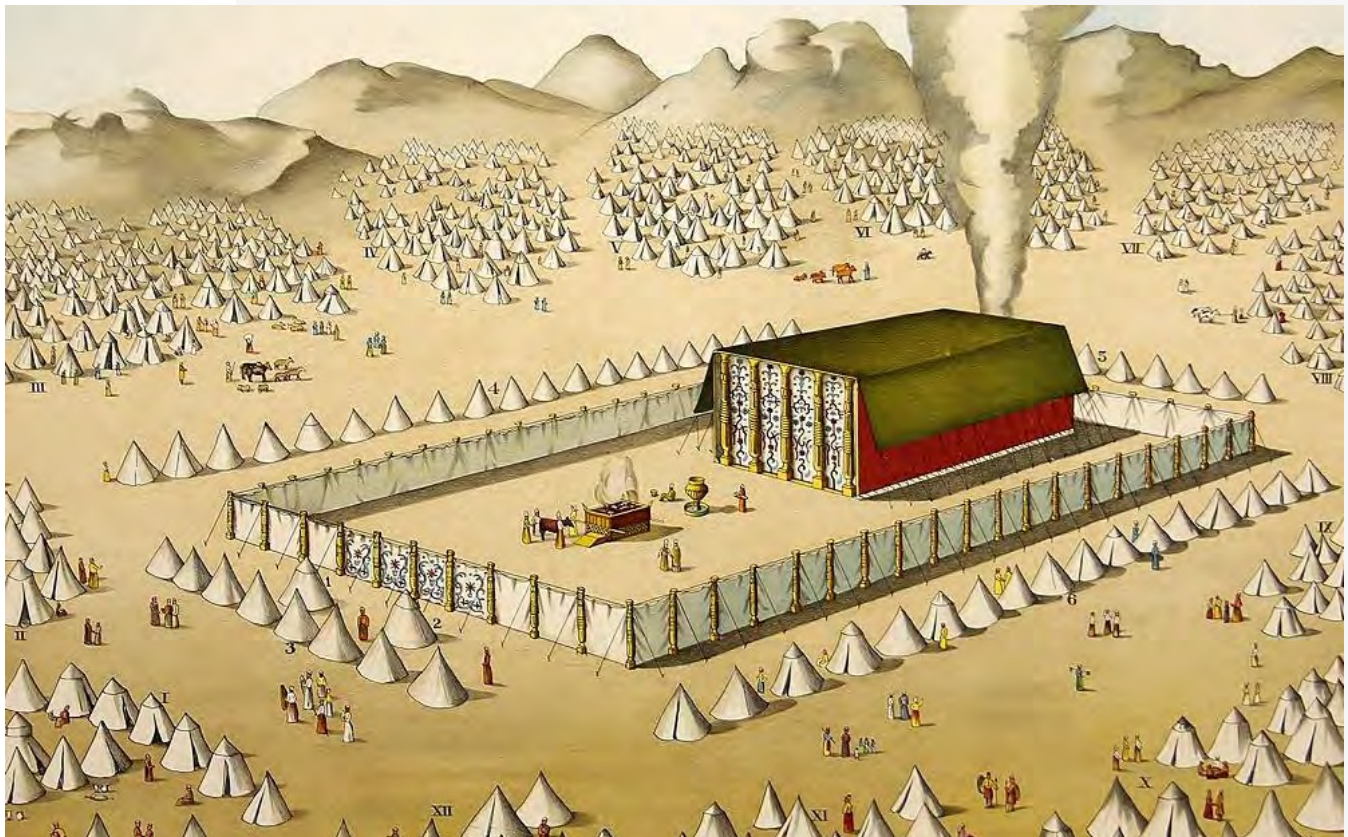


EXODUS 25:1-9

GOD'S TENT



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problems

How would you teach a class of 1-2 million people who are living in the desert, are constantly on the move, and have no education? To make it even harder, you have to teach them about God, and you have no Bible or any other books.

