

1205

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La H 338 A sermon preached by Mr. J.E. Hazelton on May 12th, 1907, from the text "And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before Me alway." Exodus 25. 30.

This morning for a little while we will consider, by the help of the illuminating Spirit of the Living God, the Table of Shewbread, speaking first of its description, secondly of its position, and thirdly of its significance.

Ritualism claims to meet the human longing and human need, hence in the present day all sorts of unauthorised ceremonies and unscriptural types are to be seen in churches nominally Protestant, but when men invent types for themselves, and paint pictures in this respect for themselves of scriptural realities, they inevitably go astray. Our God in His Word has recognised this human longing for type, picture and shadow. He recognised it in the old dispensation, the types of which we are considering Sabbath by Sabbath. That dispensation has forever passed away, and all has received its glorious fulfilment in Christ, and yet the record of them is ever to remain. In our longing for light upon the glorious realities of the Gospel we are led back to these old types, and under the teaching of the blessed Spirit we see a living Christ enshrined and set forth therein.

Let us look at the Table of Shewbread descriptively. It was made of acacia wood, and overlaid with pure gold, the same kind of materials as the Mercy Seat and the Altar of Incense, and therefore we are at once clear that it must refer to the same Person whom those other objects set forth. This table is surrounded by two crowns or wreaths of gold; one golden crown was around the slab and the outer rim, where the second golden crown was placed. Doubtless the space between the two crowns was occupied with those vessels of pure gold of which we read in the preceding verses, - "dishes, spoons, covers, bowls; of pure gold shalt thou make them," and these were dishes, spoons, incense cups, chalices, vessels used by the priests when they partook of their share of the drink offerings which had been presented upon the Brazen Altar outside. In the Holy Place stood the Table, but the most important objects on that Table were twelve loaves of fine flour, in which was no admixture of leaven, because leaven in the Word of God ever stands for that which is evil (hence the Apostle speaks of the leaven of malice and other sins.) The twelve loaves remained upon that Table for several days, and then were removed and eaten by the priests in the Holy Place being replaced by fresh loaves which most likely were covered with the sweet smelling frankincense. This was called the Shewbread, or the Bread of Face, or the Bread of Presence. Twice it is called the "continual bread", because the table was never unfurnished. I do rejoice for that word "CONTINUAL" which occurs in connection with the great objects of the tabernacle. Upon the Altar of Burnt Offering outside, "a continual burnt offering", the morning and evening lamb, was offered, and upon the altar of incense inside was offered the "perpetual incense", and again, the Shewbread Table is the table of the continual bread. The Brazen Altar, indicative of Calvary, the continuing or continual Burnt Offering.

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,

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Till all the ransomed church of God  
Be saved to sin no more."

which continual Burnt Offering was offered once for all, but its gracious effects go on down all the ages. The altar of incense in the Holy Place, - Perpetual incense.

"Founded on right Thy prayer avails,  
Jehovah smiles on Thee,  
And now Thou in Thy kingdom art,  
Dear Lord, remember me."

which perpetual incense is indicative of Christ's mediatorial work. And again on this table is Continual Bread, food for the souls of God's people down all the ages, and as the Shewbread Table was never without those twelve loaves, so there is in a precious Christ a continual abundance, a perpetual supply for the needs of the hungry, the thirsty, and the weary who come by the way. Here then is another type which is rich in Gospel, the Table itself setting forth with Divine brilliancy the Person of our Lord, the wood, His incorruptible humanity, and the gold, His deity; the Bread upon the table setting forth Christ's provision which rests upon and grows out of the nature of His person. Christ's Person and Christ's provision! The one abundance on that Table which abides forever! The one full Table which is ever full! Then, too, nothing can divide between Christ and His dear people. The High Priest of the Jews with the golden plate, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, upon His Head represents Christ, our glorious Head; and the members of his body covered with those garments of glory and beauty represent the mystical body of the Lord Jesus Christ, His dear Church and people. Again in the Shewbread Table we have Christ and His people, or Christ in the heavenly glory upholding the whole of His people before the Face of God. Those loaves represented the twelve tribes of Israel nationally, and spiritually, the whole election of grace. Christ Jesus the Lord is the true Presence Bread, and in His Person all His people are represented before God. The Bread of God is He upon Whom the Eye of Jehovah looks with infinite complacency and love, and, concerning our precious Christ, the invitation has gone forth "Eat O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O Beloved." This then is the Table of Shewbread viewed descriptively just as it stood in the Holy Place with the frankincense upon the loaves.

