

THE PLACE OF MEETING

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God desires to be with His people and declares to the world that He has made a way for sinners to be forgiven and made holy.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

Exodus 25–31; 35–40

+ **SETTING:**

After pleading with God to have mercy upon the people of Israel for their sin of idolatry, God promised to be with Moses and the Israelites. Yet restoration of the covenant would involve obedience to God's commands. While on the mountain, the Lord had given Moses detailed instructions on the construction of the tabernacle, its furniture, and the garments for the priests who would serve there. The tabernacle would be the portable tent where God would dwell in the midst of His people. After spending over half a year building God's dwelling place, the tabernacle was set up and consecrated for worship.

DAY 1

READ:

Exodus 40:1-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 40:1-2

NOTES

The details that are given about the construction and set up of the tabernacle seem repetitive and boring (Ex. 25–31; 35–40). But when the original audience heard the plans for God’s dwelling, they would have noticed a pattern to its development.

First, seven speeches detailed the construction, its symbolism, and God’s provision of skilled workers, and each section began with “The LORD said ...” (25:1; 30:11,17,22,34; 31:1,12). The final speech addressed the continued observance of Sabbath rest throughout the tabernacle’s construction.

Upon further reflection, we discover that God was speaking like He did at creation (“God said ...”; Gen. 1:3,6,9,14,20,24,26). There are many parallels between the tabernacle and Eden (see Gen. 2:11-12/ Ex. 25:3,7; Gen. 3:24/Ex. 26:31-33). Just as the creation culminated in the seventh day of rest, so the tabernacle was designed to recall the creation and to call the people to Sabbath rest (Ex. 31:12-17).

The tabernacle’s entrance faced east. As you moved further into the tabernacle to the entrance of the Most Holy Place, the veil covering the entrance had cherubim woven into it (36:35). The furniture included a lampstand that looked like a tree full of life, and its lamps were to shine bright always. These details resembled Eden, which had the cherubim guarding the east entrance back into the fruitful garden and the tree of life.

God’s dwelling among Israel was His promise to re-create Eden for the benefit of all humanity. Since humanity sinned and was separated from God’s presence, God said, “I will make a way for you so that you can return to Me, and we will walk and talk together.”

How does the tabernacle remind you of God’s desire to meet with you?

DAY 2

READ:

Exodus 40:12-33

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 40:12-13

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #82:

PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER

God's intention for humanity is that we be a kingdom of priests, not just a kingdom *with* priests. Although God set up the priestly system in the Old Testament due to the sinfulness of humanity and people's need for a mediator, His ultimate purpose is that we come to God directly, through the mediating work of Jesus Christ, thus eliminating the need of another priest. Because of the work of Christ on the cross, exemplified in the tearing of the curtain that prevented access into the holy of holies, Christians are free to approach God with boldness (Rom. 5:1-5; Heb. 4:14-16).

If you were to die today, would you be able to say, "I can face death without any condemnation, fear, or worry because I know I am forgiven"? Jonathan Edwards, the American pastor and theologian of the 1700s, wrote down several resolutions by which he tried to live. In one resolution, he said: "Resolved, Never to do any thing, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life."¹ Edwards wanted to live with such integrity, holiness, and purity that he could have a clear conscience before God. But as a sinful human being, of course, he failed often.

Regardless of how hard we try, there will always be some way that we fall short of God's glory. A little lie may have slipped out. A jealous or envious thought may nag you. Subtle anger toward someone who said a harsh word may brew in your heart. There are two ways that people respond to these kinds of sins and temptations: either their hearts grow indifferent to them or they become more sensitive toward sin.

No one is worthy to come into God's presence to worship Him. Everyone falls short. Even those whom God calls into His service are inadequate for the task. The Lord had called Aaron to be a priest and minister in the tent of God (28:1), yet Aaron would break the covenant and disobey God's command. By fashioning an idol in the name of the Lord (32:1-6), Aaron was unworthy to come into God's presence to worship.

Mercifully, God made a way for Aaron. Through sacrifice and washings, Aaron and his household were forgiven of their sin and enabled to come into the presence of a holy God. True worship delights in God's gracious forgiveness of sins.

Why is it important that as part of our worship we delight in God's forgiveness?

DAY 3

READ:

Exodus 40:34-38

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 40:34

NOTES

At the end of The Chronicles of Narnia series, C. S. Lewis brings his readers to the finale in The Last Battle with these words: “Now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever; and which every chapter is better than the one before.”² As the Book of Exodus comes to a close, we find a similar sentiment—God has descended in all of His glory, filling the tabernacle, and He is present with His people. After suffering under bondage and servitude to Pharaoh, Israel now stands on the verge of a new chapter as they serve and worship the Lord.

The glory of God changes everything. When Israel lacked food and water, they questioned if God was truly with them (17:7). When Moses was gone for forty days up on the mountain to receive the instructions about the tabernacle, the people doubted Moses’s leadership (32:1). But now God had descended with such glory that His presence filled the tabernacle (40:34).

When God seems inconsequential to us through our apathy and our sin, His truth seems irrelevant and His grace appears dull. There is no fear of God because His judgment doesn’t carry any weight and His gospel doesn’t sound very good. But when God descends, His Word produces life, His grace is amazing, His awesomeness produces holiness, and His good news makes the heart sing. To know the glory of God is to have your heart lit ablaze with a passion to know Him and love Him forever, and this knowledge only increases your desire to love Him more than the day before.

