

## THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

**DATE:** December 21, 2014

**SUBJECT:** THE TRAVELS OF THE CHOSEN CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: The Tabernacle and Its Furniture

**SCRIPTURE:** Exodus 25:1-40; 26:1-14, 31-37; 27:1-19; 30:1-10, 17-21

**AIM:** To help the children realize that God desires a home and He provided a very specific pattern to show exactly how He wanted it built. As those who love and care for Him, may we have a heart to follow His instructions carefully, make Him comfortable and happy, and be willing to offer what we have.

**SUGGESTED MEMORY VERSES:** 1 Samuel 16:7b (For *it is* not how man sees *that matters*; for man looks on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks on the heart.); 2 Corinthians 9:7b (...God loves a cheerful giver.); Isaiah 66:1 (Thus says Jehovah, Heaven is My throne, And the earth the footstool for My feet. Where then is the house that you will build for Me, and where is the place of My rest?); 1 Timothy 3:15a (...*I write* that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God,...)

**SUGGESTED SONGS:** 1 ("How Lovely is God's House"); 146 ("I Want the Lord to Have the First Place in my Heart"); 152 ("What Can I Give Jesus?"); 7623 ("Why Was a Cup Made?"); 8321 ("Look! There on the East Side" Bible Story Songs Moses Vol. 2, Song 21); 9213 ("For the Lord Sees Not as Man Sees" BSS David, Song 13); 9521 ("V-v-v-vessel!" BSS Vessels Unto Honor, Song 1)

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** This lesson contains a detailed description of the tabernacle and its furniture. (Actually, there are even more details which are not included.) You will need to determine how much detail is appropriate for your level. It is strongly recommended that you would use many visual aids, e.g., pictures, or even replicas. In this way, you will be able to keep the children's attention and make the lesson much more interesting.

**APPROACH:** Ask the children, if you were going to build a house, what kind of materials would you use? What kind of furniture would you put inside? In today's lesson, we'll find out what kind of home God told Moses he wanted.

**BACKGROUND:** We have just finished our lessons on the Ten Commandments. God had brought Moses and the children of Israel to Mt. Sinai so that He could reveal Himself to them. While Moses was on the mount, God gave the Ten Commandments. He also gave Moses many detailed rules or guidelines for the children of Israel (Exodus 21-23). (We might want to give two or three examples to the children so that they can get a better idea.) All the things He told Moses, including the Ten Commandments and all the guidelines are a part of what is called the Law. The Law is very important to the Jewish people.

We might think that now God was finished and Moses could go back down to the people and give them God's Law. But God was still not finished. He wanted to tell Moses a lot more things. What do you think it was? You could probably never guess. God, the mighty Creator of the whole universe, had wanted a home for a long time. He wanted a dwelling place on the earth. Why would God want such a thing? Well, God was kind of lonely in heaven. Even though there were probably a lot of angels around, He was lonely for man and for a people. He wanted to be with His people and be very, very close to them. So, God began to tell Moses about the home that He wanted. God must have been thinking about it for a very long time because He knew exactly how He wanted it built. He knew all the materials, the measurements, and the furnishings. He began to give Moses the pattern, or the plan, for His house so that Moses and the people could build it exactly the way He wanted it.

Remember that the children of Israel were not yet in the land which God had promised them, so this house, called a "tabernacle" or "tent of meeting" was temporary and portable, meaning that it could be moved. The tabernacle served a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert. Some of you

may have heard of a temple in the Bible. The temple was built later on, and it was built in Jerusalem on the land which God had promised.

## **CONTENT:**

### **I. The Materials (Exodus 25:1-7)**

The first thing God told Moses was the materials He wanted the tabernacle to be made of. What kind of materials do you think God wanted? We might say wood and bricks and cement. Maybe aluminum siding. No. God's house was to be very special and had to be built with very special materials—things like gold, silver, and bronze. And blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine linen. And goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins (porpoise is a kind of sea animal)! And acacia wood. God also wanted stones, precious stones like onyx and topaz, and emeralds (actually used for the ephod and breastplate). Wow! This would be some house!

Where would God get all these materials? Well, we might say that He could just create them and give them to Moses. True. But God wouldn't be happy doing that. He wanted His **people** to provide the materials and to offer these materials to Him. **But** only if they offered them willingly from their hearts. He would never force anyone.

