

God Establishes His People

Date: 09.06.2026 | The Tabernacle
Scripture: Exodus 35-40

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God wants to be with His people, and we can worship Him.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

God's people gladly obeyed Him and built the tabernacle so they could worship Him.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

God's people followed His instructions for the tabernacle, and God showed His presence among them.

STUDENTS:

Israel responded to God's grace with willing obedience and worship, building the tabernacle according to His commands so that His presence would dwell among them.

ADULTS:

In the completion of the tabernacle, God's covenant people respond to His grace through generous worship and careful obedience. When God's glory fills the tabernacle, He reveals His desire to dwell among His redeemed people, foreshadowing His ultimate presence with humanity through His redemptive plan.

MEMORY VERSE

Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring to you today...The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." Exodus 14:13-14



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

What does God require in the fourth and fifth commandments? Fourth, that on the Sabbath day we spend time in public and private worship of God, rest from routine employment, serve the Lord and others, and so anticipate the eternal Sabbath. Fifth, that we love and honor our father and our mother, submitting to their godly discipline and direction. NCC q.10

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

After the episode with the golden calf, Israel responded with humility and renewed obedience. God, in His mercy, restored the covenant and continued His plan to dwell among His people. Almost a full year after the Israelites had left Egypt, the construction of the Tabernacle began, just as the Lord had commanded Moses on Mount Sinai. In *Exodus 25–31*, God had given Moses detailed instructions for the Tabernacle, and in *Exodus 35–40*, those instructions were carried out exactly.

Moses explained to the people everything the Lord had commanded. The Israelites were invited to bring offerings from what they had—gold, silver, bronze, precious stones, skins, and fine fabrics—given willingly and generously from their hearts. God also appointed skilled workers for the task. Bezalel, filled with the Spirit of God, wisdom, and skill in working with gold, silver, bronze, and stones, along with Oholiab, who was gifted in craftsmanship and design, were chosen to lead the work. Many others whom God had gifted joined them. The people responded with such generosity that they brought more than enough, and Moses eventually had to tell them to stop because there was already sufficient material for the work.

The Tabernacle was designed to be the place where the Lord would dwell among His people (*Exodus 29:45*). It was also called the sanctuary or dwelling place and served as the central location for worship. Its fundamental purpose was to enable Israel to maintain fellowship with a holy God while recognizing the seriousness of sin. The structure itself communicated this truth. The Tabernacle was carefully divided into sections: the courtyard, the holy place (outer sanctum), and the Most Holy Place (inner sanctum, or Holy of Holies). Each section emphasized increasing levels of holiness and restricted access, demonstrating that God's presence could not be entered casually because of human sin and uncleanness.



In the courtyard stood the bronze altar of burnt offering, where sacrifices were made for forgiveness and thanksgiving (*Exodus 27:1-8; 38:1-7*), along with a bronze basin for washing. Sacrifice was necessary because sinful people could not approach a holy God without atonement. Beyond the courtyard was the holy place, where only the priests could enter. There stood the table of the bread of the Presence, the golden lampstand, and the altar of incense. Further inside was the Holy of Holies, the most sacred space, where the ark of the covenant was placed. Inside the ark were the tablets of the law, along with reminders of God's provision and authority. The mercy seat covered the ark, symbolizing God's throne and His willingness to show mercy. Only the high priest could enter this space, and only once a year. The use of gold in the inner areas and bronze in the outer court further emphasized the nearness of God's holy presence.

God appointed Aaron as the high priest and his sons as priests to serve in the Tabernacle. They were set apart with special garments adorned with precious stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel. These priests acted as mediators between God and the people, offering sacrifices and leading worship. They were required to remain holy because God is perfectly pure, and His presence is dangerous to those who disregard His holiness.

Once the Tabernacle was completed exactly according to God's instructions, Moses inspected the work and confirmed that it had been done just as the Lord commanded. Then the climax of the book of Exodus occurred: the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle (*Exodus 40:34-35*). The cloud of God's presence covered it so completely that even Moses could not enter. From that point forward, the cloud guided Israel's journey. When the cloud lifted, the people would break camp and follow; when it remained, they would stay. In this way, God's presence directed every step of their journey (*Exodus 40:36-38*).

The Tabernacle stood at the very center of Israel's camp, both geographically and spiritually, reminding the people that God Himself was to be at the center of their lives. Yet living in the presence of a holy God required more than a physical structure. God gave His people further instructions for holiness, including laws about sacrifices, purity, and worship. Through Moses, the Lord established five types of sacrifices—some for thanksgiving and worship, and others for the forgiveness of sin. When an Israelite sinned, an animal without blemish would be offered in their place, symbolizing the

transfer of sin and the need for atonement through blood. These sacrifices demonstrated that sin brings death, but that God, in His mercy, provides a way for forgiveness.

God also gave instructions about clean and unclean living, festivals, and daily life, all designed to set Israel apart as His holy people. The covenant included both blessing and responsibility: if the people obeyed the Lord, they would experience His blessing and presence; if they disobeyed, they would face consequences and risk losing the fullness of those blessings.

The Tabernacle brings the book of Exodus to a fitting conclusion. After deliverance from slavery, the giving of the Law, and the failure of the golden calf, God's presence now dwells among His people. Though Israel would continue to struggle with sin, the Lord remained faithful. The message of Exodus is clear: God rescues His people from bondage, provides a way for them to live in relationship with Him, and desires to dwell at the very center of their lives.

TELL THE STORY

Exodus 35-40

While the Israelites were still at Mount Sinai, God commanded Moses to build a tabernacle. It would be a place for God to dwell among His people. God told Moses to invite all the Israelites to be a part of this building project.

