

The Holy Tent



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 35:1–3; Exodus 35:4–36:7; Exodus 36:8–39:31; Exodus 40:1–38; John 1:14.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the cloud covered the Meeting Tent and the Glory of the LORD filled the Holy Tent. . . . So the cloud of the LORD was over [above] the Holy Tent during the day, and at night there was a fire in the cloud. So all the Israelites could see the cloud while they traveled” (Exodus 40:34, 38, ERV).

THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB that God's people had in Bible times was to live in close relationship with the Lord, to obey Him, and to show other people His love (Deuteronomy 4:5–8).

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve hid from God because their sin made them afraid. As sinners, we are afraid of God. Our sin keeps us from understanding His love. The good news is that God makes the first move to repair the broken relationship between Himself and us.

Our most important job is to show other people a correct “picture” of God and His love. When people come to God and believe that He loves them, they will give their lives to Him. Then they will obey what He tells them to do because they know His commandments are for their own good.

The Holy Tent showed the close relationship God wanted with people. God used the Holy Tent to help His people understand important Bible truth. The Holy Tent shows us how God saves sinners who come to Him in faith.



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THE SABBATH OF THE LORD (Exodus 35:1–3)

Some Bible thinkers say that the seventh-day Sabbath was only for the Jews. Or they say that the Jews first heard about the Sabbath at Sinai. But both of these ideas are false. God made the Sabbath holy in Eden (read Genesis 2:1–3). Also, the Jews kept the Sabbath long before Sinai (read Exodus 16:22–29). So, there's no question that the Sabbath was very much a part of life for the Hebrew people from the start.

What Bible truth did the people learn when they built the Holy Tent? Read Exodus 35:1–3 for the answer.

The Sabbath and its message was, is, and always will be about God: who He is and what His mighty works are. The Sabbath helps us remember that God made the skies and the earth. The Sabbath also helps us remember that God saves us. The Sabbath helps us think about God, who wants to live with His people. In this way, both the Sabbath and the Holy Tent help us to remember the same thing: God's love in our hearts and lives.

The Sabbath in the Old Testament teaches us five important Bible truths:

First, God made the skies and the earth. The Bible starts with this amazing announcement (Genesis 1:1). The Sabbath helps us remember God's work (Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:8–11). All other Bible truths come from this truth.

Second, the Savior will come. The Savior will win the fight against the snake (Satan) and evil.

Third, God will set up His Kingdom. The Sabbath helps us understand God's kingdom better.

Fourth, the Lord saves us. God's people announce that God is their Lord and Savior. His people understand that God in His mercy saves them because of their faith.

Fifth, God will judge everyone. People who fight against God and reject Him will have no future. The Lord gives everlasting life to the people who follow Him.

The Jews have a saying about the Sabbath: "Israel kept the Sabbath, but the Sabbath also kept Israel." Why is the Sabbath important to us?



The Savior will win the fight against the snake (Satan) and evil.

GOD'S SPECIAL END-TIME PEOPLE (Exodus 35:4–36:7)

Read Exodus 35:4–36:7. What important lessons are in these verses for us today?

Many precious materials were needed to build the Holy Tent. God's people gave the materials. Their hearts were filled with joy as they gave. The people gave gold, silver, brass, fine linen, precious stones, special cloths, wood, olive oil, perfumes, and many other needed things. People also donated their time and skills because many objects for the Holy Tent and its furniture needed to be made. Also, tailors wove clothes for the priests or spiritual leaders, who would work in the Holy Tent. Clothes also must be made for the high priest or top spiritual leader. His clothes included a chest covering and a special hat.

God blessed the Israelites with many gifts from the Egyptians when they left Egypt. Now God gave the Israelites the chance to give thank offerings for God's mercy and His mighty leadership. The hearts of the people were moved to do the work to God's glory.

The people gave so much stuff that the Lord told Moses, "The people have brought too much. We have more than we need to finish the work the LORD told us to do" (Exodus 36:5, ERV). So, Moses had to tell the people to stop donating (read Exodus 36:6, 7).

