

## **The Bread**

### **Bread: the staff of life.**

A generation ago, American bakeries produced more than 41 million pounds of bread each year - almost 70 times the weight of a single two-story home. The average American today consumes 53 pounds of bread every year, the equivalent of 29 loaves of sliced white bread. Think about it: unless due to dietary restrictions, how many of us have eaten bread within the last twenty-four hours, whether as buttered toast at breakfast or as a peanut butter and jelly sandwich at lunch or a thick slice of fresh baked Italian bread at dinner. And in some cultures bread is more important to sustain physical life than it is here!

Why all this talk about bread? There was bread in the Tabernacle: manna, and the bread of the presence, or shewbread; and I want to look at three lessons we can learn from this bread in the Tabernacle: the Provision of God, the Purity of Christ, and the Bread of Life.

### **The Provision of God**

We learn from Hebrews 9 that, among other things, the ark contained a golden jar of manna; and we read about manna in Exodus 16:

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

*(A little context: these people had been slaves in Egypt. We read how the Egyptians, "...made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly" - EX. 1:14. That word "ruthlessly," comes from an unused root meaning "break apart"...the Egyptians were breaking the Israelites under the heavy yoke of cruel treatment and hard labor. But God had heard their cry and redeemed them from slavery, smiting the land of their captivity with his outstretched arm and working signs and wonders through his servant Moses - there were the ten terrible plagues, their deliverance through the parted waters of the Red Sea, and now they were a free nation marching towards their inheritance, the Promised Land of Canaan. He had shown them his power and presence and providence; but then in chapter 16, they get hungry. It is a test - and they fail. Rather than trusting in God, they grumbled. And we are no better. We were once slaves of a spiritual Egypt - sin; and we were breaking under its heavy yoke; but Christ redeemed us from slavery to sin and now we are a freed people, marching towards our Promised Land; but when we are put to the test, how often do we fail? How often do we grumble rather than trust? We continue reading...)* Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you." (Exodus 16:1-4)

The Psalmist writes about this bread: "he rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels..." (Psalm 78:24-25) Exodus 16 tells us that enough fell on each day for the people to gather two quarts per person; and given a camp of about 2 million men, women, and children - that's a million gallons raining down on the Israelite camp each day for forty years - and twice that much on the sixth day so they wouldn't gather on the Sabbath. The manna is yet another reminder that God provides our daily bread, not only food but whatever he knows we need - whether directly and miraculously as with manna, or indirectly through the agency of others: a food pantry, a soup kitchen, a grocery voucher, an anonymous donation of clothes, etc.

## **The Purity of Christ**

Second, there was bread on the table of shewbread. A couple things to say about the table of shewbread.

1. *The Table*. "Then make a table of acacia wood...overlay it with pure gold..." (**Exodus 25:23-24**) We saw this last time when we looked at the ark's construction, how it points to the incarnate Deity. By way of review, we have these two building materials - base wood, prone to warping and dry rot, and a precious metal, gold, treasured for its rarity and non-corrosiveness. Two materials in one table, just like there are two natures - humanity and deity - in the one person of Jesus Christ. And notice: this gold is pure gold, gold without any dross, even as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the righteous, the Holy One of God is without any sin.

2. *The Bread*: "You must bake twelve loaves of bread from choice flour..." (**Leviticus 24:5**) In the instructions baking the bread of presence, there is no mention of adding leaven, which signifies sin; and about these instructions Edward Dennett comments, "No leaven is mentioned...the fine flour is a type of the humanity of Christ, and hence the loaves of the shebread are without leaven, He being holy, harmless, undefiled, absolutely without sin." Again, we see typified the sinlessness of Christ. Just as this flour is without leaven, Christ our Lord is without sin. It is written, "for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet without sin" (**Hebrews 4:15**); and "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (**2 Corinthians 5:21**)

**The Bread of Life** - Now, we've seen the manna and the bread of the presence; both point to Jesus who is the Bread of Life. Let's turn to John 6 and read about this living bread.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. (*Jesus knew their hearts. The day before he had multiplied the five barley loaves and two small fish to feed this multitude of five thousand men, not including women and children; and they had eaten their fill with twelve basketfuls leftover; but rather than see this as a miraculous sign pointing to Jesus identity as the Christ, the Son of God, they saw it as their free meal plan. They had dinner, and now they chase him down for breakfast. They missed the miracle. So Jesus tells them, "You didn't come here because you saw the miraculous sign...you came here because you ate yesterday and your stomachs are growling."* He then turns their attention away from physical food that will keep your body alive for a time to spiritual food that gives eternal life to whosoever will eat. We continue...) 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (*People keep insisting on works...what WORK must WE do? When you ask someone, "Are you going to heaven?" how often do they answer "Well, I'm a good person...I go to church, I make financial contributions to my church and local charities, I volunteer at the soup kitchen, I do this, that, and the other thing."* It's not by works! Jesus says the work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent, to have faith in Christ; and lest any man boast about faith as his own work: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." -