This was the situation God faced when he delivered Israel from their slavery in Egypt. What did he do to teach them about who he was? He designed and pitched a tent! "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8).

1. THE TABERNACLE IS A RESPONSE OF GOD

Truth Pictures

God used this large tent, and the items in it, as a huge visual aid. A visual aid is an object or graphic a teacher uses to help us understand her lesson (something like an infographic).

God's Tent was a visual aid to teach truth about himself to Israel. It was his infographic. In Hebrews 9:24, God calls this "holy place made with hands," a "copy of the true," or "pictures of truth." God pictured the truth to preach the truth. It is 'visual theology.'

Simple Pictures

If a child asked you, "What's Michigan like?" would you describe everything about it? It's history, geography, population, etc? No, you'd say, "It's like a mitten," and draw it. It's a memorable picture that provides a simple answer. It's a simple picture of a complicated truth.

God's Tent contained simple pictures of deep truths. When an Israelite child, asked, "What is God like?" His parent could take them by the hand to God's Tent and say, "I'll show you what God is like." It showed God and his way of salvation in a series of simple pictures. Instead of giving truth in sentence form, he gave it in sense form. He gave them things they could see, hear, touch, smell, and taste to teach them about himself and salvation.

Predictive Pictures

God designed his Tent and the items in it so that while it taught much, it also taught that there was much more that would be taught in the future when the Tent was no longer standing (Hebrews 9:8). It pictured truth for the present, but also predicted more truth for the future. God has shown the way of salvation, but there's a fuller showing of salvation to come.

APPLICATION

♥ That fuller showing of salvation was Jesus Christ. John tells us: "The Word became flesh and dwelt (literally 'tabernacled' or 'tented') among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). God's Old Testament Tent showed us his glory, his grace, and his truth; but his New Testament Tent, Jesus Christ, showed us even more of his glory, his grace, and his truth.

**GOD RESPONDS TO OUR NEEDS;
LET'S NEED HIM IN RESPONSE.**



What did God's Tent reveal about God's glory, grace, or truth?



2. THE TABERNACLE IS A REVELATION OF GOD

The Tabernacle revealed the character of God. It was Israel's 'catechism,' or 'Sunday school.'

God is King

Through the Exodus redemption from Egypt and the giving of the Law at Sinai, God said to Israel, "I am your King and you are My kingdom" (Ex. 19:6). But a King must have a palace. The Tent was God's portable royal palace. God's Tent was pitched in the middle of Israel's camp so that it could be seen by as many Israelites as possible. As the always-visible earthly palace of the heavenly King, it reminded Israel that God was its ultimate Governor, who was to be served and obeyed.

God is Holy

The location, design, and building materials of the Tabernacle all emphasized that a holy God lived among them. For example, there were six circles of holiness of decreasing size and increasing holiness as the worshipper moved through the camp towards the central Tabernacle:

- **Outside the camp:** For the Gentiles and the ritually unclean.
- **Inside the camp:** For those in covenant with God and who were ritually clean.
- **Inner ring of the camp:** Levites camped in a circle around the Tent, acting as a buffer.
- **The Tent's courtyard:** Dominated by priests from Aaron's family.
- **The Holy Place Tent:** Only the priests could enter here.
- **The Holy of Holies:** God lived here in a cloud of glory and only the High Priest could enter and that only once a year.

Why these circles of ever-decreasing size, and ever-increasing restriction? Because God is holy, and the nearer to God we get the holier we must become.

This message was reinforced by the materials used in the construction of the Tent. A common metal, brass, was used for everything connected with the outer court and its furnishings. As we get nearer to the Most Holy Place, the materials change to silver, then to gold, then to the fine gold. These graded distinctions again emphasize the immaculate holiness of God. The closer we get to God's dwelling, the more precious the metal.