God's Spirit helped the people build the Holy Tent correctly. Bezalel, Aholiab, and other people were "filled . . . with the Spirit of God" (Exodus 35:31, NKJV). God gave them the wisdom, skills, and knowledge to do the work exactly the way God showed Moses.

From these verses, we see that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not just about spiritual gifts of love, joy, and peace. The gift of the Holy Spirit also includes skills and know-how. God gives His people this wisdom to get His work done. When we are filled with the Spirit, we are not filled with some special spiritual energy or magical power. To help His cause grow, God gives His followers skills to do His work and do it well.

What spiritual gifts did you get when you were filled with the Holy Spirit? Remember, the spiritual gifts can only live in us when we have the fruit of the Spirit (read Galatians 5:22, 23).



People also donated their time and skills because many objects for the Holy Tent and its furniture needed to be made.

BUILDING THE HOLY TENT (Exodus 36:8–39:31)

Read over Exodus 36:8–39:31. Why do you think God gave Moses such a clear plan to follow? What does this plan teach us about how God cares about every part of His work?

Moses carefully built the Holy Tent. He did everything God told him to do when he was on the mountain. The Bible tells us about the different parts of the building plan. There was (1) the Holy Tent with its different cloths, curtains, and parts (Exodus 36:8–38); (2) the ark (Exodus 37:1–9); (3) the special table for the holy bread (Exodus 37:10–16); (4) the lampstand (Exodus 37:17–24); (5) the altar of perfume (Exodus 37:25–29); (6) the altar of burnt offering (Exodus 38:1–7); (7) the bowl or pot for washing (Exodus 38:8); (8) the walled-in space (Exodus 38:9–20); and (9) the material used for the Holy Tent (Exodus 38:21–31). Exodus 39 continues with a discussion about the special clothes that the spiritual leaders wore.

The Holy Tent was an object lesson that showed God's whole plan to save sinners. The Holy Tent showed (1) how much God hates sin and what He will do to solve the sin problem, (2) that God saves sinners who confess their sins, (3) what will happen to evil people, and (4) that God will make a future for His people without evil or sin.

Each day the priests or spiritual leaders did work in the Holy Tent. This work showed how God will save sinners. God showed that He forgave sinners who were sorry for their sins and offered to save them. To get this gift of forgiveness, a sinner must offer a gift. The gift was an animal that must be killed. These animal offerings showed the future death of Jesus. The Savior's blood "makes our lives clean from all sin" (1 John 1:7, NLV). To get this gift, we must confess our sin and accept Jesus' holy life as our own (Psalm 32:1, 2). In this way, God showed sinners He forgave them, and they could rejoice that He saved them.

The priests also did special work each year on the Day of Atonement or the Day When God Removes All Sin. This work shows how God will solve the sin problem forever (Leviticus 16; John 1:29). Right now, Jesus works for us in heaven's temple (Hebrews 7:25). He will solve the sin problem (Daniel 7:13, 14, 22, 27; Daniel 8:14; Revelation 21:4).

People worshiped, praised, and thanked God at the Holy Tent. Worship is about growing our relationship with God, who invites us to fellowship with Him.



Right now, Jesus works for us in heaven's temple (Hebrews 7:25).

GOD IN THE HOLY TENT (Exodus 40:1–38)

What visible sign did God give Israel to show them that He was living with them? Read Exodus 40:1–38 for the answer.

The final chapter of the book of Exodus (Exodus 40) talks about the Holy Tent and the Ten Commandments.

