

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: October 29, 2017

Lesson Title: "His Presence"

Lesson Passage: Exodus 39:42-43; 40:1-4,20,34-38

ABOUT THIS LESSON

The book of Exodus ends in glory with the descent of the Most High upon the house built by the skill and devotion of all the people. This fulfills the promise in Exod. 25:8, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." The people have done their part; now God does his part, and the cloud by day and the fire by night (40:38) testify that He is indeed living among them. (Since the "mercy seat" foreshadowed the New Testament doctrine of atonement through the blood of Christ, and the concept of "holiness" had such a prominent bearing on the design and assembly of the tabernacle, these two themes will receive special emphasis.)

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the term "tent of meeting." (2) Explain how the concept of holiness is reflected in the assembling of the tabernacle.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with these thoughts: In his conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Sychar, Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). In every age, true believers have understood the spiritual nature of God, yet have longed for tangible manifestations of his presence. This is one of the reasons that Yahweh ordered the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness, to serve as an outward sign of his presence. ("The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle," Exod. 40:34.)

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Clarify the meaning of the terms "tabernacle" and "tent of meeting" (both appear in Exod. 40:1):* (1) After the people had violated their covenant with God by making the golden calf (Exod. 32:7-8), Moses set up a temporary "tent of meeting" outside the camp (Exod. 33:7), because, after the people had broken fellowship with God, the Lord had withdrawn from dwelling in their midst. So, Moses, and anyone inquiring of the Lord, would go to the "tent of meeting" outside the camp (33:7). (2) However, Moses intervened on behalf of his people, and God consented to renew His covenant relationship with Israel. ("My presence will go with you," 33:14.) So, after the tabernacle was built, Moses no longer needed his temporary tent, so the term "tent of meeting" became synonymous with "tabernacle."

2. *Comment on Exod. 39:42-43:* These verses make the point that the Israelites "did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses."

INTERPRETATION: As we have seen, the guidelines for constructing and furnishing the tabernacle were extensive and detailed. It would have been tempting to take shortcuts to conserve time and materials. But, in response to God's willingness to forgive their apostasy and give them another chance, the Israelites demonstrated their willingness to be obedient to the divine will by carrying out His instructions in every way.

3. Note that the account of the assembling of the tabernacle and its furnishings (40:16-33) is preceded by Yahweh's instructions to Moses for doing this (Exodus 40:1-15). (Most of these instructions are drawn from the more detailed account in Exod. 25:1-31:17.) (We should note, too, that this task of assembling the tabernacle was not a one-time undertaking, for it had to be repeated every time "the people of Israel would go onward." Like the Bedouin tents the people lived in, the Lord's dwelling was portable.)

4. Explain the significance of the "mercy seat" (referred to in Exod. 40:20): (1) The ark of the covenant was the most sacred object in the tabernacle. On top of the ark was a lid called the mercy seat on which rested the cloud or visible symbol of the divine presence. And from this place God was supposed to dispense mercy to worshipers when the blood of the atonement was sprinkled there. (2) The mercy seat anticipated what Paul wrote in Romans 3:24, that our covering for sin is "Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood."

5. Note the careful attention given to the important concept of "holiness" in the instructions concerning the assembly and use of the tabernacle: (1) God's holiness is a truth that is reiterated again and again in the Bible. His holiness is basically his "separateness," his "distance" from everything and everybody in the whole created order. (2) This was emphasized when God first met the Israelites at Mount Sinai, where the people were warned not to touch the mountain when God was present upon it (Exod. 19:12). On that occasion, the people were told to "consecrate" themselves by washing their garments in an act of purification (19:10). (To illustrate this concept, read Psalm 24:3-4.) (3) Finally, to show how the idea of holiness influenced the instructions for making the tabernacle ready for use, refer to Exod. 40:9, 40:12-13 and 40:30-32,

CLOSING THE LESSON

Final thoughts: For the Israelites, the tabernacle symbolized the truth that God was with them. Although we affirm Jesus' assurance that "God is spirit," we, too, need visible reminders of his presence. To some extent, our church buildings serve this purpose. And, approached in an appropriate attitude of prayer and contemplation, the Lord's Supper serves as an outward sign of His presence. ASK: What other symbols of the Lord's presence are meaningful to you?