

TABERNACLE OF THE LORD

Lesson Aim To see the symbolism of Christ in the tabernacle, which was manifest when He dwelt on earth in His human body

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson and insert the following questions where they fit the lesson for class discussion.

Introduction: The LORD is present everywhere, but He chose to localize His presence in a tabernacle on earth. The pattern for the tabernacle was shown to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It was primarily symbolic of Jesus Christ who later came to dwell among His people, not in a tent, but in a human body. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

What does the tabernacle tell us about fellowship with God?

The tabernacle tells us that God wants to dwell with His people. However, the sinfulness of all people is offensive to His holiness and makes fellowship with Him impossible without the shedding of innocent blood. The shedding of animal blood provided limited fellowship with Him through a priesthood that interceded for believers. God used the tabernacle to prepare His people for the coming of His Son, who would dwell among them, shed His blood on the cross and rise from the dead to open the way for intimate fellowship with Him. Now the fellowship that Adam and Eve had with God in the Garden of Eden is restored through Christ.

What does the beautiful linen curtain in the tabernacle symbolize? 26:1-6

The linen curtain symbolized Jesus Christ's beauty. It was made of "fine twined linen" that was dyed "blue, and purple, and scarlet" and had figures of cherubim embroidered on it. However, its beauty could only be seen by the priests who ministered in the tabernacle. The divine beauty of Christ is only seen by those who are in Christ.

What do the other three coverings on the tabernacle symbolize? 26:7-14

There was a goats' hair curtain placed over the linen curtain and then a red-dyed covering of rams' skins and finally an outer covering of "badger" skins (more likely the skins of a sea creature called a "dugong" or a "sea cow" that is found in the Red Sea). These coverings gave strength to the tabernacle and protection from the weather, but they provided no outward beauty. They also symbolized Christ, who was "despised and rejected of men" because they found no outward attractiveness in Him (cf. Isa 53:2, 3).

How did the framework of the tabernacle symbolize Christ? 26:15-30

The "boards" of the tabernacle are better understood as wooden frames and not solid boards. They were 15' tall X 27" wide. These frames were covered with gold and they enhanced the beauty of the tabernacle as they allowed the beautiful linen curtain to be seen through the gold covered frames. The gold on the frames symbolized the deity and beauty of Christ, which can be seen only by those who serve Him as His priests. The frames were held together by the sockets and bars which remind us of Christ's work in binding believers together in one body (Eph 4:15-16).

How did the two veils in the tabernacle symbolize Christ? 26:31-37

The first veil separated the court from the tabernacle. It was the only way into the tabernacle. Jesus said, "I am the door: if any man enter in by me, he shall be saved" (Jn 10:9). The veil inside the tabernacle separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. God dwelt in the Most Holy Place and only the high priest could pass through that veil into God's presence and he was allowed to do that only once a year on the Day of Atonement. When Jesus died, He cried out, "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). The veil that separated believers from God was torn apart by Him from top to bottom (Mt 27:51). Jesus ascended to Heaven to be our high priest at the right hand of His Father. Now believers can come

boldly to the throne of grace by Jesus Christ and have intimate fellowship with the most holy God at any time (Heb 4:12-16; 6:19).

What symbols of Christ were in the Holy Place? 25:23-39

The Holy Place is where the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the altar of incense were located. This is where the priests ministered each day.

The table of showbread had twelve loaves of bread placed on it each week and it symbolized the grace of God to provide food for each of the twelve tribes of Israel and pointed to Jesus Christ who is the bread of life for all believers (Jn 6:35). He gives them the bread that provides eternal life.

The lampstand provided light in the Holy Place and it pointed to Jesus Christ who is the light of the world (Jn 8:12). His light dispels the darkness of Satan's lies and opens the eyes of the blind to the truth. The oil for the lampstand (Ex 27:20, 21) is symbolic of the Holy Spirit (compare Jn 3:34 with Heb 1:9).

The altar of incense (30:1-10) was placed before the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. It symbolized the prayers of Christ (Jn 17:1ff; Rom 8: 34), the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26, 27) and of the believers (Rev 8:3, 4).

What was in the courtyard that symbolized Christ? 27:1-8; 30:18-21

The brazen altar was the first furnishing that one would see when entering the courtyard. It was the place where the blood of sacrificial animals and birds was spilt and their bodies were burned to make temporary atonement was made for those that brought their sacrifice. This altar pointed to the cross of Christ where He died and made permanent atonement for the sins of all that come to Him in faith (Heb 9:22-10:12).

The laver was the next and only other object in the court. It was placed between the brazen altar and the tabernacle. The laver will be discussed more in next week's lesson, but suffice it to say that it contained water and was used for cleansing the priests before they entered the tabernacle. It pointed to the word of Christ which cleanses the believer from daily sins (Jn 13:4-10; 15:3; Eph 5:25, 26).

How does the gate into the courtyard of the tabernacle symbolize Christ? 27:9-19).

The tabernacle was surrounded on three sides by hangings and only on the east side was there a gate to enter the courtyard. The gate of the court was made of the same material as that used in the two veils of the tabernacle. It pointed to Jesus Christ who is the one and only gate to heaven (Mt 7:13, 14; Jn 14:6).

How did some of the apparel of the high priest symbolize Christ? 28:1-43

Two onyx stones were engraved with the names of the 12 tribes and were carried on the shoulders of the high priest to represent them before God. Christ, our High Priest, represents us as our Advocate with the Father (1 Jn 2:1).

The breastplate of judgment had twelve stones with a name of a tribe on each stone. These stones were fastened to a piece of fabric and carried over the heart of the high priest as a token of his love for his people. It symbolized the prayer of Jesus Christ to His Father for all believers (Jn 17:9-26). The Urim and Thummim was put in a pouch in the breastplate to enable the high priest to judge the will of God for the people. The answer given by the Urim and Thummim was usually a yes or no. Christ enables believers to know the will of God by His words recorded in the Bible (Col 3:16).

The mitre was a linen headpiece with the words, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, inscribed on a plate that was attached to the front of it. The high priest was to wear it at all times to fear the guilt of the people that brought gifts to the LORD. Christ bore guilt on the cross making believers a holy people who are accepted by our holy God (1 Pet 2:5, 24; 3:18).