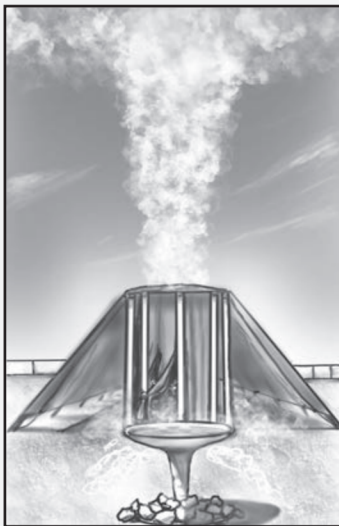
God fills the temple with His glory. God's glory is His love and holy life (Exodus 3:5; Exodus 33:18, 19). The glory is visible as the cloud. The book of Exodus ends with a discussion about how God leads His people in the cloud day and night. In a very powerful way, the Hebrews saw that God was real. More than that, they saw a visible sign that He led them in the cloud.

Moses set up the Holy Tent on the first day of the first month in the second year (Exodus 40:2, 17). Moses offered to God everything connected with the Holy Tent. That included Aaron and his sons, who were God's priests or spiritual leaders. Moses put special oil on them to show that they belonged to God (Exodus 40:9, 13–15). Moses went into the Most Holy Room, the Holy Room, and the walled space around the Holy Tent. Moses gave all these things to God and got the Holy Tent ready to be used for worship (also read Numbers 7:1). That was the only time Moses entered the Most Holy Room. After that, only the high priest entered it on the Day of Atonement or the Day When God Removed All Sin (Leviticus 16:2, 17).

Three times, the Bible says that God or His servant finished doing work: (1) after He made the skies and earth (Genesis 2:1–3), (2) after Moses finished building the Holy Tent (Exodus 40:33), and (3) after Solomon finished the temple (1 Kings 7:51). So, we see a connection between the time when God finished making the skies and earth and Israel's Holy Tent. This connection helps us think about the time when the Lord will live with the saved on the new earth in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is "the Tabernacle [temple] of God" (Revelation 21:2, 3, KJV; compare with Revelation 22:1–4).

God fills the Holy Tent with His glory (Exodus 40:34). So, the story ends in glory that started with Moses being born. The story continued with God's win over the Egyptian gods, the ten punishments, the escape from Egypt, the defeat of the Egyptian army, and God speaking His law on Sinai.

What are ways that you can know God is with you? Why is it important that you know when He is with you?



God fills the Holy Tent with His glory (Exodus 40:34).

JESUS LIVED AMONG US AS ONE OF US (John 1:14)

Jesus became a man and lived among us. How is His becoming a man compared to the Old Testament tabernacle or Holy Tent in the desert? Read John 1:14 for the answer.

Jesus became a man. We don't really understand how that happened. We will study this mystery when we get to heaven. John says that Jesus became a man to show that He lives with us in a real and visible way. Jesus on this earth in a body helps us remember that God in the Old Testament lived with the Israelites in the Holy Tent at Sinai. Later, God lived in the desert as the Israelites journeyed to the Promised Land.

After Jesus became human, He lived with people on this earth. This thought is amazing! The everlasting God came down to us, as one of us. God wants us to know that He truly is "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). "The name Immanuel means 'God with us' " (Matthew 1:23, NIV).

In Matthew 18:20, Jesus said that if two or three come together in His name, He will be there among them. Jesus is with His people in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus invites His followers to be in close relationship with Him: " 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him. And he will eat with me' " (Revelation 3:20, ICB).

Read Revelation 21:1–3. What Bible truth do these verses teach us?

The New Jerusalem will come down from heaven to earth. John announces, "I heard a loud voice coming from heaven. It [the voice] said, 'See! God's home is with men. He will live with them. They will be His people. God Himself will be with them. He will be their God' " (Revelation 21:3, NIV). There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22) because the whole city is the temple. The city is the same size in all its measurements: the sides of the city are as tall as they are wide and long. (The Most Holy Room in the Holy Tent also was the same size in all its measurements. So, this room was in the shape of a perfect square or cube, with all sides equal or the same.) We will live in this perfect city with God on an earth without sin, death, or suffering forever and ever.