Let's take a look at the Lord's house (show picture of tabernacle). Is that a house? It sure doesn't look like one. It doesn't seem too impressive, does it? Well, let's look more closely.

### **II. The Furniture**

#### **A. The Ark of Testimony (Exodus 25:10-16)**

God began to tell Moses about the furniture that He wanted in His house. What kind of furniture do you think God would want? Maybe a **big** bed, or a **big** couch. No. Again, this furniture was very special. The first item of furniture that God told Moses about was the ark of testimony (something like a chest or a big box). The ark was to be made of special wood called acacia wood. The wood is very hard and very heavy and insects cannot harm it. It has a fine, beautiful grain.

The ark was to be 2½ cubits long, 1½ cubits wide and 1½ high (about 45" long, 27" wide and 27" deep). And it was to be completely covered with gold! Inside and out. It would have a rim of gold around the top and four rings of gold at its corners. It would be carried on poles (put in the rings) made of acacia wood and gold.

God also told Moses what He wanted to be put inside the ark. God was going to give Moses two tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments written on them. They were to be kept inside the ark. (Teachers: At this point, the Bible does not mention Aaron's rod—it budded at a later point. Nor is the pot of manna mentioned here. So we do not need to mention these things.)

#### **B. The Expiatory Cover (Exodus 25:17-22)**

The ark needed a cover or lid. It was to be of pure gold, with two cherubim (a kind of angel) on top of it. They would face each other from each end of the cover. Their wings would stretch forth, covering the expiation cover.

The ark with the expiation cover was the most special piece of furniture in the whole tabernacle. God told Moses, "There will I meet with you, and I will speak to you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony..." Here is where God would be. This is where man could meet God and where God could meet man.

#### **C. The Table of the Bread of the Presence (Exodus 25:23-30)**

The next item of furniture for God's house was a table called the table of the bread of the presence, or the showbread table (about 36" long, 18" wide, 27" tall). It was also to be made of acacia wood covered with gold. There would be a rim of gold around the top of it. The table also had four rings of gold and poles by which to carry it. It would have plates, cups, pitchers, and bowls made of pure gold. And on top of the table there would always be the bread of the Presence. This was a kind of bread made with unleavened flour. Twelve loaves were baked which were to be eaten on the Sabbath by the priests only. Fresh loaves, which had been prepared overnight, replaced them.

#### **D. The Lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40)**

The lampstand was made of one talent (about 75 pounds) of pure gold. It had six branches and seven lamps. The Bible does not tell us the exact measurements but only its weight. Of course, it was not an electric lampstand. Back then, there was no electric lights, so this lampstand provided light. The lamps were fueled by olive oil. Tongs (used to pull up the wicks) and firepans (used to carry live coals) were needed; they also were made of pure gold.

#### **E. The Altar of Burnt Offering (Exodus 27:1-8)**

This was a big piece of furniture. It was a square, 5 cubits long, 5 cubits wide and 3 cubits high (about 7 ½' square and 4 ½' tall). It was also made of acacia wood, but it was covered with bronze, not gold. There were "horns" on each corner. There was a grating of bronze, which had four rings in the corners and poles (covered with bronze), for the altar's transport. Can you guess what the altar was used for? (To sacrifice animals or offerings to God.)

#### **F. The Golden Incense Altar (Exodus 30:1-10)**

This was another altar but it was much smaller, 1 cubit wide, 1 cubit long and 2 cubits high (about 18" square and 36" tall). On this altar, incense was to be burned. Incense is a compound of spices, which gives off perfumes when burned. It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold. It had a rim of gold around the top and four horns on the corners. There were two rings and two poles to carry it.

#### **G. The Laver of Bronze (Exodus 30:17-21)**

The laver was like a basin. It was to be used by the priests to wash their hands and feet. It was made of bronze but we don't know how large it was or how it was shaped. It had a "foot" or base at the bottom, which was also made of bronze.

### **III. The Structure of the Tabernacle and the Arrangement of the Furniture**

#### **A. The Outer Court (Exodus 27:9-19)**

The tabernacle was surrounded by what was called the court of the tabernacle, or the outer court. The outer court had "walls" of pillar (made of bronze) and hangings (curtains) of fine twined linen. It was 100 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 5 cubits high (about 150' long, 75' wide, and 7 ½' tall). Close to its entrance (at the east side) was the altar of burnt offering. Further in was the laver.

