

**GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL****Exodus 25–31; 35–40**

**Memory Verse:** *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* (1 Cor. 3:16 ESV).

**Background Helps:**

Hebrews 9:1-5 informs us that the “first covenant,” that is, the covenant that God established with Israel through Moses, included “regulations for worship” and “an earthly place of holiness,” namely, the tabernacle, where God dwelt among and met with his people. This tabernacle consisted of a Holy Place and a Most Holy Place, separated by a curtain. The furniture of the tabernacle included a lampstand, a table for the bread of the Presence, the golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant with its cherubim and mercy seat. This ark was a gold-covered chest that contained the tablets of the covenant, that is, the Ten Commandments. God also established the Aaronic priesthood to minister on behalf of the people in the tabernacle (Heb. 9:6-10).

This tabernacle and the priesthood associated with it are the subject of this week's readings. In Exodus 25–31, while he is on Mt. Sinai for forty days, Moses receives detailed instructions from the LORD on how to construct the tabernacle and establish the priesthood. After the interruption of the golden calf incident (Ex. 32–34), Exodus 35–40 gives a detailed account of the actual construction of the tabernacle.

Exodus 25:8 specifies the purpose of the tabernacle: “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” The priesthood was established to offer sacrifices to God, so that he might meet with the people at the tent of meeting. In Exodus 29:43-46 God says to Moses, “There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.”

In the ark was deposited the “testimony” that God gave to Moses (25:16), that is, the tablets with the Ten Commandments (31:18). The mercy seat was placed on top of the ark and “there,” God told Moses, “I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel” (25:22).

In Exodus 40 the tabernacle is erected, at the conclusion of which “the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (40:34), indicating that God was indeed present among his people.

**Lesson Helps:**

Here's are some suggestions for your lesson:

The aim: My students will learn about the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness under the first or old covenant, so that they will value the church as God's dwelling place among his people under the new covenant.

The teacher should be able to find many helps on line for teaching this lesson. Google "Old Testament Tabernacle" and download various pictures and diagrams or even videos to help you teach the lesson. Give an overview of the tabernacle and its furniture and the role of the priesthood. Emphasize that the tabernacle was part of the "first covenant" and the arrangement God set up for dwelling among his people, meeting with them, and receiving their worship.

Where does God dwell now under the new covenant? How does he meet with us today? You might briefly note that (1) God made his dwelling among us in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14); and that (2) our bodies are now the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). But your lesson should emphasize the truth that the church (that is, God's people under the new covenant) is now the dwelling place of God. See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (which includes the memory verse; note also that the "you" in these verses is plural); 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 3:1-6; 1 Peter 2:4-5. (Some of these verses use the figure of a "temple," since Solomon's temple later replaced Moses' tabernacle.)

Challenge your class to reflect on the privilege of being the church, the dwelling place of God by his Spirit! What should be our response to this truth? See, for example, 1 Corinthians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 3:6; 10:24-25; 1 Peter 2:5.

You could also focus your lesson on the role of the priesthood in the tabernacle, based on Exodus 28-29, comparing and contrasting the priesthood of Aaron with the priesthood of Jesus Christ as set forth in the book of Hebrews; but it might be better to save this emphasis until next week's lesson, which will include a study of the day of atonement in Leviticus 16.

**Home Assignment:**

 Read Leviticus 16; 26.

 Memorize Hebrews 9:22b ESV.