

The Table of Shewbread

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[0 : 00] Well if you turn with me this evening to the book of Exodus and to chapter 37.

Chapter 37, we read from chapter 25. But chapter 37 gives us the implementation of the table of showbread being made.

So Exodus 37, we're reading at verse 10. He cast for it four rings of gold and fastened the rings to the four corners at its four legs.

Close to the frame were the rings as holders for the poles to carry the table. He made the poles of acacia wood to carry the table and overlaid them with gold. And he made the vessels of pure gold that were to be on the table, its plates and dishes for incense and its bowls and flagons with which to pour drink offerings.

And so as you know, this evening we're continuing our study of the tabernacle and its importance for us as the Lord's people. And as we've said throughout our study, everything we're looking at in relation to the tabernacle points us forward to Jesus Christ.

[1 : 42] Because he is the word. He is the word who became flesh and dwelt among us. He tabernacled among us. All so that we might behold his glory.

And so the tabernacle in the Old Testament, it points us to Jesus, our tabernacle. And as we said before, when we're looking at the tabernacle, we're approaching the tabernacle as sinners who are seeking God's favour, fellowship and forgiveness.

And the first area we come to, every time we look at the video, the first area we come to is this perimeter. The perimeter that surrounds the tabernacle. This white cloth surrounding the tabernacle courtyard.

And its purpose is always to lead us round, right round to the outer gate. Because as sinners, we can't approach God any other way than through the outer gate.

There's only one way to God. And that's through Jesus, our tabernacle. He is the way, the truth and the life. And so we must enter through the outer gate.

[2 : 42] But we must come with a substitutionary sacrifice. And on entering into the tabernacle, even as we see on the video, week by week, we're confronted by two items of furniture in the tabernacle courtyard.

We see first of all the altar of sacrifice. And then afterwards we see the bronze laver. And these two items of furniture, they remind us about two key doctrines in the Christian life.

The altar of sacrifice reminds us of our justification. That we're made righteous. We're accepted in the sight of God through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

And the bronze laver, the second item of furniture, it reminds us about our sanctification. That we need to come to the word of God daily. We need to come day by day for daily cleansing.

Continual cleansing. Because sanctification is this ongoing work of God's free grace. In which we, as Christians, have a role and a responsibility.

[3 : 45] But as we move beyond these items of furniture, we came to the tent coverings. The coverings over the tabernacle. And we saw that there were four coverings. Four coverings that point us to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

And as we said, there are four coverings but one Christ. But it's on entering in, inside the tabernacle, we come under these four coverings.

And we're made to realise that when we enter into the tabernacle, we are in Christ. We're covered by Jesus, our tabernacle. We're in Christ.

And as those who are in Christ, now inside the tabernacle, there are three items of furniture in the holy place of the holy king. There's the golden lampstand, the table of showbread and the altar of incense.

And as we said before, they all speak very clearly of what sinners receive when they are in Christ. Now last week we considered the golden lampstand or the menorah.

[4 : 48] Which was this golden tree that symbolised the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. It was a golden tree that promises to us eternal life for those who are in Christ.

So if we're in Christ, we have received the promise of eternal life. But more than that, we saw that the menorah, it burned continually day and night. And it was the only means of the light inside the tabernacle.

So it reminded us that as those who are in Christ, the word of God, both inspired the Bible and both incarnate Jesus.

Both inspired and incarnate, the word of God is to give us light and hope, direction and guidance in the midst of a dark world. But this evening we're coming to the second item of furniture in the holy place of the holy king.

The table of showbread. And the table of showbread, it ought to remind us that as those who are in Christ, we have the assurance of the presence of Jesus, our tabernacle.

[5 : 57] And I just want us to consider the table of showbread under three headings.

Three headings. The design of the table, the day of the table and the desire of the table. So the design of the table, the day of the table and the desire of the table.

So first of all, the design of the table. What did the table look like? We're told in verse 10. He also made the table of acacia wood. Two cubits was its length, a cubit its breadth and a cubit and a half its height.

And he overlaid it with pure gold and made a moulding of gold round it. And we're also told that he made a room round it a handbreadth wide and made a moulding of gold round the room.

So in these opening verses, we're told that Bezalel, the master craftsman, he made the table of showbread from this hard wood called acacia wood.