#### **B. The Holy Place (Exodus 26:31-35)**

The actual tabernacle was made of boards (acacia wood covered with gold) and was divided into two rooms. A veil of blue and purple and scarlet strands with embroidered cherubim separated the two rooms. The first room was called the Holy Place. In the Holy Place were the Lampstand (on the south side), the Table of the Bread of the Presence (on the north side), and the incense altar (on the west side).

#### **C. The Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:33-34)**

The inside room was called the Holiest Place or the Holy of Holies. This was where the ark would be kept and where God's presence would be. It was, of course, a very special place. Only one person on the entire earth could go into this room. This person was the High Priest. And he could go in only once a year.

#### **D. The Covering of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-14).** There were four layers of covering for the tabernacle.

1. The first layer was made of ten curtains of fine twined linen. They were made of blue and purple and scarlet strands, with cherubim embroidered on them. They were like a large sheet, which covered the tabernacle and overlapped at the side and the rear (not at the entrance).
2. The second layer of the covering was made of eleven curtains of goats' hair. They completely covered the first layer (it was a bit larger) and protected it.
3. The third layer of covering was made of rams' skins dyed red. This was even stronger than the goats' hair and provided even more protection.
4. The fourth and final layer of covering was made of porpoise skins. This was the final, best protection. Water may be able to penetrate rams' skins, but not porpoise skins.

#### **E. The Screen (or entrance) to the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:36-37)**

The entrance of the tabernacle (at the east end) is referred to as the screen. It was made of the same material as the first covering, i.e., of blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine twined linen of embroidered work. The

first covering of the tabernacle, the inner veil separating the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and the screen were all made of the same lovely material.

### **SUGGESTED APPLICATIONS TO CHOOSE FROM:**

- **God wants a home in our hearts.** Today there is no more tabernacle or temple. But God still desires a home. Where is God's home? Today, "the Lord dwells not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24; 7:48-49; 2 Chronicles 2:6). At that time when the children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness, God was happy with the tabernacle and He did dwell there. It was the closest that He could get to His people. But He really wanted to be much closer and still does. Today the Lord wants to make home in us, in our hearts.
- **We should let God be comfortable.** We all like to feel comfortable in our homes, as does the Lord. But sometimes we may do things that make the Lord feel uncomfortable (e.g., lying, stealing, cheating, disobeying our parents, etc.) A good guideline is the Ten Commandments. They show us what God likes and what He doesn't like, what makes Him comfortable and uncomfortable.
- **We need to come together and meet together.** Another name for the tabernacle was the "tent of meeting." We come together on the Lord's Day and sometimes during the weekdays in the homes. We should come together regularly, just like the children of Israel did.
- **We need to be willing to give.** God did not force His people to build a home for Him. The materials used to build the tabernacle were offered by God's people. They brought offerings willingly. We can willingly give our time and energy (clean the meeting hall, come to the children's meeting, help tidy our children's meeting room, offer some money that we have been given, help our parents, grandparents, teachers or siblings when we see there is a need). Today, as then, He will not force anyone. We must have a willing heart. We can pray that the Lord would keep our hearts soft and willing.
- **We should be beautiful on the inside.** From the outside, the tabernacle was not much to look at. Actually, porpoise skins are rough and tough and not very beautiful. But on the inside, God's house was very lovely with much gold and beautiful blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine twined linen. How lovely it must have been!  
We should not be so concerned with our physical beauty and dress. (Of course, we should be neat and well-groomed.) Many times we care too much about how we look, and perhaps even covet what other people have. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). What really counts is our heart. If we make the Lord feel happy, we will be beautiful on the inside. The Lord is not interested in a beautiful building with stained glass windows and steeples. Beautiful buildings may not honor Him. Our love for Him and for one another honors Him.
- **We need to be thorough and careful in following instructions.** God gave very specific instructions to Moses to build the tabernacle. What if those helping to build the tabernacle wrongly measured one side of a table, or miscounted the number of wooden boards needed? The tabernacle might be crooked and not function properly. When our parents or teachers ask us to do something, we should do it until it is complete and do it carefully.

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