Jesus on this earth in a body helps us remember that God in the Old Testament lived with the Israelites in the Holy Tent at Sinai. Later, God lived in the desert as the Israelites journeyed to the Promised Land.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pages 353–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Before the Holy Tent was built, God helped Israel escape from slavery in Egypt. Then God made a Promise with His people. This agreement was a relationship that was meant to continue forever. The Lord would be Israel’s God. They would be His people (Exodus 6:7). The law showed the people what God expected them to do and how to love each other. The Holy Tent was a meeting place. It was a place where God and humans came together. After God saved Israel and promised to be their God forever, the people could meet with God in the place where He chose to live among them.”—*Andrews Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, “Exodus” (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University press, 2020), page 226, adapted.

Ellen G. White says, “In the work done in the Holy Tent, and later in the temple, the people learned each day the important Bible truths about Jesus’ death and saving work. On the Day of Atonement or the Day When God Removes All Sin, the priests or spiritual leaders did a special work. This work helped the people think about the final work that would happen in the worldwide war between God and Satan. At that time, God will make all heaven and earth clean from sin and sinners.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 358, adapted.



“In the work done in the Holy Tent, and later in the temple, the people learned each day the important Bible truths about Jesus’ death and saving work.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Blood was an important part of the work done in the Holy Tent. What did the blood symbolize? What important Bible truths did all these offerings show God’s people?
- ❷ God came to live with us and die for us. What does this amazing gift teach us about God’s love? Also, what does this gift teach us about how much God wants to see us saved in His everlasting kingdom?
- ❸ Read Hebrews 8:1–6. What do these verses teach us about how the Holy Tent on earth showed us what Jesus is doing for us right now in heaven’s temple?

THE SABBATH'S WONDERFUL REWARD

Fernando Joaquim Ge joined a big company of builders in Mozambique. Fernando was a Seventh-day Adventist. So, the company agreed to let Fernando have his Saturdays off. But after three years, the company boss asked Fernando to go on a business trip on Saturday. Fernando told his boss, Alexander, to remember that he didn't work on Saturdays.

But at 5 a.m., Saturday morning, Alexander came to Fernando's house to drive him to Zimbabwe. When Fernando refused to go, Alexander told him not to come back to work until they had a face-to-face meeting.

Fernando and Alexander met many days later. Alexander told Fernando to stay at home for seven days with no pay. Alexander also gave Fernando three choices: (1) quit, (2) work on Saturdays, or (3) give up two days' pay for every Saturday that he missed work. Then Alexander told Fernando to give him his answer in writing after seven days.

Fernando wrote a ten-page letter about his decision. He wrote that he couldn't quit because he needed the job. He also wrote that he couldn't work on Saturdays because he must obey God. Fernando included many Bible verses about the Sabbath. Then he said that he was willing to accept a pay cut for every Saturday he missed work. He also was ready to make up Saturday work on Sundays. Alexander took the letter. Then he told Fernando to keep working while he talked about the letter with his team of managers.

A week later, Alexander called Fernando on a Sunday to come to his house. Fernando rode there on a public bus. Alexander told Fernando to drive a company car to a town 70 miles away to inspect a building. Fernando came back late that night. The public buses stopped running, so he slept at Alexander's house. The next Sunday, Alexander asked Fernando to take his mother out in the company car.

The next day, Alexander held a meeting. Alexander said, "Fernando accepted a pay cut because of his faith in God. But now we see that he is loyal to God. So, he doesn't need to work on Saturdays." Then Alexander gave Fernando the keys to a company car. Alexander said, "Use this car for all company business. You also may use it for your church business, too. And we will pay for the gas. We ask for only one thing. Please ask your pastor to pray for our company to be a success."

From that day in 2003 until today, Fernando hasn't had any Sabbath problems at work. The company car has been a blessing to the church, too. When people see the car, they remember that Fernando keeps the Sabbath.

Fernando says, "When we are loyal to God, He rewards us."

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Alexander gave Fernando the keys to a company car.