What are some reasons you need to be reminded about the glory of God?

DAY 4

READ:

John 1:1-18; Hebrews 7-8

FOCAL PASSAGES:

John 1:14; Hebrews 8:5

NOTES

The writer of the Book of Hebrews wanted to remind Christians that Jesus is better than everything the Old Testament has to offer because Jesus is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament taught. The sacrifices, priests, and tabernacle were merely shadows of the heavenly things that were to come. Though the people of Israel could see and experience the tabernacle and hear and smell the sacrifices, these things were merely copies of the heavenly things that the Lord had shown Moses (Heb. 8:5). Though the presence of God descended upon the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord was present, better things lay ahead.

Even better than the blueprints and copies of the heavenly things, God sent His own Son. The apostle John tells us that the Word that was with the Father, the Word that created the world, took on flesh and blood and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Figuratively, John tells us that the Word pitched His tabernacle and lived in His tent among us. Just like God's tent had been set up in the center of the camp of Israel (Ex. 25:8-9), Jesus' incarnation was evidence that God would keep His promise to live among His people (Lev. 26:11-12).

Further, John makes the connection between the glory of the Lord descending upon the tabernacle with the presence of Jesus, about whom we have observed the glory of the one and only Son of God (John 1:14). The ultimate display of glory walked and talked, healed and taught, and went to the cross to suffer for sinners. In Jesus Christ, all of God's glory is clearly seen. Whenever we wonder if God truly loves us and will be with us, we need only look at Christ, in whom all the fullness of God dwells (Col. 1:19).

What has the coming of Jesus taught you about the glory of God?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The tabernacle, like the later temple, is a sign of God's presence with Israel. It announces His intention for His glory to dwell among His people. It foreshadows the incarnation of the Logos (John 1:14) and God's majestic presence that will come to earth in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22)."⁵

-Michael Bird

DAY 5

READ:

1 Corinthians 6

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

NOTES

Knowing that God is with us strengthens us to walk in holiness of life so that we glorify Him in everything that we do. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, he appealed to them to live in such a way that was holy and pleasing to the Lord. Some had fallen into sexual sin. Others were in conflict with one another and were taking each other to court. And there were those who were enjoying their abundance while others were in need.

The reason Paul gave to the Corinthians as to why they could glorify God with their lives was simple: Because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their bodies were not their own. They could not treat their bodies as though sin didn't matter because the Spirit of God had taken up residence in their lives, making them a holy dwelling place.

When we understand that God has saved us and taken up residence in our lives, we ought to glorify Him in whatever we do. For Christians, our bodies matter to God. How we live reflects to others what we think about God's presence. When we neglect our physical well-being, abuse our bodies through improper eating habits or using substances that cause us to lose self-control, we dishonor God. But when we live and act as people in whom God dwells, the fruit of the Spirit will be displayed in our lives. And furthermore, our witness to the world around us will exhibit that the message of the gospel is powerful and that the presence of God is life-transforming, changing us from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18).

Why do we need to be reminded that God dwells within us?

GROUP

NOTES

POINT 1: Worship of God centers on His holiness (Ex. 40:1-11).

The construction of the tabernacle represented a culmination of God's redemptive work in the _____ and a fresh beginning of their experience of God's saving _____.

 **What are some ways we celebrate and remember the Lord's salvation?**

The tabernacle was designed by _____ with increasing levels of _____ as one proceeded inward toward His presence.

 **Since God is holy and pure, how should this affect our worship?**

POINT 2: Worship of God centers on His forgiveness (Ex. 40:12-15).

God's choice of Aaron as a priest was a great act of _____ and demonstrates God's desire to cleanse and use _____ people for His _____ work.

 **How should the Lord's choice of Aaron as a priest encourage us?**

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #82: PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER:

God's intention for _____ is that we be a kingdom of priests, not just a kingdom with priests. Although God set up the priestly system in the Old Testament due to the sinfulness of humanity and people's need for a mediator, His ultimate purpose is that we come to God _____, through the

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee, Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see; Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee, Perfect in power, in love and purity."⁴

-Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

mediating work of Jesus Christ, thus eliminating the need of another priest. Because of the work of Christ on the _____, exemplified in the tearing of the curtain that prevented access into the holy of holies, _____ are free to approach God with boldness (Rom. 5:1-5; Heb. 4:14-16).

NOTES

POINT 3: Worship of God centers on His presence (Ex. 40:34-38).

The cloud that had led the people filled the tabernacle, revealing that the holy God of _____ is unapproachable apart from His _____.

The tabernacle was a temporary measure for God to dwell with His people. The eternal fulfillment is found in _____ and the _____.



What are some ways we are hindered from worshipping in the presence of God?

MY RESPONSE

Because we are the people in whom God dwells, we manifest His glorious presence and bear the fruit that comes from the Holy Spirit as we live in our culture, calling on others to place faith in Christ as well.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways you can remain mindful of the presence of God each and every day?
- **HEART:** How will you choose to live and worship because you are a dwelling place for the holy God?
- **HANDS:** With whom will you share the good news of God's glory in Christ?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"God wants worshipers before workers; indeed the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the lost art of worship."⁵

-A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)