**EPH. 2:8-9** *We continue...*) 30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " 32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. (***The Bread of Life nourishes us unto eternal life. The Bread of Life nourishes us unto eternal life. Just as bread is the staff of life, that is it is necessary for physical life, Jesus, the Bread of Life, is the staff of life, He is necessary for us to have new, abundant, and eternal life. He says later in this chapter, "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever."*** - JN. 6:47-51. ***Do you want eternal life, then feed on the Bread of Life by believing on him.*** He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (**John 6:25-36**) The Bread of Life not only nourishes us unto eternal life, it also satisfies spiritual hunger. The bread of life satisfies spiritual hunger. Sulfa is an anti-biotic widely used during WWII and still widely used to treat things like Urinary Tract infections; but unlike most anti-biotics that actually kill bacteria, sulfa works as an enzyme inhibitor masquerading as bacterial food. The bacteria gobble up this fake food, and then what happens? The book "The Devil Under the Microscope" explains, "The bacterial machinery, gummed up, would slow to a stop. The bacteria, denied a nutrient they needed, eventually starved to death." Their food was not food, and no matter how much of it they ate, it left them starving.

People are the same way. They have spiritual hunger pangs they long to satisfy; and they frantically feed their souls food that is no food, food that leaves them starving. They will eat physical food, material possessions, inane entertainment, career advancement...but nothing will satisfy their gnawing hunger, nothing will assuage those persisting pangs. These things are fake food, but not so with the Bread of Life; as Jesus assures us, "...my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink." - **JN. 6:55.**

**The Light** - And for the sake of time, we won't spend as much time on this.

The next thing to look at in the Tabernacle is the lamp stand. God gives instructions for a lamp stand of pure gold in Exodus 25, with a central trunk and six branches for a total of seven lamps. This lampstand points us to both Jesus and the Church.

First, the lamp stand points us to Jesus. Jesus says in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." What does Jesus mean when he says, "I am the light of the world"? Darkness is a Biblical metaphor for, among other things, death. In the context of Psalm 88:12, the Psalmist is writing about being close to death; and in Psalm 88:12, he asks God, "Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion." And Psalm 23 talks about the valley of the shadow of death. Conversely, in the Old Testament, we see that light is a metaphor for life, as in Job: "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul" (**Job 3:20**). Death is darkness, but Christ dispels the darkness as the life-giving light, the light that gives free, new, abundant, eternal life; life that does not stop with bodily death, life that will never be touched by the second death - that is eternal alination from God and torment in the unquenchable fires and utter darkness of hell,

life that lasts forever in a personal relationship with God. And so the prophet Isaiah, to people living in darkness proclaimed light: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (**Isaiah 9:2**) We read, “In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (**John 1:4**) and here in John 8:12, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

One of the seven wonders of the ancient world was the lighthouse of Pharos. Its light could be seen 30 miles away in the darkness; and as with any lighthouse that shows where where safe harbor is and helps you steer clear of perilous obstacles those who followed the light would live, arriving safely in the harbor; but those who decided not to follow the light put themselves in mortal danger. The same is true of Jesus; he shines as the light of the world, and those who follow him will live, while those who decide not to follow him are in danger of dying and being lost forever in the outer darkness.

