

For GC Discussion

- What implications does the teaching of the tabernacle and God's presence among His people have for us today?
- What response does the truth of the mercy seat/propitiation bring in our hearts and lives?
- How can we endeavour to stay pure and live lives full of good works that others would see the change in us?

Next Week: we will study the instructions God gave for the priesthood and completion of the tabernacle..

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to '**Better is one day**' by Matt Redman. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 10: The Tabernacle

Exodus Chapters 25-27

This Weeks Summary

This week we see the initial instructions for the creation of the tabernacle - the visible representation of God's presence among His people, and the pattern for their ongoing worship.

For Study:

The following verses all have to do with the major subject areas symbolised in the tabernacle.

The Throne of God:

Psalm 11:4
Isaiah 6:1-8
Acts 7:46-50
Revelation 20:11-21:7

The Mercy Seat/Propitiation:

Romans 3:21-26
Hebrews 9:1-15
1 John 2:1-2, 4:9-11

Purity:

Psalm 51:1-10
Mark 7:1-23
2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

Light:

Matthew 5:13-16
Ephesians 5:1-14

This week we saw the initial instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle in the midst of the desert - there is more to come, and later we find out a bit more of what the tabernacle housed, but for now, here are some of the symbols that we find in this God-given place for worship:

A Copy of Heaven

The symbolism of the tabernacle in its entirety is explained for us in the book of Hebrews. A couple of times (8:5 & 9:23) the writer explains that the tabernacle was a 'copy' of that which is in heaven. So the big picture of the tabernacle was that it was a representation of a very real heavenly throne room where God rules and reigns over the universe. There He is worshiped and adored by angels, and in that same place He will always be adored not just by angels but by all of His redeemed people for all eternity. There is no overstating just how significant this representation really is - this is the presence of the God of all creation in the middle of His chosen, special people in the middle of the desert.

The Merciful Presence of God

As we saw above, one of the big pictures of the tabernacle was that it was the visible representation of God's presence amongst His people, and the place where that was manifest was the very inner room of the tabernacle - the holy of holies. In this place was the symbol of the very throne of God, surrounded by angels - the Ark of the Covenant which for now was to contain the law of God - the declaration of His Kingly rule over His people. We find out quickly though by the name given this part of the tabernacle that this wasn't just a place where anyone could wander in when they wanted - far from it. This was called the 'mercy seat' (also similar to the word propitiation we find in the New Testament. This was the symbol of a throne so holy that we as sinful human beings couldn't approach without mercy being extended, and something being done about our sin. In fact, in the Old Testament this place just wasn't accessible at all to God's people - all they were allowed was for the High Priest to enter once a year to atone for the sins of the people. The holy of holies reminds us that this isn't a God we come before lightly - He isn't a God we could come before at all if he hadn't intervened for us. Thankfully another item of the tabernacle furniture speaks to us of the answer God has given to this problem.

The Altar of Sacrifice

Though it wasn't exclusively about this, the bronze altar was the symbol of the place where our sins would be finally dealt with, and the way would

be made open for us to come boldly into the holy of holies. For now it was a picture to the people of their sinfulness and the fact that blood had to be shed every time they sinned and fell short of the standard that God had set them. One day though, Jesus would come into the world and not be killed on a bronze altar, but on a wooden cross, and in doing so would not just cover over God's anger at sin until the next time we messed up, but He dealt with that anger forever - that's what propitiation is all about - God's wrath against us as sinful people was satisfied in Jesus as He bore our sins in His body. It's that once for all payment that now frees us to offer God the sacrifices that He so rightly deserves - Jesus death sanctifies our worship so that we can now offer our bodies to God as an offering that is holy and acceptable to God. As a declaration of our love, commitment and gratitude to our God we now lay ourselves on the altar to be used by Him however He sees fit.

Bread of Purity

Just as we've seen in the feast of passover, God calls His people not just to eat unleavened bread during a feast that would take place every year, but to offer it to Him constantly as a perpetual reminder of the symbolism of this particular item. As we've seen before, the symbolism of leaven was of sin that can creep in, and even only a small amount can spread and infiltrate every part of our lives, and so Jesus urges His disciples to beware of, and to rid themselves of this leaven. Therefore this perpetual offering of unleavened bread was a constant reminder that the lives of God's people should be inwardly pure. Of course, as with the altar, Jesus was the only one who could truly live up to this requirement, and so He gave Himself as the Bread of Life that we might feast on Him, and having been born again could truly offer a pure offering to God.

Light of the World

The last piece of symbolism we will look at in this chapter is the lampstand. As with the bread, the light was to be a perpetual offering from God's people to their King, and again it's Jesus that makes it clear what the symbolism of light is. He told us to let the light that God has put within us shine out for all the world to see. Don't hide it away but rather let all men see your good works that they might glorify God, and that's the symbolism. Not only does God require inward purity from His people, He wants us to shine out His love and grace to a watching world and in doing so we demonstrate the transforming power of the Gospel and can become a stepping stone to others coming and experiencing that same transformation for themselves as they too put their faith in Christ.