[7 : 06] And acacia wood, interestingly, it's what the altar of sacrifice was made from, which was situated in the tabernacle courtyard. Except if you remember, the altar of sacrifice was made of bronze.

It was overlaid with bronze. But the table of showbread is overlaid with gold. And as we said before, the fact that this item of furniture is overlaid with gold, it emphasises that we're now in the holy place.

When we were in the tabernacle courtyard, the items of furniture, the altar of sacrifice and the laver, they were made of bronze. But now that we're in the holy place, all the furniture is made of gold, emphasising that we're in a holy place.

It's a place of royalty. It's the holy place of the holy king. And as we said before, when we come together in worship in the holy place of the holy king, it should always remind us that we shouldn't come not casually, but cautiously.

Not flippantly, but fearfully. Not informally, but intentionally. Not laxadaisically, but lovingly. We're to come into the holy place of the holy king.

[8 : 20] Now we're told that the table of showbread was two cubits long, a cubit wide, and a cubit and a half its height. And if you remember, if you're not David and you're like me, you have one cubit was the distance from your elbow to the tip of your finger, which is about 18 inches or one and a half feet.

And so the table of showbread, it's about three feet long, one and a half feet wide, and about two foot high, which is just about the size of this table. So I'm sure Ian Murray was measuring everything according to the table of showbread when he built this table.

But you know, the table of showbread, it was overlaid with gold. We haven't managed to do that here, but we will do one day. It was overlaid completely with gold, but it also, as you can see, it has this rim around the edge of the table.

And this rim moulding was to be like this small lip that would come up from the sides of the table, and it would be an edge, as we're told, it's a hand breadth, which is about three inches.

And so it was to be this protective edge all the way around the table. And it was just, the purpose of it was to stop anything falling off the table. In fact, it seems that the sole purpose of the table of showbread was to hold what was often referred to in the Bible as the bread of the presence.

[9 : 47] The bread of the presence. And we'll come back to that in a moment. But what we also read in the following verses, just to go through the design of the table, what we read in the following

verses is that the table of showbread, it also had rings and poles to make it portable.

And we see that in verse 13. He cast for it four rings of gold and fastened the rings to the four corners at its four legs. Close to the frame were the rings as holders for the poles to carry the table. He made the poles of acacia wood to carry the table and overlaid them with gold. So the portable nature of the table of showbread was to be another reminder to us that the Lord's people are continually travelling through the wilderness.

They're on this wilderness journey towards the promised land. But what's interesting is that the table of showbread, it was just a table, a wooden table overlaid with gold.

It would have been easy to carry. Anybody could have just picked it up and walked off with it. And yet in order to prevent an object that dwelt in the holy place of the holy king, in order to prevent it being touched by a sinful human being, poles were used to carry this table of showbread.

[11:07] Sinful mankind wasn't to have contact with the table of showbread, which is why it was used for display purposes rather than everyday use.

We're told in verse 16 that there were four types of golden vessels that would have been permanently left on the table for display.

We're told he made the vessels of pure gold that were to be on the table, its plates and dishes for incense, and its bowls and flagons with which to pour drink offerings.

So the plates which were to be used on the table of showbread were to be placed on the table and the bread was to be on it. And the bread was to be placed on these plates, each sabbath.

And the dishes that were told about, they were to be used for incense. And the particular incense was frankincense. And we actually read about that in Leviticus 24, where we read there, And so on the table of showbread, this table that was there for display, there were to be two golden plates, each with six loaves of showbread.

[12:51] And there was also to be these two golden dishes with frankincense. And the bread and the frankincense were to be a food offering to the Lord. But there were also, as mentioned in verse 16, another two vessels on the table of showbread, we're told that they were golden bowls and golden flagons or jugs.

It was a jug. And they were to be used as a drink offering to the Lord. And these golden bowls and flagons, they were used to contain wine.

But because these vessels, the plates and the dishes and the flagons and the bowls, they were all in the holy place of the holy king. And because they were in the holy place, they were only there for display.

They were there for display purposes only. And so as you look at the table of showbread, what we have to see is that there was a food offering there of bread.

