

Study #5 The Table of Showbread

Introduction

On entering the Holy Place, the priest would see a piece of furniture to his right called the Table of Showbread. This highly significant piece of furniture pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. The table of showbread was a small table made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold, a picture of Yeshua as the God-man. The priests baked the bread with fine flour and it remained on the table before the Lord for a week; every Sabbath day the priests would remove it and eat it in the Holy Place, then put fresh bread on the table. Only priests could eat the bread, and it could only be eaten in the Holy Place, because it was holy.

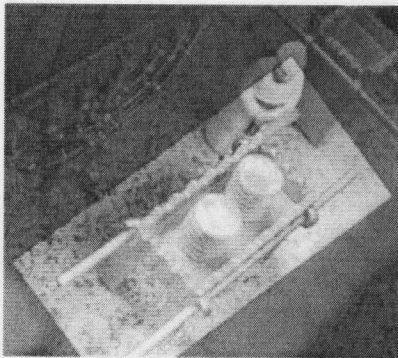


Fig 5.1a The priest at the Table of Showbread from above and Fig 5.1b from the horizontal

Showbread (Hebrew: לחם הפנים *lechem haPānīm*), literally means "Bread of the Presence", in a biblical or Jewish context, it refers to the cakes or loaves of bread which were always present on a specially dedicated table as an offering to Yahweh.

The Table

Notice the instructions God gave to Moses in Exod 25.23-24. The table was to measure 91cm (2 cubits) in length, 46cm (1 cubit) wide and 69cm (1.5 cubits) high. It stood on the right side of the Holy Place across from the lampstand and in the direct glow of its light. It held 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. It was made of acacia wood (representing the humanity of Christ) and overlaid with gold (representing the deity of Christ). As the God-man, Christ was completely without sin (1 John 3.5).

On the table which God instructed Moses to make, he said "And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before Me always" (Exod 25.30). The showbread is a perfect picture of the

body of Christ. It was made with fine flour. To get the flour fine, the miller had to grind it almost to powder. This speaks of the suffering of Christ. The bread was to be baked without leaven. Leaven being a picture of sin, this is a beautiful symbol of the sinlessness of Christ.

The bread was the result of a picture of suffering and death as the wheat had to be reaped, ground to powder and exposed to extreme heat. So too Christ went through the crushing experience of Gethsemane and the death on Calvary's cross.

As we study the Tabernacle and see in portrait form all that Christ went through to provide salvation for us we need to be daily thankful. We read in the scripture that the suffering of Christ in Gethsemane as He agonized over sin before His Father was so great his sweat contained drops of blood (Luke 22.44). This is known in medicine as "haematidrosis" or "haematohidrosis." It is a condition in which the capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood – a phenomenon which occurs under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress.

For example, Leonardo Da Vinci described the case of a soldier who sweated blood before going into battle. The phenomenon has also been observed in individuals condemned to execution, one case occurring during the Nazi blitzkrieg of the City of London and a further case caused by extreme fear of an approaching storm while out sailing.

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How reasonable and proper it is for Paul to write to the Romans (and of course, to us in our day) the following admonition: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12.1-2)

God's Provision

The Tabernacle was God's provision for Israel during the wilderness journey and the provision was seen especially in the Table of Showbread which symbolizes spiritual food. The nation of Israel is a picture of the individual believer, who during his earthly life passes through the world even though he is not part of it.

Heb 11.9-10 says of Abraham that "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Those under the old covenant looked ahead by faith to the provision God would someday

make for sin. God accepted their blood sacrifices, given in faith, as a covering for their sin until Christ would take it away. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

As Christians, our attitude toward the world should reflect that spoken by Titus (2.11-13): "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world: looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The Table of Showbread in the Tabernacle was to be a constant reminder to the Israelites that God was their provision for the wilderness journey. Because it was symbolic of spiritual food, it pointed to Jesus Christ, who came to die a sacrifice for sin once and for all that all who receive Him should inherit eternal life (John 10.10). Since Jesus is the Word (John 1.1 & 14) the Showbread teaches us that we are to feed upon it as it is there that we learn of Him and gain spiritual sustenance and growth.

The Bread

The bread on the table in the Holy Place was to be used for food by the priests as they ministered daily before the Lord. It pointed prophetically to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the bread of life. In showing His superiority to the manna which came down from Heaven on a daily basis, Jesus said in John 6.35: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Further on in John 6.51 Jesus added: "I am the living bread that came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Today we have the written word, which presents to us the Living Word (Jesus). The sustaining food of the believer is the word of God, both the Living Word (Jesus) and the written word (the bible).

Notice that the showbread was regularly replenished, constantly fresh portions were available for the priests. So too is the word of God – fresh portions for every day. We need to be coming constantly to the word of God to learn more and more of Christ. The Apostle Paul never considered himself to have "arrived" but taught the Philippians in 3.12-14: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

One of the best illustrations from the Old Testament of the need for daily devotions is God provision of manna as the Israelites wandered in the desert. He sent enough for just one day. Those who gathered little had no want, those who gathered much had none left over.

Every day they had to come to God for that day's provision. What a wonderful example of how God expects us to live today.

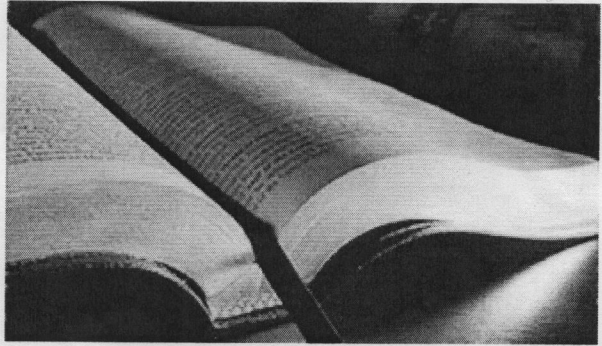


Fig 5.2a Manna from Heaven and Fig 5.2b Manna from Heaven for Today