

PRIESTLY SERVICE – TABERNACLE OF THE CONGREGATION

Objective

The children learn about priestly service in the Old and New Covenants.

Contents

- The ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:10–16, 22).
- The tabernacle of the congregation (Exodus 25:8–9, 40; 40:2–38).
- The priesthood in the Old Covenant (Exodus 28–29; Numbers 18; 28).
- Our Priests today.



Lesson Plan

Lead-In

Discussion

We ask the children to tell where they would keep something special which belonged solely to them.

The children might perhaps give the following examples:

- treasure chests,
- purses/wallets,
- a particular place in their room,
- etc.

We then discuss with the children that adults also store valuables in a special place. For example:

- jewelry box
- vault, safe,
- case,
- etc.

Implementation

Teacher's Presentation

The tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments were a visible sign of God's covenant with the people of Israel. That is why they were of special value to the people. On Mount Sinai God himself gave Moses the commission to make a valuable box for their safekeeping. For this, he gave precise instructions concerning its size and shape. Since the sign of the covenant was kept in this box, it received the name "ark of the covenant".

Workbook, Text

The children read the text "Ark of the Covenant and Tabernacle of the Congregation".

Workbook, Exercise 1

With the aid of the cited Bible texts, the children complete the descriptions of the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle of the congregation. This can be done together or divided into work groups.

Discussion, Theme Picture

Teacher's Presentation

Using the theme picture, we discuss the following with the children:

- The tabernacle stood in a courtyard: the 'outer court'.
- In this courtyard stood the altar of burnt-offering and the laver, a large brazen vessel which was filled with water.

The tabernacle consisted of two compartments. These were called the 'holy place' and the 'holy of holies'. A curtain separated the two. In the holy place stood the seven-branched candleabrum and the incense altar.

As a visible sign for the Israelites that God dwelt among them, the cloud of the glory of the Lord covered the tabernacle. As long as this cloud hovered over the tabernacle, the Israelites remained at that place. When the cloud rose, they continued (cf. Exodus 40:34–37).

In addition to directions about the construction and furnishing of the tabernacle, Moses received precise instructions from God about how it was to be used.

Men from the tribe of Levi were responsible for dismantling, transporting and reassembling the tabernacle during the journey through the desert. There were set rules for this procedure (cf. Numbers 4:1–20).

Whenever the Israelites made camp, the tabernacle was erected first. The Levites and priests lived in its immediate vicinity surrounded by the remaining tribes.

Workbook, Text, Discussion

Using the text in the workbook "Priestly Service in the Old Covenant", we discuss with the children that God commissioned Moses to ordain Aaron and his sons from the tribe of Levi as priests (Exodus 28:1). They were to render the service in the tabernacle. In the Old Covenant, the priesthood was restricted to Aaron's descendants.

For the service, the priests received special garments and precise instructions as to how the sacrifices were to be prepared and offered.

It also was their task to

- maintain and clean the tabernacle (except the holy of holies),
- advise about the sacrificial animals,

Teacher's Presentation

- care for the fire on the incense-altar,
- instruct the people about the laws (cf. Leviticus 10:8–11), and
- rule on difficult matters of law.

Before the high priest and the priests could see to their duties at the altar or in the tabernacle they had to wash their hands and feet in the laver.

Every day the priests offered sacrifices. This constituted the actual divine service in the Old Covenant. They observed the instructions given by God concerning the different offerings (cf. Leviticus 1–7).

Once a year only, on the day of atonement, the high priest—Aaron at the time—entered the holy of holies. During a special ceremony, he was to ask the Lord for forgiveness for the sins of the people and for himself (cf. Leviticus 16). Access to the holy of holies was forbidden otherwise.

The Levites had a special position among the tribes of Israel. Their sustenance came from the rest of the people, who had to give them the tenth. Of this tenth, the priests again received the tenth (Numbers 18:20–21, 26).

Discussion

We emphasize the following:

- The task of the priests in the Old Covenant was mainly to offer the required sacrifices according to God's instructions. This was the divine service in the Old Covenant.
- Tithes, or the tenth, was not an offering but a compulsory contribution, a tax.
- The sacrifices of Old Testament times lost their effectiveness with Jesus' sacrifice. Any Old Testament sacrifices ceased, once and for all, with the destruction of the temple in the year AD 70.
- The task of God's servants of the New Covenant (i.e., also that of the priestly ministries—from Priest to Bishop) is to prepare God's children for the return of Christ.

Compared to the priesthood of the Old Testament, the emphasis of priestly service in the New Covenant is on the care for the soul.

Question Prompt

How do the Priests of today care for the soul?

- They proclaim God's word.
- They proclaim the forgiveness of sins.
- They perform Holy Baptism and dispense the Holy Communion.
- They give comfort and pray for, and with, God's children.
- They give godly advice regarding matters of faith.

Workbook, Exercise 2, Discussion

Ask the children to do exercise 2. The correct statements are again read aloud.

Conclusion

Ask the children to list the tasks the Priests in their congregation perform. For example:

- visiting the sick,
- family visits,
- youth meetings,
- divine services for children,
- etc.

Notes