And there was a drink offering of wine. And it's on display. Now we need to keep that in our minds. There's bread and wine on a table. We need to keep that in our minds as we move on.

[13:57] So we move on from the design of the table to the day of the table. The day of the table. So the design of the table and the day of the table. Now we read earlier in Exodus 25, that the Lord gave the instructions to Moses.

The Lord said to Moses, you shall set the bread of the presence on the table before me regularly. And we also read in Leviticus 24, that the Lord gave details of how Moses and the Levites were to set the bread of the presence before the Lord regularly.

Moses was commanded in Leviticus 24, you shall make, take fine flour, bake 12 loaves from it. You shall set them in two piles, six in a pile on the table before the Lord.

The bread of the presence was to be set before the Lord regularly. In fact, Leviticus 24, when we read it, it said, every Sabbath day, Aaron shall arrange the bread of the presence before the Lord regularly.

It is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the Lord's food offerings.

[15:19] And so once a week, on the Sabbath day, the priests were to replace the bread of the presence and the flagons of wine.

They were to replace it with freshly baked bread, hot bread, and new wine. Every Sabbath day, the priests were to replace the food offering of bread and the drink offering of wine.

And what had been offered to the Lord in the holy place of the holy king, what had been offered to the Lord the previous week, it was to be taken out and eaten by the priests.

Every Sabbath day, the priests were to eat bread and drink wine together. And you know, it's fascinating that the priests were to eat the bread and the wine as a symbol of God's covenant with his people.

The bread and the wine, as the priests brought it out and ate it together, it was a covenant meal. A covenant meal, and it was to be a symbol before the people of the Lord's faithfulness to his covenant.

[16:26] And again, I want you to keep that in mind. Because this covenant meal which the priests partook of each Sabbath, it was to assure the Israelites of the king's presence and the king's provision for them.

That's why it's referred to as the bread of the presence. The bread of the presence. It was to assure the Israelites of the presence and provision of the Lord, the covenant king.

Because you remember that when the Lord brought the children of Israel up out of the land of Egypt, he assured them of his presence. We were singing about that in Psalm 105. That the Lord assured his people that he would always be with them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

But more than that, more than assuring his people of his presence, the Lord assured his people of his provision. Because the bread of the presence, it was a wonderful reminder of the Lord's daily provision of food throughout their wilderness journey.

And again, we sang about that in Psalm 105. Because the Israelites, you'll remember, when they first left Egypt, they were hungry, they were starving. And they started crying to the Lord for food.

[17:44] And the Lord rained down bread from heaven. The Lord provided for his people on a daily basis this manna from heaven.

And it was to teach the people and to assure the people of the presence and the provision of the Lord who was their covenant king. And so what we've been reminded here of by just looking at the table of showbread, this table that was there for display purposes.

What we've been reminded is that each Sabbath, the priests were to replace the bread of the presence and the flagons of wine in the holy place of the holy king. And with what was removed, the priests were to eat bread and to drink the wine together as a covenant meal.

And the covenant meal was to be a symbol of the Lord's covenant faithfulness towards his people, assuring them of his presence and his provision for them throughout their wilderness journey.

But you know, in looking at the design of the table and also understanding what went on on the day of the table, the Sabbath day, I want us to be brought forward into the New Testament and consider the desire of the table.

[19:06] So there's the design of the table, the day of the table and the desire of the table. What is the desire of this table? The desire of the table of showbread, which is situated in the holy place of the holy king, was, of course, like every part of the tabernacle, it's to point us forward to see the glory of Jesus, our tabernacle.

And as we said earlier, as those who are in Christ, we have the assurance of the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle. As those who are in Christ, we have the assurance of the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle.

And we can see the glory of Jesus, our tabernacle, when we consider his life and his ministry. And so I want to say that the desire of the table of showbread is to bring us first of all in the New Testament to the Sermon on the Mount.

The desire of the table of showbread is to bring us to the Sermon on the Mount because it's in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus, our tabernacle, teaches us about the presence and provision of the King.

You remember that Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with these beatitudes, these blessings, blessings for those who are in Christ.

[20:28] And with regard to the presence and the provision of the King, Jesus says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.

And as you know, the emphasis of the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 to Matthew 7, the emphasis of the Sermon is to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing then that all other things shall be added unto you.