Let us look next at the position which the holy table occupied in the Holy Place. On one side of the Holy Place was the golden lampstand; on the other, that is the north side, stood the shewbread table. In the very centre, facing the centre of the vail, was the golden incense altar. On the other side of the vail, opposite the altar was the Mercy Seat with the Shekinah cloud. The table with the bread thus stood also before the Lord as manifested on the Mercy Seat in the Shekinah cloud, and in the Holy Place we see what our Saviour is to us, food, light, fragrance! In the 5th verse of the 4th chapter of the Revelation is written "seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." This is an allusion to the seven branched candlestick in the Holy Place and represents the light of divine truth pouring its glory throughout the Church of God. "In

Thy light do we see light", and as we are favoured with the teaching and illumination of God the Holy Spirit (there was no other light in the Holy Place but that which came from the golden lampstand), we see Christ Jesus our Lord, our Bread, our heavenly Light, and our Divine and glorious Intercessor.

Now look at the way by which a poor sinner comes into all this. He is feeling the burden of his sins, and his need of a propitiation. The First place he comes to is the Gateway of the Court, and so I would say this morning to every yearning, burdened, uneasy soul here, Christ ALONE can meet the necessities of your case! and as Pharaoh said to the Egyptians in their sore distress, "GO UNTO JOSEPH", so I would say to every burdened soul, to every weary and troubled heart, GO UNTO JESUS, for He is yet alive. And so the Israelite comes to the Gateway, and the curtain is lifted, and he enters the outer court. He has come to Jesus, and draws near to the Brazen Altar, that is, he comes to the sacrifice and the blood of a precious Christ. The sacrifice is offered, the sinner is accepted. He goes further, being a priest, and approaches the Brazen Laver, the vessel containing the water sufficing for his purification, and he cleanses his hands and feet therein. Then he advances into the Holy Place and stands beside the Incense Altar with its sweet odours ascending to heaven. He turns and there is food for him; he looks in another direction and there is light for him all along the pathway. But now the Vail is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, so that access to the Mercy Seat, communion with God, are the portion of every poor sinner who cometh unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and approacheth the Sacrifice of Calvary and knoweth the washing of the Spirit by the Word. Now the Shewbread Table occupies such a position that we cannot partake of Christ as the food of our souls unless we have drawn near to Him, unless we know Him first of all as the glorious One meeting our necessities, knowing the power of his blood, and the cleansing water by the Word. Then going into the Holy Place we can feed upon Him and in that strength commune with Him from off the Mercy Seat.

What did the Shewbread Table rest upon? We have seen that it stood upon one side of the Holy Place and was illuminated by the light of the Candlestick. What was the floor upon which it stood? The same as that of the Tabernacle - the BARE EARTH. There was no artificial floor; it rested on the red sand of the desert. What does this teach us? That our Christ in His atonement, in His life as the food for our souls meets all our necessities as we travel through the wilderness. The Tabernacle, that wonderful structure of beauty, was up-reared upon the dust of the earth, the dust of which man is made, and to which we shall one day return, the dust which is the serpent's food the dust which speaks to us of death and ruin. This is where the Gospel meets our needs. Beauty and barrenness! Preciousness and worthlessness! The incorruptible and the perishable! The heavens above the earth as we travel through the wilderness to our heavenly home. There is no provision in the wilderness naturally for the souls of men; earth itself can yield no provision, but there is a Table, bountifully and perpetually furnished with living Bread, which meets the necessities of living souls - meat to eat which the world knoweth nothing of.

