

The NRSV translates the word *kaporet*, which means “lid” in Hebrew as “mercy seat” as it struggles to express the word in its context. The cover of this central piece of furniture was the place where the blood of a sacrificed animal would be spread on the Day of Atonement. It was to be a sign of dependence on God for covering over the sins of Israel as Leviticus describes. Its image is one of a throne suitable for heaven, hence the idea of *mercy seat*. Inside the chest was the “testimony” of God’s saving love and the covenant guidelines for living in God’s presence.



Study Notes

Q.6 How did the Tabernacle as a whole symbolize the meeting point between heaven and earth for the people?

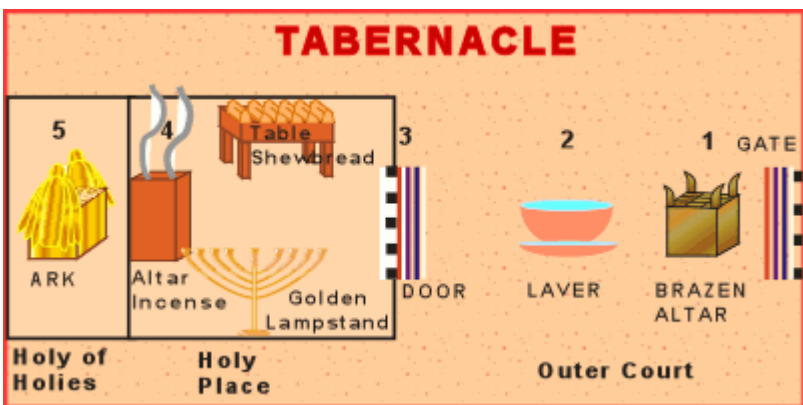
Q.7 How does the Tabernacle and Temple foreshadow the ‘place’ where all can now meet with and find peace with God by faith– in Christ? (read Hebrews ch. 9)

Gerard Kelly, author and lecturer in the UK says people today: *“are not looking for a set of propositions to assent to; they are looking for a place to live. If Christianity is to work for them, it must become their home- the place of security from which the world is explored and understood. They will not only bring their “souls” or brains into the household but indeed the whole of their lives- the good, the bad and the ugly.*

Q.8 How might this aspect of the Gospel message appeal to your neighbours? To other situations in the world today?

READ & REFLECT on the following passages of Scripture to finish:

⇒ John 1:14; 14:23; 1 Tim. 2:5,6; Rev. 21:3



A resource explaining the different elements of the Tabernacle and its furnishings is available on our website at www.stmichaelsnc.org.au

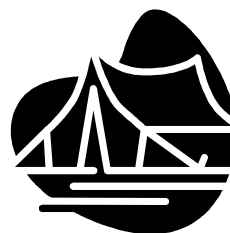
the book of exodus

#8 God Goes Camping—Exodus 25

Exodus 25:8-9

“... 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.”

The God of Freedom



The Israelites will soon be entering the land of Canaan promised to them. But before they get there as they wander in the desert, they have much to learn about having God at the centre of their lives. With the covenant and its guidelines now in place to govern the people’s understanding of how to live with God in their midst, God now pitches His tent among them.

Warm up

Q.1 Been camping in tents recently? What are the benefits and drawbacks of spending a long stay in a tent city?

Q.2 What is it that brings people together your local community?

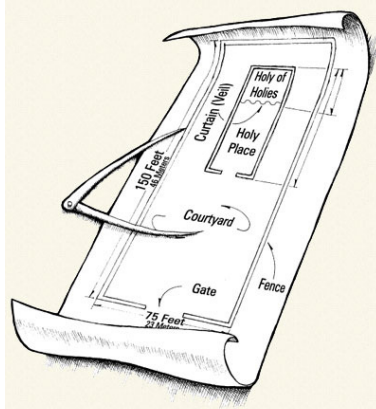
- The mayor and the town hall?
- A group of like-minded neighbours?
- A local park or lake?
- other?

Special Notes

Tabernacle (Ex. 25:9) means tent, dwelling or residence. The **tabernacle differentiates Yahweh from other deities worshipped in ancient times**. E.g. people climbed ziggurats to meet the gods of heaven half-way.



By contrast, the God of Israel is symbolized as coming down to earth. He pitches a tent right among the people and mediates a way for humans to connect with heaven. So too, the tabernacle is different to the worship of those **in Egypt**. God did not represent himself by man-made figures. This is the lesson learned in Chapter 32 of Exodus when the impatient Israelites fashioned a golden calf as their god to guide and save them. By contrast, the tabernacle and the associated covenant and commandments were not symbols that contained God or fit him into a limited image.



Exodus 25:1-9—Make God Welcome

The actual construction of the tabernacle is described in chapter 35. Up until now in our study of Exodus God is a journeying God; one who travels ahead of and with his people.



Q. 3 What development in the relationship between God and Israel might the construction of the tabernacle have indicated to the people?

v.2 God calls for voluntary giving

"Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give."

Q.4 What do you think God is searching for in the request for gifts? (see Exod. 35;1 Chronicles 29; 2 Corinthians 9:7)

NB: for a clue to where the exotic and expensive materials the people were called to give would come from see Gen. 15:14 & Exod.12:36.

Clearly, such a cache of treasures would have been alluring. Would the people use them to make a new home for God's presence in their midst?

v.8 God desires to live in the midst of his people

"... have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."

The literal sense of this verse is: **make a holy place so that I can come and make my home right in the middle of everyone.**

Q.5 How might the centrality and function of the tabernacle, and then later the temples, point forward to Christ? (see box below)

vss. 17,21,22 God bridges the gap between us and Him

"Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites."

NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO NOTE:

- John 1:14 - Christ "tabernacled" or "dwelt"
- Romans 3:25 - propitiation or "mercy seat" illustrates the atoning work of Christ on the cross
- Titus 3:5 - the laver (wash basin)
- Revelation 8:3-5 - golden incense altar
- Revelation 13:6; 15:5 - heavenly tabernacle
- Practically all features of the Tabernacle/Temple are found in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews