Preschool–Grade 6

The Ark of the Covenant

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God wants to meet with His people, and He tells us how to come to Him, so we do things His way.
Bible passage: Exodus 25:10–22. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." *Exodus 25:22 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), masking tape, a tape measure, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, paper and pencils, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: How Big Was It? (5–10 minutes)

Say: "In Bible times people measured with a **cubit**, the length from the elbow to the fingertips, about 18 inches." Read Exodus 25:10 out loud. Ask the kids to guess how big the ark was, and to show it with their hands. Then work it out together: two and a half cubits is about 45 inches, and a cubit and a half is about 27 inches. With the masking tape, mark a rectangle 45 inches long and 27 inches wide on the floor. Kids stand around it. Say: "This is the ark God told Moses to make. Let's find out what it was for."

2. Bible story: The Pattern for the Ark (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Exodus 25. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

On the mount. Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:18), and the LORD spake unto Moses (25:1). **Look up Exodus 25:8.** God wanted a **sanctuary**, a holy place, so He could dwell (live) among His people. **Look up Exodus 25:9.** They must make it all after the **pattern** God showed Moses.

The ark. Look up Exodus 25:10. The ark was a chest of **shittim wood**, a kind of wood, 2½ cubits long, 1½ wide and 1½ high. **Look up Exodus 25:11.** It was overlaid (covered) with pure gold inside and outside, with a **crown** of gold, a gold border, round about.

Rings and staves. Four gold rings were cast for the four corners, two on each side (25:12). **Staves** (poles) of shittim wood covered with gold went through the rings, so the ark could be **borne**, carried (25:13–14). **Look up Exodus 25:15.** The staves were never to be taken out.

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The testimony. Look up Exodus 25:16. The **testimony** God would give went inside the ark. Exodus 31:18 tells what it was: two tables of stone, "written with the finger of God".

The mercy seat. Look up Exodus 25:17. The **mercy seat** was a lid of pure gold, the same length and width as the ark. Two **cherubims** of gold, of **beaten work** (hammered out of the gold), stood on its two ends, one on each end (25:18–19). **Look up Exodus 25:20.** Their wings stretched up on high and covered the mercy seat, and their faces looked one to another, toward the mercy seat. The mercy seat went on top of the ark, with the testimony inside (25:21).

Why God wanted it. Look up Exodus 25:22. Above the mercy seat, between the two cherubims, God would meet with Moses and **commune** (talk) with him, and give him His commandments for the children of Israel.

Made God's way. Later, Bezaleel made the ark just as God said (37:1–9). Moses put the testimony in the ark, set the staves on it, put the mercy seat on top, and brought it into the tabernacle "as the LORD commanded Moses" (40:20–21). The Bible later calls it "the ark of the covenant of the LORD" (Numbers 10:33).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. God gave Moses a pattern and said, "even so shall ye make it" (25:9). Why do you think God wanted it made exactly His way?
2. The ark was gold inside and outside (25:11), even where no one would see. What does that teach us about being the same inside and out?
3. The staves were never to be taken out (25:15). Why might that be? The Bible doesn't say here, so what do *you* think?
4. God said He would meet with His people above the mercy seat (25:22). What does it mean that God wants to meet with us?
5. Today we can come to God through Jesus (Hebrews 4:16). Where and when can you meet with God this week?

Recall questions

1. How big was the ark? *(2½ cubits long, 1½ wide, 1½ high, Exodus 25:10)*
2. What was inside the ark? *(The testimony, 25:16; the two tables of stone, 31:18)*
3. What was on the two ends of the mercy seat? *(Two cherubims of gold, 25:18–19)*

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4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **thee** means you, **commune** means talk together, the **mercy seat** is the gold lid on the ark, **cherubims** are the gold figures with wings on its two ends, the **testimony** is what God put in the ark, and a **commandment** is something God tells us to do. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God met with His people above the mercy seat. **Mercy** means God does not give us the punishment we deserve. Then 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us' (John 1:14, KJV): God came to meet with us as a man, Jesus. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5). 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4:16, KJV)"
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: set a time every day to meet with God: pray, and read a few verses of your Bible.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Exodus 24:18: How long was Moses in the mount? *(Forty days and forty nights)*
2. Exodus 25:2: How were the people to give their offering? *(Willingly, with the heart)*
3. Exodus 25:10: What kind of wood was the ark made of? *(Shittim wood)*
4. Exodus 25:11: What did they make round about the ark? *(A crown of gold)*
5. Exodus 25:12: How many rings of gold were made? *(Four)*
6. Exodus 25:18: What kind of work were the cherubims? *(Beaten work)*
7. Exodus 31:18: What was written with the finger of God? *(Two tables of stone, the tables of testimony)*
8. Exodus 37:1: Who made the ark? *(Bezaleel)*

For more, use the **word search, crossword, maze or worksheet** (vbshq.com/bible-stories/ark-of-the-covenant).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You want to meet with Your people, and that we can come to You through Jesus. Help us do things Your way, the same inside and out. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks where the ark is now: the Bible doesn't tell us. Stay with what the text says. Today God meets with His people by His Spirit, wherever they pray.
If a child asks what cherubims are: in this passage they are two figures of gold with wings, on the two ends of the mercy seat, their faces toward each other (Exodus 25:18–20). Stay with what the text says.

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