First, Moses invited the Israelites to give their money and their possessions so that the tabernacle could be built. The people gave gold, silver, and bronze. They gave blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. They gave goat and ram skins and fine leather. They gave precious, beautiful gemstones. The people were so generous that Moses had to tell them to stop giving, as they already had far more than they needed!

Next, Moses requested that people with special skills in building, sculpting, weaving, designing, and decorating come and help with the tabernacle and all its furnishings. Many artists came to give their time and talents, and God's Spirit filled a man named Bezalel to lead the tabernacle's construction and design. God also gave a man named Oholiab the ability to teach others how to design, weave, cut gems, and more.



Bezalel, Oholiab, and many other artists worked hard on the tabernacle. They made huge curtains to be the walls of the tabernacle. They made a special box, called the ark, and overlaid it with gold. The ark had a special seat called the mercy seat with two cherubim at each end. The mercy seat was where the high priest would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificial animal to ask God for forgiveness of sins. They made a gold table, a gold lampstand, two altars, and a bronze basin or bowl. These items would be used in worship of God.

They also made special clothes for Aaron and the other priests to wear. Aaron's garments included a special breastpiece that had twelve different gemstones on it- one for each of the twelve sons of Jacob. These clothes could only be worn in the tabernacle and would show that Aaron and the priests were set apart for a special work of God.

Moses inspected all the work that had been done. He saw that everything had been done just as the Lord had commanded. Moses blessed the people and then set up the tabernacle. Once it was completed, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Whenever the people traveled, the cloud of the Lord stayed with the tabernacle during the day, and there was fire inside the cloud at night.

God told Moses and the people to build the tabernacle so that He could dwell among them. We no longer need a tabernacle because those who trust in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have been given the Holy Spirit, so that God lives in us, not merely near us.

REBUILD THE STORY

1. How did God give Moses the instructions for building the Tabernacle, and how were those instructions passed on to the people? (*Exodus 25:1-9; 35:4-10*)
2. Where did the Israelites get the materials for the Tabernacle, and what was their response in giving? (*Exodus 35:20-29; 36:5-7*)
3. Who were the men chosen to lead the construction of the Tabernacle, and why were they selected? (*Exodus 35:30-35*)



4. How was the Tabernacle structured, and what were its main sections? (*Exodus 26:33-34; 40:1-3*)

5. What was the purpose of the different areas of the Tabernacle, and who was allowed to enter each one?
(*Exodus 27:20-21; Leviticus 16:2, 34*)

6. What happened when the Tabernacle was completed, and God's presence filled it? (*Exodus 40:34-35*)

7. How did God guide the Israelites through the wilderness once the Tabernacle was established? (*Exodus 40:36-38*)

8. How did God provide a way for the Israelites to deal with their sin and receive forgiveness? (*Leviticus 1:3-4; 16:6-10*)

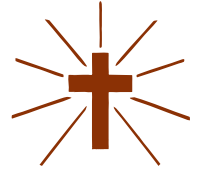
9. The Israelites gave generously to build the Tabernacle. What does this teach us about how we should respond to God's work and provision in our lives?

10. The Tabernacle had restricted access to show God's holiness. How does this help us understand both the seriousness of sin and the privilege of coming into God's presence today?

11. The priests acted as mediators between God and the people. How does this role point forward to Jesus and what He has done for us?

12. On the Day of Atonement, the scapegoat symbolically carried away the people's sins (*Leviticus 16:10, 21-22*). How is this a picture of what Jesus does for believers, and why is that important for understanding forgiveness?

GOSPEL EMPHASIS



One of the most significant moments in the Old Testament was the Day of Atonement, a special day when the high priest made atonement for the sins of all the people of Israel. This day powerfully revealed both God’s holiness and His hatred of sin, showing that sin is serious and that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (*Hebrews 9:22*). It also demonstrated that sin was not a one-time problem—it was ongoing. The sacrifices had to be repeated year after year because the people continued to sin. Ultimately, sin created a barrier between the Israelites and Yahweh, separating them from full fellowship with Him. This same problem exists for all people today, as sin still separates us from a holy God.

On the Day of Atonement, two goats were used to picture how God deals with sin. One goat was sacrificed as a purification offering, its blood symbolizing the payment required for sin. The second goat, called the scapegoat, had the sins of the people symbolically placed upon it when the priest laid his hands on its head and confessed their wrongdoing. This goat was then sent away into the wilderness, representing the removal of the people’s sin and guilt. Together, these two goats showed that sin must be both paid for and taken away.

These sacrifices, however, were only temporary and pointed forward to something greater. Jesus Christ is the ultimate and perfect fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. Through His death on the cross, He became both the sacrifice for sin and the scapegoat. His blood was shed to pay the penalty for sin once and for all, and He bore our sins and carried them away completely (*Hebrews 9:11-12, 26*). Unlike the repeated sacrifices of the Old Testament, Jesus’ sacrifice was sufficient forever. Because of Him, those who trust in Christ are fully forgiven, their sins are removed, and their relationship with God is restored. The Day of Atonement ultimately points to the good news that through Jesus, God not only covers our sin—He removes it completely and welcomes us into His presence.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today’s story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true change the way we live in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You for always desiring a relationship with us! In the Garden of Eden, You lived among Adam and Eve. In the Old Testament, You gave instructions for building a tabernacle so that You could live among the people and guide them. Now we have the ultimate gift of Your Holy Spirit living within each of us as believers. Thank You for sending Your son, Jesus, as the forever “scapegoat” so that we can be forgiven of our sins and spend eternity in Your holy presence! Help us to live in light of Your holiness and Your righteousness!



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Leviticus 19