

Exodus pt. 47
The Tabernacle pt. 2 - The Showbread
Exodus 25:23 - 30

I. Introduction

- A. As God leads through the wilderness He gives them the Law as the basis for His covenant with them. He also instructs Moses to build the Tabernacle, so that the people will know that God is with them. The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant which it housed was the most important artifact for the Hebrew people during their wilderness wandering. As New Testament Christians we may wonder what the Tabernacle's importance is to us today.
- B. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:1 - 5)
- C. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)
 - 1. The phrase "dwelt among us" in Greek is literally "tabernacled among us." Jesus is our Immanuel, God with Us. Jesus is the new and better Tabernacle, where God dwells in the midst of His people. When the Hebrews needed to be reminded that God was with them to protect, guide, and provide for them they looked at the Tabernacle. As Christians, when we need to be reminded that God is with us we look to the Lord Jesus, God the Son.
- D. With that in mind, we should understand that everything in the Tabernacle actually points us to Jesus. What had deep significance for Israel has eternal importance for us.

II. The Table

- A. "You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high. You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a gold border around it. You shall make for it a rim of a handbreadth around it; and you shall make a gold border for the rim around it. You shall make four gold rings for it and put rings on the four corners which are on its four feet. The rings shall be close to the rim as holders for the poles to carry the table. You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that with them the table may be carried." (Exodus 25:23 - 28)
 - 1. The table was around "three feet long, a foot and a half wide, and [a little more than two feet] high." (Wiersbe, pg. 233)
 - 2. "Like the ark, it was made of acacia wood covered with gold." (Ibid)
 - 3. The table included a golden border around it.
 - 4. Like the Ark of the Covenant, the table was constructed with "four gold rings for it and put rings on the four corners which are on its four feet" so that poles for carrying it can be inserted. Unlike the Ark the poles were only to be in the rings while it was being transported.
 - 5. Many different views have been speculated about the significance of the construction of the table. While I appreciate that we should always look at what details symbolize, it seems to me that the details about the table itself are not symbolic in nature. At least if they are, their symbolism is neither taught here nor in the New Testament.

6. However, these details are important for other reasons:
 - a) Think of how specifically the Bible records the dimensions and details of the Tabernacle furniture. This doesn't read as mythology. It reads as a real description of a real object. Such a detailed description supports the historicity of the Bible narrative.
 - b) It shows us that the table is not unusually big but that it is lavish and elaborately created and decorated. It is both functional and beautiful.
- 7.

B.

III. The Bread

- A. "You shall make its dishes and its pans and its jars and its bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times." (Exodus 25:29 - 30)
 1. You'll notice that Exodus does not give much detail about the bread itself. If we look at Leviticus 24 we will find more information about this symbolic bread.
- B. "Then you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before the Lord. You shall put pure frankincense on each row that it may be a memorial portion for the bread, even an offering by fire to the Lord. Every sabbath day he shall set it in order before the Lord continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel. It shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the Lord's offerings by fire, his portion forever." (Leviticus 24:5 - 9)
 1. 12 cakes of bread
 - a) One for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - b) All of Israel was represented before God and had access of God being with them.
 - c) Every child of God was under God's care and provision.
 2. Based on the amount of flour used these cakes were likely fairly large.
 - a) One writer says they were "probably twelve inches in diameter and four inches thick." (*Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 784)
 3. On the table were also instruments for burning frankincense as "an offering by fire to the Lord" as well as golden cups for a drink offering.
 4. The bread would be prepared the day before the Sabbath and set in the Tabernacle every Sabbath. After a week, the bread would be replaced with new loaves. The old bread was to be eaten by the priests.

C.

IV. The Truth

- A. The bread, like everything in the Tabernacle, carries deep meaning and purpose. What did the Bread symbolize to the Hebrews? How does that symbolism point us towards Jesus?
- B. God's Provision
 1. In the pagan world, it was common to leave food at the shrines of false gods. The thought was that they, like humans, would need food and drink to survive. We may be tempted to think that this is similar to why the Hebrews were to leave the bread in the Tabernacle. Not only is this not the reason but I think one of the reasons for the Bread is the exact opposite.
 2. God does not need anything; rather He provides all things to His children.

3. “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; **nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things**; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist...” (Acts 17:24 - 28a)
 - a) “We are utterly dependent on God for everything we need. And this is what the bread signified. [...] This was a perpetual reminder of God’s providential care. The people brought the bread right into God’s holy presence - not for his benefit, as if he might forget what they needed, but for their benefit. The showbread symbolized God’s constant awareness of their daily needs. In case they were ever tempted to doubt his providence, it reminded them that their needs were ever before him. God saw what they needed, but he also provided it.” (*Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 786)
4. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1:17)
5. For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, how blessed is the man who trust in You! (Psalm 84:11 - 12)
6. “[God] never overlooks our concerns or neglects to provide for them. Whether it is meeting a basic material need, granting wisdom for a major decision, sustaining us through a serious illness, comforting us in a painful sorrow, or providing friendship in a time of loneliness, God never fails to provide what we truly need. Whatever difficulties we may encounter, we can trust him to sustain us along the way.” (*Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 787)

C. God’s Presence

1. The Bible refers to this bread as “the Showbread” (literally the bread of faces). This has been translated in modern English as “the Bread of the Presence.” This Bread was to be in the Tabernacle, before God’s face, at all times. The bread points us the constant friendship and presence that God has with His people. As with any relationship there are two distinct aspects of God dwelling with His people.
 - a) God’s People being In His Presence
 - (1) The people were to be a worshipping people.
 - (2) O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, for the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our god, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. (Psalm 95:1 - 7a)
 - b) God’s Presence being with His People
 - (1) This is both a comfort and a challenge.
 - (2) The same God who would take care of His children is also the One who would discipline them, when necessary.

(3) God is both a comforter and a consuming fire.

2. Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.” Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, **“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”** So they said to Him, “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe in You? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “he gave them bread out of heaven to eat.”” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread.” Jesus said to them, **“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”** (John 6:26 - 35)

D. Conclusion and Application