God is Savior

The Tent demonstrated how sinners may approach a holy God — through a divinely appointed priesthood offering divinely appointed sacrifices. The first thing an Israelite saw when they went into the Tabernacle was a huge bronze altar of sacrifice. Wherever the Israelites looked in the Tabernacle, they saw blood: the blood of bulls, the blood of goats, and the blood of lambs; blood poured, blood sprinkled, and blood spattered; blood on the altar, blood on the priests, and blood on the floor. Whatever else the Israelites knew, they knew that God could only be approached via blood. God accepted them in his presence through sacrificial blood.



God is Beautiful

God's beauty is proclaimed by the Tabernacle's impressive artistry. The gold, silver and brass, the fine linen curtains, and the elaborately embroidered veils, make the sanctuary a place of glory and of beauty. In the Holy Place, the air is fragrant with the sweet aroma of burning incense from a golden altar. A golden lamp casts soft light upon an ornate golden table. There are gold-plated wooden supports from which hang deep blue curtains exquisitely embroidered with heavenly cherubim. Then, a step away, the heartbeat of it all, the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place, from which shines a mysterious, other-worldly cloudy light. Everything says, "God is so, so beautiful!"

APPLICATION

♥ Worship Jesus Christ who is God's greatest Tent (John 1:14). There we see full glory, full grace, and full truth. There we see the full majesty, holiness, salvation, and beauty of God.

♥ Put your faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. In the Old Testament, God was pointing to the Tabernacle and saying, "This is a picture of how I save sinners." In the New Testament era, God is pointing to Christ and saying, "This is how I save sinners." He is the divinely-appointed priest who offered the divinely-appointed sacrifice. He opened up a way of access by which sinners can approach, meet with, and fellowship with God.

♥ The Christian is also a Tent of God, a dwelling place of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-20). As God takes up residence in each Christian, His majesty, holiness, salvation and beauty are to be increasingly seen

♥ We look forward to heaven as the ultimate fulfilment of this picture, the place where we shall see the majesty, holiness, salvation and beauty of God and one another in their fulness. "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God (Rev. 21:3).

WE WANT TO RUN FROM GOD,
BUT GOD WANTS TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US



God wants to show himself to us.
But does he want to be with us?



3. THE TABERNACLE IS A RESIDENCE OF GOD

God lives with us

Before the first sin, God was present everywhere and met with Adam and Eve anywhere. Everywhere and anywhere were sacred. God was accessible at any time and in any place. But sin alienated our first parents from God and banished them from God's friendly presence (Genesis 3:22-24).

The book of Genesis tells us that the way back into God's gracious presence was through individuals sacrificing on altars at special places. That went on for many years – God meeting with individual families through sacrifice (e.g. Gen. 4:3-5; Gen. 35:6-15)

Because Israel had grown into a great nation, God instructed Moses to build one large tent, the Tabernacle, in which Israel could approach him in a united and organized manner. This is why the Tabernacle is frequently called 'the Tent of Meeting' (Ex. 38:8, 30). It was God's way of living in the midst of Israel and meeting with Israel. "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel" (Ex. 25:22).

God lives like us

Because Israel lived in tents, God lived in a tent. Like the people's tents, his Tent had a couple of rooms and a fireplace. He lived with them, and he lived like them. He came right down to their level and lived in the desert as they did in tents like they did. This was an incredible privilege for Israel. God living with them was amazing enough, but God living like them was awesome.

APPLICATION

♥ The Tent said, "God lives with us and lives like us." But this was only a shadow of good things to come (Heb. 10:1). The good thing to come was Jesus. In Jesus, God lived with us and like us in an even more astounding manner. He was Immanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:23). He was "the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man" (Heb. 8:2). He camped among us, full of grace and truth! Let our mouths be full of praise and thanks.

♥ If you want to meet with God, Jesus is the only place in the universe you can do this. He is our sacred space, our sanctuary, our Tabernacle (Mk.14:58). Through Christ we can, Eden-like, meet God anywhere and everywhere (Jn.4:23-24).