So King Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, put the King and the Kingdom first in your life and you will know the presence and the provision of the King.

Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and you will know the presence and the provision of the King. And you know, when you read the Sermon on the Mount, that's why Jesus teaches us to pray.

He teaches us to pray in the Sermon on the Mount with the words, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[21 : 34] Then we're taught to pray, give us this day our daily bread. And so in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to come before the Lord daily, giving thanks for his presence and his provision.

But what's more is that Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount not to worry about the presence or the provision of the Lord. Jesus went on to say in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 6, Jesus says, and we're looking at this on Sunday night with the big YF in Carloway, where Jesus says, Do not be anxious about your life or what you'll eat or what you'll drink, not about your body, what you'll put on.

Is life not more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to the span of his life? My friend, the desire of the table of showbread in the tabernacle is to show us or point us forward to the Sermon on the Mount and remind us that as those who are in Christ, we have the assurance of the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle.

And like the Israelites who were to be thankful for the daily presence and the daily provision of the Lord, you know, we are to be thankful for the daily presence and the daily provision of the Lord.

[23 : 09] We should be a thankful people. You know, we should begin our prayers with thanksgiving, not with I want, I want, I want. Lord, help, help, help.

Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving. We should be a thankful people, thankful for the Lord's daily presence and his daily provisions. Because, you know, sometimes we can get into the mindset that we have things because we work hard for them.

But if this passage teaches us anything, and if the table of showbread teaches us anything, is that we shouldn't grumble about what we don't have.

But we should give thanks for what we do have. Because it's the Lord who gives us our daily bread. It's the Lord who gives us our health because he's good to us.

We have a job because the Lord is kind to us. We have clothes on our backs, money in our bank, rubes over our heads, food in our stomachs, because the Lord has graciously and abundantly provided for our needs.

[24 : 12] So we should be a thankful people. We should be thankful for his presence, thankful for the Lord's provisions. So the desire of the table of showbread is to show us that as those who are in Christ, we have the assurance of the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle.

But I also want to say that the desire of the table of showbread is to bring us to the miracle of feeding the 5,000. Because as we read earlier in John chapter 6, it was in the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle, that over 5,000 people were fed.

Because when the crowds who had followed Jesus, when they grew hungry, they're all going towards Jerusalem. They're all going for the feast of Passover. They're all walking from all over Israel and they're going towards Jerusalem.

And they're growing hungry. They're following Jesus. And so Jesus takes the lunch box box of this young boy, consisting of five loaves and two fish. And he multiplies it and he feeds everyone.

And then we read in John 6 that the disciples, they gathered up the leftovers and 12 baskets were filled. And the 12 baskets was not only to draw attention to the number of disciples who had doubted the ability of Jesus to perform such a miracle.

[25 : 38] The 12 baskets was also to remind the disciples and us of the number of loaves of bread that sat week by week on the table of showbread.

Again, giving us the assurance of the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle. But what was more, and we didn't read this part in John 6, after the miracle of feeding the 5,000, the disciples were taught that the Lord's presence and provision of bread from heaven, it had been fulfilled in the portion of Jesus, our tabernacle.

Jesus said later on in John 6, truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. And with that, as disciples, they all say to Jesus, Sir, give us this bread always.

And Jesus says to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. And in these words, we have it affirmed that the desire of the table of showbread is to reveal to us the glory of Jesus, our tabernacle.

[27 : 03] He is the bread of life. Jesus is the true bread which came down from heaven to tabernacle among his people. And by faith in him, by being in Christ, we have the assurance of his presence and his provision every day in this wilderness journey.

It's wonderful. But last of all, I want us to see that the desire of the table of showbread, it's brought us to the Sermon on the Mount, it brought us to feeding the 5,000, but last of all, I want us to see that the desire of the table of showbread is to bring us to the upper room.

Because it's there in the upper room that Jesus, our tabernacle, he assured all his disciples of his presence and his provision. As we said, every Sabbath, the priests ate bread and they drank wine together.

And they ate bread and drank wine as a symbol of the Lord's faithfulness to his covenant throughout their wilderness journey. They ate bread and they drank wine together as a covenant meal.