In relation to dust as constituting the floor of the tabernacle, there is very wonderful teaching contained in the 5th chapter of Numbers. A woman suspected by her husband of unfaithfulness is brought to the priest, and with her an offering of jealousy; afterwards holy water was taken, and the dust of the floor of the tabernacle mingled with it; curses pronounced by God against unfaithfulness were read in her hearing, and the water used in absorbing these curses; the cup was then administered to the woman, and if she were guilty she was smitten with a sore disease. How different from a picture of our blessed Lord and His Church! We stood as members of His Church convicted of unfaithfulness, and heart wandering from Him, and He who had espoused His wife from all eternity came and took the cup which contained all the curses of God against us; He gave it not to us to drink, but emptied that cup Himself, that His Church might go free! "He was made a curse for us." "He was made Sin for us Who knew no sin!" And so we understand a little of the preciousness of the fact that the tabernacle and its table stood on the bare earth, for a precious Christ comes to meet us in our barrenness, our worthlessness, and all our guilty corruption and need.

Let us look lastly a little more closely at the significance of that which was placed upon this table. The bread was not there to be looked at, but to be eaten, and eating throughout God's Word is always a type of communion and of fellowship. There can be no partaking one with another of the same food with pleasure, unless there is peace and friendship existing between the two parties, and if we have been brought to receive, to appropriate, to lay hold of Christ, it is because there is friendship between us and God. This truth is taught to us in the way to the Table being by the Brazen Altar, and by the Laver of the pure water, the daily sanctification and the blessed ministry of the Spirit. We shall want Jesus, dear friends, for food ALL THE WAY! It is not by repentance and faith when first we come to Him, and then laying them aside forever that we shall thrive, but daily repenting, daily and hourly faith, daily trusting! Our peace and joy shall gather in proportion as, actively and continually under the power and unction of the blessed Spirit, we have to do with Jesus; this is taught by the priests eating week by week the precious bread upon that table, the bread being replaced by fresh loaves. Do we know what this is? Many, a large number, the majority here this morning, profess to know what it is to come as poor sinners to a Gospel Table, but in all congregations like this, we may be quite certain that there are some who do not know it, and what a solemn thing it is if we profess to know it and yet have never tasted that the Lord is gracious! Here stands the Gospel table, the only provision upon it Christ Jesus the Lord, the same yesterday, today and for ever, and we come into the Holy Place to worship and bless God for the gift of His Son. He that eateth - we learn of Christ, we receive Him, we delight in Him, we find Christ and Him crucified the joy and the peace of our souls, for not only is Christ and Him crucified set forth, but our risen and ascended Saviour. Can you get on without Christ? How easy it sounds I often think when people sing "Give me Christ, or else I die." I ask myself personally "Is this true of me?" Is it true of you, or is it only a sham? Do you feel spiritually that you would die if you had not Christ? If not, when you sing those words, you sing a LIE. If

your soul has been quickened by Divine Grace, if you have been made to pant and yearn and hunger after God, only Christ Jesus the Lord, Prophet Priest and King can possibly meet the needs of your soul, and in coming to Jesus to eat His Bread, and drink His Blood you meet His Father. That is a glorious word in the parable, when the prodigal reached home, his father received him and said, Let us eat and be merry; but God the Father looks on His dear Son, Jesus, the Bread of God, He in Whom He finds infinite satisfaction; and when the poor sinner comes to feed upon Jesus, to rest upon Him, God the Father says, Let us eat and be merry (or be glad), for the wine of Jesus' blood maketh the heart of God and man glad, and the Bread upon the Shewbread Table satisfies both the sinner and God the Father. Have we a right thus to come? The apostle in the last chapter of Hebrews says, "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." This implies that while some have no right to eat, others have. There were the drink and meat offerings of the Brazen Altar eaten by the priests in the Holy Place, of which they which served the Tabernacle (i.e., the Levites) had no right to eat. Paul writing to the converted Jews says We have an altar (the Gospel) Jesus Christ, whereof they have no right to eat which adhere to the old Jewish rites and ceremonies. In like manner it is the poor and needy sinners coming empty to Christ who have the right to eat of Him, but not those who trust to deeds and self righteousness. The poor sinner who says