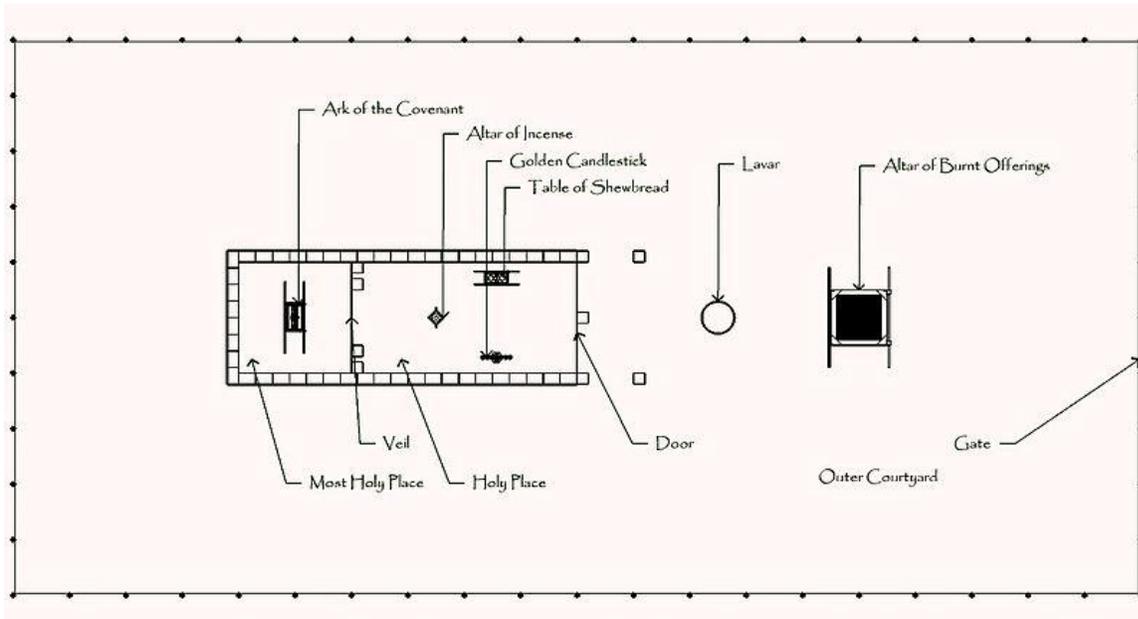
Second, the lamp stand points us to the Church. In Revelation 1, the apostle John sees Christ standing among seven golden lamp stands; and in verse 20, Jesus reveals what these lamp stands signify, saying the seven lamp stands are the seven churches, that is the seven churches John writes letters to in the book of Revelation. The lamp stand points us to the Church of Jesus Christ, which is to shine in a world lost in the darkness of sin, death, despair, and the ignorance of God, to shine good deeds like a spotlight on God. “You are the light of the world. A city hidden on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (**Matthew 5:14-16**) I read the following illustration: “When the great Church of Holy Wisdom (the Hagia Sophia) was completed in Constantinople, they hung thousands of lamps in it. The light shone through a corona of windows in the dome, so that a sailor on the Bosphorus could find his direction not only by the stars but by the light from the church. One writer of the time said, “It not only guides the merchant at night, it also shows the way to the living God.” Are we as a church shining in the darkness? Are we shining good deeds that result in glory to God? Are we shining the light of the Gospel showing the living and only way to God, our Lord Jesus Christ? I think in many ways we are - but I think maybe we have on our parking lights, when the darkness of our world demands us to turn on our high beams. We must keep shining and shining brightly in the darkness.

### **Closing**

One thing you may have noticed about both the bread and lamp stand - it points to Jesus who alone gives eternal life. A 2011 poll of 18,000 people in 23 different countries revealed that 26 percent of people do not know what happens to them after death, and 23% think they simply cease to exist. Is it any wonder that so many people around us have apathy or despair or dread - they live thinking that they will die and become nothing more than food for worms. But we are beggars who have found the living bread that gives to life to anyone who eats, bread that is real food and free to all. We are children of the light, who live in the Light of Life that can dispel the darkness of death and despair people feel looking into its face. Let us not only be encouraged knowing that we have eaten this bread and are followers of this light, but let us tell others.

## THE TABERNACLE, Pt. 2 (Bulletin Insert)

Feb. 9, 2014



### I. The Bread

#### A. The Provision of God

1) "In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you." (**Exodus 16:1-4**)

2) "he rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels..." (**Psalms 78:24-25**)

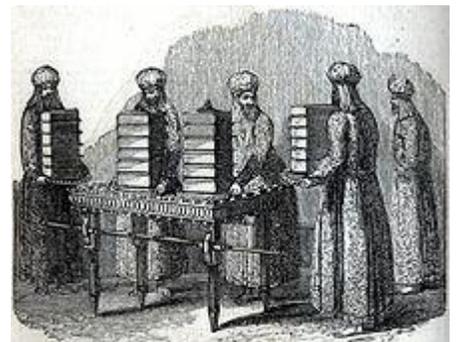
#### B. The Purity of Christ

1. *The Table.* "Then make a table of acacia wood...overlay it with pure gold..." (**Exodus 25:23-24**)

2. *The Bread:* "You must bake twelve loaves of bread from choice flour..." (**Leviticus 24:5**)

a. "for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet without sin." (**Hebrews 4:15**)

b. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (**2 Corinthians 5:21**)



#### C. The Bread of Life

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seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who 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." "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty..." "...my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink." (**John 6:25-36, 55**)

## **II. The Light**

### **A. Jesus**

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (**John 8:12**)



### **B. The Church**

"You are the light of the world. A city hidden on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (**Matthew 5:14-16**)