

# Building the Tabernacle

Exodus 25:1-31:11



Old Testament 4  
Part 1: God's People in the Desert

## SUNDAY MORNING

Old Testament 4 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Exodus 25:1-31:11; 35:1-40:38; Hebrews 5; 7:25-28; 8:1-6,9,10

### MEMORY WORK:

For all ages: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

### SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["The Tabernacle"](#)
- ["Our Tabernacles"](#)

### LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be scriptural.]
- [God's People and Joshua Bible fact cards](#) (provided under "O.T. 4 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)
- Apologetics Press' [Bible Timeline](#)
- "Summary of the Bible" from "[Kids Prep](#)" CD by Jeff Miller
- The Tabernacle A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, *not the lesson book*; Note on cards 2.2, 3.1, and 3.2 that the actual visual appearance and size of the cherubim is unknown)
- *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, Thomas Nelson, Inc. (DISCLAIMER: Not all of the material in this book will necessarily be scripturally accurate.)
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- Pictures or objects to illustrate linen, goat's hair, leather, a menorah, incense, round cakes of bread
- ["Inside the Tabernacle"](#) chart (provided in activity sheets)



## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: Worship is one way I show God that I love Him.

OLDER CHILDREN: God has a plan (design) for how He wants me to worship Him, just as He did for the Israelites in the Old Testament.

## LESSON STARTS HERE

### INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

Last week we learned about some special laws God gave His people. Today we are going to talk about a special place God told them to build for worship.

### INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Review last week's lesson.

After God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He gave Moses instructions for building a special tent where the Israelites would worship Him. God was very specific about how to build this big tent called the Tabernacle. As we study today's lesson, think about what it would have been like to help build the Tabernacle.

### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, some of the instructions God gave him were about a special place of worship for the Israelites. This special place would be called "the Tabernacle," or "tent of meeting." God knew that His people would need a place of worship and a definite plan of worship while they were moving from place to place so that they would be reminded to worship **Him** and **not** idols like the ones they had left behind in Egypt (Exodus 23:33). The Tabernacle would be in the middle of their camp, so it would remind the Israelites that God was always with them.
2. God also set aside the tribe of Levi (the tribe of Moses and his family) to take care of the Tabernacle and everything related to worship. Aaron, Moses' brother, was chosen by God to be the first High Priest. Only men from the tribe of Levi (Levites) were allowed to help with worship—and only certain ones were allowed in the Tabernacle of Meeting itself.
3. The Tabernacle was a portable, or movable, place of worship, i.e., a tent, because the Israelites would be moving around in the wilderness for a long time. The tent was about 45 feet long by 15 feet wide and was surrounded by an outer court made of curtains and poles.



**NOTE:** The Bible gives all the measurements for the Tabernacle in cubits instead of feet or yards (just as it does for Noah's ark). A cubit was the length of a man's arm from his elbow to the end of his middle finger, so the actual length of a cubit varied. Most resource books estimate the cubit to have been about 18 inches.

4. The outer court was about 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. The sides were made of seven-foot-long linen curtains hung from bronze poles. There were two very important objects in this outer court: the altar of burnt offering (about eight feet square and five feet high) and the bronze

**laver.** Every day the people brought sacrifices that were gifts to God. [The gifts were also signs of repentance.]



**Laver:** Large basin where the priests could wash their hands before and after offering sacrifices

5. The Tabernacle was divided into two rooms: the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The support beams of the Tabernacle were made of acacia wood and covered with gold. The top (roof) of the Tabernacle was made of four long curtains laid on top of one another: linen, goat's hair, ram's skin dyed red, and another type of animal skin (translations differ considerably). [The leather skins would have provided a waterproof covering for the other three coverings.]
6. Inside the Holy Place, or outer chamber, were three pieces of furniture, each covered in gold: the table of showbread, the altar of incense, and the lampstand.
7. The table of showbread was about three feet long, 18 inches wide, and two feet high. On each corner of the table was a gold ring. Poles were placed through the rings so that the table could be carried from place to place on the shoulders of the priests. Once a week, 12 cakes of bread were placed on this table. [These 12 loaves of bread represented the 12 Tribes of Israel who were supposed to be holy and dedicated to God.]
8. The altar of incense measured about 18 inches wide by 18 inches deep by 36 inches long. It had a horn and a gold ring on each corner so that it could also be put on poles and moved from place to place. Sweet-smelling incense was burned here to represent the prayers of the people going up to God (Revelation 5:8; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 2:15).
9. The lampstand or "menorah" was a **seven**-branched lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand provided light for the priests as they did their duties in the sanctuary.



**NOTE:** The number **seven** is used throughout the Bible and Hebrew literature to represent the idea of completeness or perfection.

