

God Instructs Moses Regarding the Tabernacle

The Bible Study

What you will need:

- Bibles in a modern translation, pens and note pads
- The altar stone - paint a symbol of the two stones containing the Ten Commandments.
- Handouts of the Ten Commandments (See picture and reference at end of this study).



Pattern for the Tabernacle

He Dwells Among Us

Exodus 21-40

"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." Exodus 25:8-9 (NIV)

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14 (NIV)

See if the group can list the Ten Commandments – (brainstorm)

Exodus 21-40— Read these chapters at home—it's worth doing.

The last twenty chapters of Exodus are filled with instructions about the religious and community life of the people God chose to be His holy nation and His kingdom of priests. The shaping of this nation would influence the world for the rest of time. Think of the laws of your nation. Are they based on the principles of the Ten Commandments and the social laws laid out for the nation of Israel? Chapter 21 speaks to the fair treatment of servants.

- Have you ever heard the term "an eye for an eye" used?
- What did Jesus say about this? (Matthew 5)

The first part of chapter 22 deals with issues about personal property and restitution. The second part of the chapter deals with social responsibilities. It calls for righteousness, justice, and mercy toward others and holiness toward the Lord. Chapter 23, like the two previous chapters, is a commentary and expansion of the Ten Commandments.

In chapter 24 we see God's invitation to Aaron and his sons along with 70 of the elders. They were allowed to worship at a distance. Only Moses could approach. The rest of the people were not allowed access. Moses met with the people and told them what God said. The people agreed to accept and obey God's commands. Moses set up an altar. Sacrifice was made. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar and the other half on the people to seal the covenant.

Moses prepared to go higher up the mountain into God's presence. He took Joshua with him part of the way. He left Aaron and Hur in charge of hearing the disputes of the people. Remember how Aaron and Hur held up the arms of Moses while he interceded for the battle against the Amalekites? Joshua was the leader of the battle. These three men again figure in to the story in a significant way. "When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights." Exodus 24:15-18 (NIV)

- Note again how the "glory" of the Lord is described
- What other 40 days and 40 night events are found in the Bible?

Chapters 25 to 31 deal with the design and plans for the Tabernacle, the furnishings of the Tabernacle and the priests and people who would serve in the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle would become the focus point of the organization of the mass of people as they journeyed through the wilderness to reach the Promised Land.

Chapter 26 describes the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was divided into two main areas, called the Holy place and the Holy of Holies. Chapter 27 describes the courtyard where the Altar of Burnt Offerings resided. Chapter 28 deals with the priestly garments. Chapter 29 speaks about the consecration of the priests so that they could work on behalf of God and the people. In chapter 30 we learn about the Altar of Incense, the Basin for Washing, the Atonement Money, the Anointing Oil and the

Incense. God even had the craftsmen in mind that could do the job.

God concluded the meeting with Moses with more instructions regarding the Sabbath. "It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested." (31:17) From verse 18 we learn that the stone tablets had been inscribed by the finger of God. This indicates His care and desire for a personal relationship with His covenant people.

Meanwhile back at the camp fear and sin were taking hold of the people who had just promised to love, trust and obey God and God alone. It is amazing how quickly people change or go back on their promises to God. When Moses went up into the mountain to meet with God the chosen people had only been on their journey two months. Moses was gone for forty days, more than half the time he had been their leader. He left Aaron and Hur in charge of the people. At some point in the forty day period the people began to doubt and fear took hold in their hearts. They approached Aaron and demanded that he give them some kind of assurance. The worship of a God who was invisible was too new to the people. The worship of God and God alone was a difficult concept for them to grasp and trust. Aaron instructed the people to take the gold earrings that the women and children wore and bring them to him. One of the reasons people wore earrings and other types of jewellery were as amulets, charms or protections against evil. Jewellery was also a show of wealth and position. It was not an easy thing to give up one's jewellery. Aaron took the earring offering and made an idol in the shape of a calf. Calf idols were familiar sights to the people of Israel and to the people of the land.

God sent Moses back down the mountain to deal with the people. When God threatens to destroy the corrupted people, Moses intercedes on their behalf. However when Moses sees the people wildly dancing and partying before the idol, he grew so angry he threw down the stone tablets and broke them to pieces. He took the calf idol and burned it, ground it to dust and put it into the water forcing the people to drink it. Moses rallied the Levites instructing them to kill those who were leading the rebellion and idolatry. Moses returned to the mountain to intercede for the remaining Israelites.

Chapter 33 describes the remorse of the people and the response of God while they waited on God. Moses continues to be the mediator between the holy God and the stiff necked people. A "tent of meeting" was set up outside the camp where Moses would go each day to meet with God. The people would watch as Moses entered the tent. The pillar of cloud would descend and remain at the entrance to the tent. While this happened the people worshipped God and waited. The second half of this chapter is beautiful in its significance. Moses asked the Lord to go with them or not to send them. God expressed his pleasure with Moses. Moses requests to see the Glory of the Lord.

Here is the Lord's response to Moses. "And the LORD said, 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.' Then the LORD said, 'There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.'" Exodus 33:19-23 (NIV)

We read more of the details of the encounter in chapter 34. Noting that the meeting took place early in the morning and that Moses was instructed to bring stone tablets to replace the ones he had smashed. Several of God's instructions emphasized the importance of rejecting all kinds of idolatry. God identifies His name as "Jealous" and identifies His nature in similar terms. This is a positive jealousy denoting protectiveness rather than envy. It comes from pure intentions rather than evil intentions. After Moses spends another 40 days on the mountain with God, he returned to the camp and his face was glowing. Even Aaron was afraid to approach him.

Chapters 35 through 40 deal with the assembly of the Tabernacle and Moses communicating the message of God to the people. In chapter 40 the Tabernacle is finished and dedicated. At the dedication the Glory of the Lord fills the Tabernacle and not even Moses could enter. Exodus ends with a triumphant note of God's blessing on the people as they are finally prepared to continue their journey to the Promised Land. God and Moses had a lot of work left with this challenging and contentious mob of people, but they were well on their way to becoming the holy people of God, a kingdom of priests, set apart for God's purpose.

We too are on a journey. It is a spiritual journey that takes us from the bondage and slavery to sin to the promised freedom as the chosen people of God who live for Him. We have a lot of things to unlearn as well as a lot to learn. We take this journey one step at a time. God writes His law upon our hearts and He dwells within us. We are His Temple and Tabernacle. Pay attention to the significant "markers" or memorial altars in your life which remind you of how far you have travelled on this journey and the lessons you have learned. We behold the Glory of God as revealed to us through Jesus Christ His Son. His blessing is ours.

Give each group member a copy of the two stone tablets.

God

- 1: Do not worship any other gods
- 2: Do not make any idols
- 3: Do not misuse the name of God
- 4: Keep the Sabbath holy

Man

- 5: Honour your father and mother
- 6: Do not murder
- 7: Do not commit adultery
- 8: Do not steal
- 9: Do not lie
- 10: Do not covet