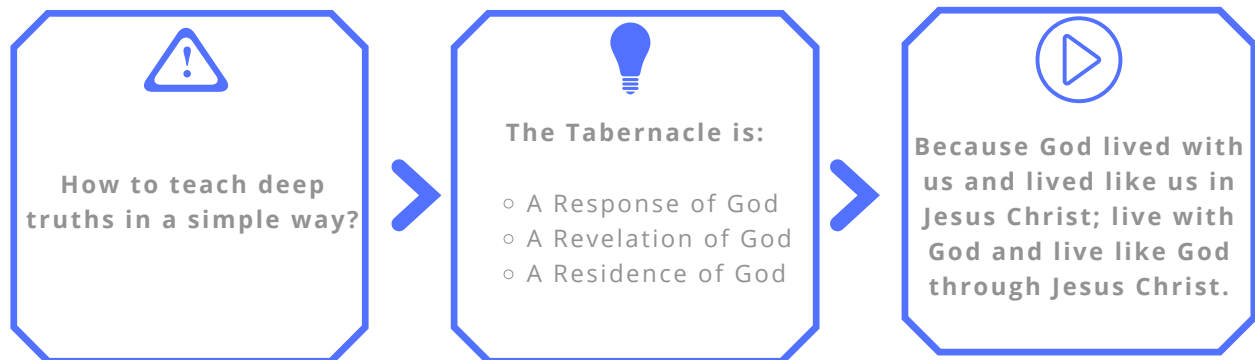
♥ We look forward to heaven as the ultimate fulfilment of the Tabernacle (Heb. 9:24). God will live with us and we will live with God. God will not only live like us, we will live like God.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).

GOD LIVED WITH US AND LIKE US,
SO WE CAN LIVE WITH AND LIKE GOD.



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Immanuel, I praise you for responding to my spiritual needs by revealing yourself to me in Christ and residing with me through Christ.

FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [Visual Theology: The Tabernacle](#) by Tim Challies
- [God's Mobile Home](#) by David Murray (for kids).
- [Tabernacle Resources](#)
- [Christ and the Tent in the Wilderness](#)

Books

- [The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation](#) by Dan Hays.
- [God Dwells Among Us](#) by G. K. Beale
- [God in our Midst](#) by Daniel Hyde
- [Rose Guide to the Tabernacle](#) (for kids)

Discussion Questions

1. What other "visual aids" did God use to teach his people in the Bible?
2. What does God's use of visual aids tell us about God?
3. What do you find beautiful about God and his way of salvation?
4. What are the parallels between the Tabernacle and Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14).
5. How does being a Temple of God change your life (1 Cor. 6:19-20)?
6. Think of how God lived like us in Jesus Christ.
7. How does this teaching about the Tabernacle change your view of heaven (Rev. 21:3-4)?

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VISUAL THEOLOGY

EXODUS 25:1-9

GOD'S TENT

"LORD JESUS, I PRAISE YOU FOR RESPONDING TO MY SPIRITUAL NEEDS BY REVEALING YOURSELF TO ME IN CHRIST AND RESIDING WITH ME JESUS CHRIST."



How to teach deep truths in a simple way?

Biblical answer?



Because God lived with us and lived like us in Jesus Christ, live with God and live like God through Jesus Christ.



The Tabernacle is a Response of God

- Truth Pictures
- Simple Pictures
- Predictive Pictures

GOD RESPONDS TO OUR NEEDS; LETS NEED HIM IN RESPONSE.

What did it reveal?



The Tabernacle is a Revelation of God

- God is King
- God is Holy
- God is Savior
- God is Beautiful

WE WANT TO RUN FROM GOD BUT GOD WANTS TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US

Does he want to be with us?



The Tabernacle is a Residence of God

- God lives with us
- God lives like us

GOD LIVED WITH US AND LIKE US SO WE CAN LIVE WITH AND LIKE GOD

Action?