10. Separating the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was a curtain (veil) made of blue, scarlet, and purple fabrics. This curtain represented the fact that under the Old Law (the law given to Moses), the people couldn't approach God directly in the Most Holy Place. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place—and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. (When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the Temple was split down the middle as a sign that God could be approached by followers of God at any time because of Jesus' sacrifice.)
11. Only one thing was inside the Most Holy Place: the Ark of the Covenant. It was a box about four feet long by two feet wide by two feet high; it was covered inside and out with gold. There were rings on the corners through which poles were put to carry the Ark. Only the Levites were allowed to carry the Ark of the Covenant (and the table of showbread and altar of incense), and only one family within the Levite tribe: the sons of Kohath. Each time the Ark was moved, the Levites in charge covered it with a special cloth. (The other furnishings of the tabernacle were moved in six covered wagons drawn by two oxen each.) **No one** but the High Priest was ever to look at the Ark of the Covenant; **no one was ever to touch it**. The lid of this special box was called "the mercy seat." On the mercy seat sat two cherubim whose wings were stretched toward the center of the lid.



**NOTE:** Hebrews chapters 9 and 10 tell us that the items of the Tabernacle were symbolic of various New Testament ideas. While there is disagreement among commentaries as to what each tabernacle item symbolized, some suggest the following:

- The “altar of burnt offerings” represents the sacrifice of Christ (cf. John 1:29).
- The “laver” was a symbol of cleansing connected with baptism in the New Testament (cf. Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5).
- In the holy place, the lampstand may represent the light of God’s Word (cf. Psalm 119:105,130).
- The “altar of incense” likely represents the prayers of the saints (cf. Luke 1:9-10; Revelation 5:8).
- The twelve loaves of bread on the table were called the showbread or “bread of presence,” perhaps signifying the presence of God, the “Bread of Life” (John 6:48), with His people. Some think the Lord’s Supper is also suggested.
- The sanctuary or “Holy Place” (where the altar of incense, the lampstand, and the table of showbread were placed) is thought to represent the Church in the New Testament (cf. Acts 15:16-17; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:15). Aaron and his sons, the priests, were allowed to go into the sanctuary. In the New Testament, all Christians are “priests” (1 Peter 2:5,9) and can approach God in worship as the priests did under the Law of Moses.
- Under the Law of Moses, the “Most Holy Place” (i.e., the part of the Tabernacle that had the Ark of the Covenant and that represents heaven) wherein God manifested His presence was only entered one time each year by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.
- The veil separating the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was torn in two by God at Jesus’ death, symbolizing the fact that those who have been washed by the blood of Jesus can now approach God directly through prayer.

[For more information, see Jackson, Wayne (2011), *A New Testament Commentary* (Stockton, CA: Christian Courier Publications), pp. 501-502.]

12. Initially, the Ark contained the two tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments. At some point, a jar of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded were also placed inside the ark (Hebrews 9:4).
13. God helped men with special talents to build the Tabernacle. All the materials used to build it were given by the Israelites. In fact, so much was given that Moses had to tell the people to stop bringing their gifts for the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:2; 36:3,5,6)!
14. According to Exodus 40:2,17, the Tabernacle was assembled at Mount Sinai at the beginning of their second year out of Egypt, 14 days before the Passover, to celebrate the first anniversary of the Exodus.
15. Just as God had special ways for the Jews to worship (according to the laws of the Old Testament), He has special ways for us to worship today (under the New Testament). He expects us to follow His commandments regarding worship just as carefully as the Israelites were supposed to.

## NOTES FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

Beginning with Adam, God required animal sacrifices as part of worship. The deaths of animals

reminded His people that their sins had consequences, and there was no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. The writer of Hebrews says the same thing about the New Covenant God has made with Christians. Jesus was the last sacrifice for our sins. His death was the most powerful reminder ever of how much our sins hurt God, and what He is willing to do to save us/to help us get to heaven. [The pattern for the tabernacle and the sacrifices that were made are all mentioned in the New Testament as having been patterns (or “types”) of things that would come when the Messiah, or Savior, came to Earth.]



**NOTE:** In the New Testament, the human body is described as a temporary tent (a tabernacle) which will be done away with after we leave this Earth (2 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Peter 1:13-14). It seems that the New Testament writers are alluding to the Old Testament Tabernacle in their symbolism.



**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the article titled “[The Holy Place, or the Most Holy Place?](#)” by Wayne Jackson on the Apologetics Press Web site for a response to an alleged discrepancy regarding location of the golden altar in the Tabernacle.

### PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

#### Ages 2-5:

- [“Building the Tabernacle Coloring Sheet”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- As the children come into class, have Lincoln logs and/or wooden blocks they can use to build “tabernacles.” Have pieces of cloth that they can use to make walls and roofs.
- As the children are building, talk to them about what the church building is made of, how long it took to build it. Then direct your comments toward the Israelites’ special place of worship, the tabernacle.

#### 1st-2nd Graders:

- [“Building the Tabernacle Crossword Puzzle”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- [“Building the Tabernacle Word Search”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Play “Bible Alphabet Soup”: Divide the class into small groups. Give each group identical sets of plastic letters. Ask review questions which require one-word answers. As soon as you ask a question, the groups are in a race to correctly spell out their answers with the plastic letters they have.

#### 3rd-4th Graders:

- [“Building the Tabernacle Crossword Puzzle”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- [“Building the Tabernacle Word Search”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- [“Building the Tabernacle Fill in the Blank”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Play “Bible Alphabet Soup”: Divide the class into small groups. Give each group identical sets of plastic letters. Ask review questions which require one-word answers. As soon as you ask a question, the groups are in a race to correctly spell out their answers with the plastic letters they

have.

- Have the children read the following:
  - *The Tabernacle*, by Rose Publishing (DISCLAIMER: p. 9—change “confession” to “baptism”)
  - Exodus chapters 25-27
  - Hebrews chapters 5, 7, and 8
- Advanced Bible Reader: Have the children read Exodus chapters 29-40, and chapter 32 if they did not do so this quarter. [This could be assigned Sunday, to be completed by Wednesday.] Print out copies of the Exodus chapters 31-35 and 36-40 quizzes from AP’s [Advanced Bible Reader](#) (ABR) site. Have each of the children take the quiz if they have yet to do so. If you have not already, outside of class, make ABR accounts for each of the children and put their answers into the ABR quiz for each child. Show them their scores in the next Bible class, and explain what ABR is.

## SONGS:

### “THE TABERNACLE”

Author: Jewel Kendrick

(Tune: “All Things Bright and Beautiful”)

(Words: See *Sing a Story: Volume I*, by Jewel Kendrick)

### “OUR TABERNACLES” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Jeff Miller

(Tune: “London Bridge is Falling Down”)

He-brews carried ‘round a tent,  
To and fro’, where e’er they went.  
We also car-ry a tent!  
It’s our bodies!

\*\*\* IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.



# Building the Tabernacle

Exodus 25:1-31:11



Old Testament 4  
Part 1: God's People in the Desert

## WEDNESDAY EVENING

Old Testament 4 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Exodus 25:1-31:11; 35:1-40:38; Hebrews 5; 7:25-28; 8:1-6,9,10

### MEMORY WORK:

For all ages: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

### SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF SUNDAY'S LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["The Tabernacle"](#)
- ["Our Tabernacles"](#)

### LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be scriptural.]
- [God's People and Joshua Bible fact cards](#) (provided under "O.T. 4 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)
- Apologetics Press' [Bible Timeline](#)
- "Summary of the Bible" from "[Kids Prep](#)" CD by Jeff Miller
- The Tabernacle A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, *not the lesson book*; Note on cards 2.2, 3.1, and 3.2 that the actual visual appearance and size of the cherubim is unknown)
- *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, Thomas Nelson, Inc. (DISCLAIMER: Not all of the material in this book will necessarily be scripturally accurate.)
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- Pictures or objects to illustrate linen, goat's hair, leather, a menorah, incense, round cakes of bread
- ["Inside the Tabernacle"](#) chart (provided in activity sheets)



## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: Worship is one way I show God that I love Him.

OLDER CHILDREN: God has a plan (design) for how He wants me to worship Him, just as He did for the Israelites in the Old Testament.


## INTRODUCTION:

Review [O.T. 4 Bible Facts Flashcards](#) (provided under “O.T. 4 Bible Facts” on curriculum Web site).

## POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday’s lesson (see [O.T. 4 Review Questions](#) for example questions).
2. YOUNGER CHILDREN: Help the children place the felt pieces (Betty Lukens’) for the tabernacle furnishings in their proper places. Remind them that God wants us to worship in different ways today than the Israelites worshipped in the Old Testament. Remind them that worship is one way in which we can show our love for God.

OLDER CHILDREN: Remind them that God wants us to worship in different ways today than the Israelites worshipped in the Old Testament. You can discuss with them the way the 12 tribes of Israel camped around the tabernacle (three tribes on each side), a pattern that God used to remind them that He was to be the center of everything they did, especially their worship. [You may want to mention that, although Jews today claim to still be God’s chosen people and claim to practice the laws of the Old Testament, they do not follow those laws, including those about the priesthood and sacrifices.]



**NOTE: The Sacrificial Offerings:** “The burnt offering was the only sacrifice entirely consumed upon the altar, and therefore it is sometimes called the whole offering. The grain offering was a tribute offering made in order to secure or maintain the divine favor, indicating that the fruits of a person’s labor should be dedicated to God. The peace offering was designed to provide expiation and permitted the one who made the offering to eat the meat of the sacrifice. It was often given on a joyous occasion. The sin offering was employed to remove impurity from the sanctuary. The trespass offering, also referred to as the guilt offering or the offering of reparation, was given for violation of the sanctity of the property of God or of another person, usually by use of a false oath” (*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, pp. 42-43).

## PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

See Sunday morning lesson.

\*\*\* IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.

