

Life Lesson 30
The Tabernacle
Text: Exodus 3 & 4

Introduction

(A photograph of a person is a helpful illustration for this lesson.)

What do I have here? (Show picture, of Ruth, for instance) Is this Ruth? No, if I told this thing right here to come and pick up the toys, it would just sit there and do nothing. That's because it isn't Ruth. It's a picture of Ruth.

This picture would be no good at all for picking up toys, but it's useful in other ways. By looking at this picture, you can tell what Ruth looks like. If someone had never seen Ruth, he wouldn't know what she looked like. If he saw a picture of her first, though, he would recognize her when he saw her.

This morning we will be studying about the tabernacle God commanded the children of Israel to build in the desert. The tabernacle was kind of a portable church. It was more than that, though. It was a picture of Jesus. It did for the Israelites (and for us, too) what the picture I have here of Ruth does for us. It helped them see what Jesus was like, so that they would recognize Him when they saw Him.

Let's take a look at this picture of Jesus we find in Exodus.

The Story

After the Israelites had repented of their sin with the golden calf, God told them to bring offerings of jewelry and gold and fine cloth to be used in the tabernacle. They were ashamed of the way they had been acting and were grateful for God's forgiveness. Out of the love of their hearts they gladly brought their best. They had plenty, because the Egyptians had given them lots

of jewels and treasures before they left Egypt. Everyone brought gifts until there was enough and more than enough for the tabernacle. Moses had to tell them, "That's enough. Don't bring any more."

God gave Moses exact instructions for making the tabernacle. He appointed a gifted man named Bezaleel to be in charge of the building. After much hard work the tabernacle was finished at last. Let's pretend we are walking up to take a look at the newly finished tabernacle.

The first thing we would come to is the fence around it. It was about as high as this room, about seven and half feet, and was made of pure white linen. Can you think how this clean white fence was a picture of Christ? Just as the fence was white with no markings at all, Jesus was perfect without any sin at all. The first glimpse of the tabernacle showed Jesus= holiness.

It also showed the need of the people, because they were not holy at all. They could not come into the tabernacle because they were barred by the white fence. It stretched all the way around the tabernacle on three sides, but on the fourth side there was a door, just one door in all the fence.

We are barred from Heaven, from God's presence, by sin. We aren't good enough for God. Jesus came and lived a perfect life so that He could pay for our sins and provide a way into Heaven. There was only one door into the tabernacle, and there is only one of salvation, through Jesus.

The gate of the fence wasn't white, but blue, red, and purple, beautifully embroidered. The blue color makes us think of Heaven. It's to remind us that Jesus came from Heaven, and that He is God. The purple is the color of royalty. It shows that He is to be our King, our ruler

and master. If you are saved, Jesus is your king, the one in control of your life. The red was to tell of the blood Jesus would shed on the cross to save His people from their sin.

The first thing we would see if we walked through the gate would be an altar. It was made of boards covered with brass. The Israelite brought an animal for an offering every time they came into the tabernacle. It would be sacrificed on the altar. That's because God says that the wages of sin is death. The blood of the animals didn't take away the sin of the Israelites, but it was another picture that Jesus would come and shed His blood on the cross. He would pay the death penalty for the sin of His people.

Next we would see something that looked like a big washing bowl, called a laver. It was made of brass, too. Brass always stood for judgement. The priest had to wash in the brass laver before he could go into the tabernacle, or he would die. That's a picture of how we can't go into God's presence without first being washed, being forgiven of our sins. We can't go to Heaven unless we are saved.

We could see the tent inside the courtyard. The outside of the tabernacle-tent wasn't pretty. It was made of badger skins. When Jesus came to earth, he wasn't especially handsome or attractive, either.

Underneath the badger skins was a covering of ram skins that were dyed red. They represented the blood of Christ. The next layer was a covering of white goat hair, which reminds us that Jesus was pure, without sin. The inner covering was beautiful, with blue, purple, red and white embroidery on the curtain. It made the ceiling of the tabernacle.

If we were a priest, we could go in and see the inside of the tabernacle. We would probably stop in awe and look at the colorful ceiling and at the walls, which were made with gold panels.

There were two rooms -- the holy place where the priests could go was the first. Behind a heavy curtain there was the Holy of Holies where only the high priest could go in.

The holy place had three pieces of furniture in it. There was a table of shewbread, a golden candlestick, and a golden altar of incense.. Can you think of how these are a picture of Jesus? He is "the bread of life," and "the light of the world." The altar where sweet perfume was offered makes us think of His sweet sacrifice for us.

Once a year the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies. He would take some blood from the brass altar to offer for the sins of the people. There was only one thing in the Holy of Holies. It was the Ark of the Covenant. It looked like a golden chest with a golden lid. It held the Ten Commandments God wrote on stone. It also had Aaron's rod and a dish of manna in it.

The lid to the box was called the mercy seat. Two special angels made of gold, called cherubim, sat on the mercy seat.

The high priest would sprinkle on the blood from the brass altar, showing that one day the Lamb of God would come and give His life and shed His blood. Jesus was like the high priest, too, because he came to God and offered His own blood.

The Life Lesson

The tabernacle shows us Jesus -- and it shows us ourselves. The white fence shows that we are separated from God because we are sinners. We want to be the one in charge instead of surrendering to God.

The altar in the courtyard shows that we can't come near God unless a sacrifice is made for our sins. The brass laver shows we need to be washed from our sins.

Over and over we see that Jesus paid for our sins. He washed us. He made us clean by the blood on his mercy seat.

I hope you aren't planning to get to heaven by being good enough -- because no one is good enough for God. The only way to heaven is by Jesus -- by believing in Him and surrendering to Him as your God.

Review Questions

What were the Israelites commanded to bring for the tabernacle?

Jewelry, gold, and fine cloth

Who was in charge of building the tabernacle?

Bezaleel

What did the tabernacle picture?

Jesus

What did the white fence represent?

Jesus' righteousness

What does the blue in the gate represent?

Heaven. Jesus left Heaven to come to earth as a baby.

What does the purple represent?

Royalty. Jesus is the King of Kings

What does the gold represent?

Deity. It showed that Jesus is God.

What does the red represent?

The blood of Jesus that pays for the sins of His people.

What three things were in the holy place?

The table of shewbread, the golden lampstand, and the altar of incense.

How do those three things make us think of Jesus?

Jesus is the "Bread of Life," the "Light of the World," and his perfect life was a sweet-smelling offering to God.

What was in the holy of holies?

The Ark of the Covenant, which held the ten commandments written with God's own hand, and the mercy seat.