It was a weekly covenant meal which assured the Lord's people of his presence and his provision. And you know, is that not what the Lord's Supper really is?

[28 : 24] It's a covenant meal. A covenant meal that God's covenant people partake of and it seeks to assure us of the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle, throughout our wilderness journey.

You know, it was in the upper room that Jesus, our tabernacle, we're told in Mark's Gospel, he took bread after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body.

And he also took a cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

And of course, the priests, they partook of their covenant meal of bread and wine on a weekly basis. Which is why some, like John Calvin, the reformer, he argued for many years that we should have communion on a weekly basis.

Now, I'm not going to start an argument just now, but maybe you can think about that yourself. And that's what he based it on, the priests having bread and wine, a covenant meal on a weekly basis.

[29 : 41] Every Sabbath. But you know, whether we have communion weekly, monthly, twice a year, the desire of the table of showbread is to remind us that the Lord's, it's the Lord's table.

And it's to remind us that it's the Lord's supper. And it's, it's not for those who are good enough to come to it. It's for those who are in Christ. It's for those who are in Christ.

Those who are sheltering up under the cover of Jesus, our tabernacle. They are the ones who should, by faith and obedience, partake of the covenant meal of the Lord's supper.

Because it's at the covenant meal of the Lord's supper. You know, this is the wonderful thing about communion. It's at the covenant meal of the Lord's supper where we gather together as the Lord's people, the Lord's covenant people.

It's there that we're assured of his presence with us. And we're assured of his provision of grace for us throughout our wilderness journey.

[30 : 47] And that's all from a table, the table of showbread. And so as we've considered the table of showbread in the holy place of the holy king, we've looked at the design of the table, the day of the table, and the desire of the table.

Because as those who are in Christ, we have the assurance of the presence and the provision of Jesus, our tabernacle. We have the assurance of his presence and his provision throughout our wilderness journey.

So may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the wonder of who Jesus is, that he is the true bread which came down from heaven.

And Lord, we pray that each and every one of us throughout our wilderness journey that we would be assured of his presence and that we would be assured of his provisions for us, that we would

taste and see every day that he is good and continue to trust in him and know his blessing. And Lord, we realize that how often we faint and fail, but we give thanks to thee, the Lord, the God who has given to us a covenant meal in which we are able to gather together as the Lord's covenant people and sit with our covenant king and hear him speak to us and assure us of his presence and his provision day by day.

[32 : 15] Lord, bless us then, we pray. Uphold us and strengthen us. Remember, Lord, those of whom we were speaking about this evening, those who are laid aside, those, Lord, who are mourning, those, Lord, who are in hospital.

Oh, Lord, we live in a broken world. We are broken people living broken lives in this broken world, but we thank thee and we praise thee for that reminder this evening that the Jesus of the gospel, he came into this world to seek and to save the lost.

He became flesh and dwelt among us. He tabernacled among us. That we might behold his glory. The glory is of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Help us then to see him. Help us then to love him. Help us, Lord, to walk with him day by day. For we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 132.

Psalm 132. It's on page 423. Psalm 132.

[33 : 37] We're singing from verse 12 down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 132. It's a psalm written, I think it was written by David or about David anyway.

But it's about, especially David's covenant, a covenant that the Lord made with David. And it's reminding us here of the Lord's covenant faithfulness to his people.

How he blesses them with provision and his presence. Psalm 132 and verse 12. My covenant if thy sons will keep and laws to them made known, their children then shall also sit forever on thy throne. For God of Zion hath made choice, there he desires to dwell. This is my rest, here still I'll stay, for I do like it well. So we'll sing on down to the end of the psalm of Psalm 132.

To God's praise. Amen. Psalm 132 and verse 12.

[35 : 01] For God of Zion hath made choice, there he desires to dwell.

This is my rest, here still I'll stay, for I do like it well.

Her food I'll greatly bless, her poor, with great will satisfy.

Her priests I'll clothed with health, with health, her saints, shall shout for joyfully.

And there will I make David's heart, to God for bless, to God for bless and bleep.

[36 : 48] For him that mine anointed is, a love, a love, a love, a love, a love, or date of I.

As with a garment I will clothe, with shame, with shame, with shame, his enemies own.

But yet the crown, that he doth wear, upon him flourish shall.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.