

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121-26 The Tabernacle (Ex 33-34, 40)

Of all the things a believer needs, which is the most important? A place to worship? People of faith to worship with? Someone to lead worship and teach? All these are good, but in this lesson you will see that Moses knew the one thing the people could not possibly do without.

Because the people of Israel had worshipped the golden calf, Moses had interceded for them with the Lord. He even offered to have his own name blotted out of God's book. But God did not punish Moses; instead he sent a plague on those who had sinned.

Then the Lord told Moses, "Leave this place and lead your people to the land I promised them, a land flowing with milk and honey. I will send an angel before you to drive out your enemies. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." So Moses went down and told the people that God would not live among them. The people broke down and cried. They grieved that their sin had cost them so much.

Moses went outside the camp and set up the 'tent of meeting,' as he had done before, so he could talk with the Lord. As Moses went in, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance. There Moses and God spoke face to face, while the people stood in front of their own tents and worshiped. Joshua, Moses' young helper, stayed in the tent.

Moses pleaded with the Lord, "If you know me by name and are pleased with me, then teach me your ways. This nation is your people. If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. If you do not go with us, we are no different from all the other people on earth!" Moses could not imagine going on this difficult journey without God. His presence had been shown to Moses and the people by the pillar of fire and cloud ever since they had left Egypt.

The Lord replied, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." Then the Lord told Moses to chisel out two more stone tablets and bring them up Mount Sinai. He would write the same words again, to replace the broken tablets. The Lord came down in a cloud proclaiming His character, the great 'I AM,' Yahweh: "The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. This is my covenant with you. I will force out the unbelieving nations from Canaan through great miracles, but you must obey my commandments. Worship none of their gods; break down their altars, for I am a jealous God" (Ex 34:6-14).

Moses stayed on the mountain and wrote down all the laws and commandments of God. He wrote the Ten Commandments on the two new tablets of stone. He was there for 40 days and ate no bread nor drank any water. Afterwards, he went down to the people with all God's commands. He did not realize his face was glowing after spending time in God's presence. This radiance made the Israelites afraid, so Moses wore a veil when he talked to the people, but he removed it when he entered the Lord's presence to speak.

Moses told them God had commanded that a special tent of meeting—a sanctuary—was to be built, called ‘the tabernacle.’ God promised to dwell among them there. Everyone who was willing to give an offering to the Lord was invited to bring gold, silver, bronze, special yarn, fine linen, ram skins, acacia wood, olive oil, spices, and gems. All who were skilled craftsman were asked to come and dedicate themselves to building the tabernacle—its tent, the courtyard around it, the altar, the bronze basin, and the furniture inside.

The next day, people started bringing the things needed to build the tabernacle. Skilled craftsmen came to do the work—designers, weavers, carvers, and builders. The Lord chose two craftsmen, Bezalel and Oholiab, and filled them with His Spirit to direct the creative work. Day after day, the people brought their gold jewelry, silver and bronze, and all that Moses had requested, until finally he said, “Stop bringing offerings. There is more than enough!”

The people were careful to build the tabernacle exactly as God had told Moses. God filled the workers with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts. There were designers, weavers, embroiderers, and skilled women who spun the yarn and linen and goat hair. The tent of the tabernacle was made of curtains of linen with blue, purple and scarlet designs of cherubim. Over the linen was a covering of goat hair curtains, and over that a covering of ram skins dyed red. The final layer was made of the hides of sea cows. The frames of the tent were built of acacia wood overlaid with gold and set on silver bases.

The tent was divided into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In the inner Holy of Holies was placed the Ark of the Testimony, a wooden box overlaid inside and out with gold. On the atonement cover of the ark they made two gold cherubim facing each other, with outstretched wings. Inside was kept the tablets of stone with the commandments written on them. A curtain separated the two parts of the tent. The pieces of furniture in the Holy Place were the table to hold the bread of the Presence, the gold lampstand which was to be kept burning, and the golden altar for burning incense to the Lord. All the furniture was overlaid with gold and had rings through which poles ran along opposite sides. These allowed them to be carried without touching the furniture itself.

The rectangular fence surrounding the tabernacle was made of curtains woven of linen and enclosed an area about 23 by 46 meters (75 by 150 feet). This courtyard held the bronze altar for burning the animal sacrifices and a bronze basin for the priests to wash their hands and feet in before entering the Holy Place. The people also made special garments for the priests—Aaron and his sons.

The tabernacle was finished exactly two years after Israel had left Egypt. Moses inspected the work and found they had done just as the Lord had commanded, so he blessed them. Moses set up the tabernacle as God had instructed and consecrated each part with anointing oil. It was holy unto the Lord. Then the cloud of the Presence covered the tent of meeting. As the people watched, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. From that day on, in all of their travels, whenever the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out, but if it did not lift they stayed where they were. So the cloud was over the tabernacle by day and the fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

This story is **important** because it shows that God's presence will depart if sin is allowed to remain unconfessed in the lives of believers. If we live without God's presence we will be defeated by our enemies.

The main **truth** of this story is that the key to worshipping God is having His presence among us; rather than anything that we ourselves can provide or give to God.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions.

1. Why did God say He would not go with the people to Canaan?
[Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "God said, 'If I lived among these obstinate people for even a moment, I might destroy them'," you are correct.
2. What did Moses realize was essential for Israel to have?
[Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Moses said, 'Without your Presence among us, we are no different from anyone else'," you are correct.
3. How did the Lord lead the Israelites after the tabernacle was set up?
[Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "They moved when the pillar of cloud lifted from the tabernacle and stayed in camp when it did not lift," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly. Tell the story to someone and then ask them if they have ever felt God's presence with them or in a gathering of Christians. Explain to them that Jesus has promised to be with us always. Even though we cannot see the cloud or the fire like the Israelites did, we can sense His presence.