I, other priests disclaim,  
 And laws and offerings too,  
 None but the bleeding Lamb  
 The mighty work could do.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want.

Poor sinner, all in Christ thou shalt most surely find; hungry, thirsty, poor and needy, coming by Calvary thou hast a God-given right to eat of that altar, of that table, and to partake of that Shewbread.

The Shewbread was made of fine flour, and so the Person, the nature of our Lord was free from every taint of corruption. Our sins were His burden. Hell sifted Him when He was on earth, and found no grain of chaff in Him. God's wrath blazed against Him on Calvary's cross as the Sin Bearer of His people, and, when God's holiness was satisfied, the result of all was the loaves of fine flour upon the Shewbread Table, the meat of His dear people.

There were twelve loaves, one loaf representing each tribe, which means food for the whole family of faith; though differing widely as do the Lord's dear people, there is food for each one. I look for a moment at the loaves as representing God's people in Christ Jesus the Table - Christ upholding all God's people before the Face of God. But how can that be typified by the loaves? "Ye are God's husbandry." Ye are the outcome of His work, the Bread of His Heart. What provision there was that no loaf should be displaced! There was the golden crown right round the table so that it was not possible for one loaf to fall to the ground; thus our great and glorious Jesus, our Priest-King

preserves by His faithfulness and by His royal power and dignity every poor sinner putting his trust in Him. There was no pre-eminence among those loaves. There were two rows of six each side by side, all upon one level. We differ here in diverse ways, but however much we may differ, all are one in Christ Jesus the Lord. There is a child of God who only just touches with trembling hand the very edge of Jesus' garments; there is another who with enraptured head rests upon His very Breast, but IN CHRIST JESUS THE LORD both are equally safe, and equally accepted.

Frankincense was sprinkled upon those loaves, and Christ Jesus the Lord is fragrant to the poor sinner. Regarding them as typical of His people the frankincense sets forth the intercession and the merits our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ sprinkled upon them.

O sacred Head, once wounded

we sometimes sing concerning our blessed Lord. There is no sustenance for the heart but in Thee. Live near the Cross, dear friends; live near Gethsemane; live near Calvary, be much in thought, heart, mind and contemplation with the dying, reigning Christ. Anticipate the Coming ONE, for in proportion as thou dost live upon this Bread thou wilt be strong for holy and gracious service. The dead can do without bread, but the living cannot! If you are "dead in trespasses and sins" you can do without Christ in your own feelings. Suppose someone said "~~the man/~~ ~~has/~~ ~~never/~~ ~~tasted/~~ ~~bread/~~", "I have a man in my house who has never tasted bread". I should say, "The man must be a statue," and so it would prove. I bring a piece of bread to the lips of a dead man, but the lips are dead, but when He who says "I AM THE LIVING BREAD" touches the lips of a dead sinner, the sinner lives.

Lastly, every Sabbath the priests were to bring forth fresh supplies of bread; the Table was never to be emptied, and this tells us what should be the theme of the Gospel, nothing but Bread, the BREAD OF LIFE, CHRIST JESUS THE LORD - none but Christ. We are to glean in the fair fields of holy Scripture during the week; we are to work upon that which we glean by prayer, we are to seek for the fragrance and anointing of God the Holy Spirit, and to place Sabbath by Sabbath upon the Table the Bread which alone can satisfy the yearning of the soul.

The bread was eaten in the Holy Place, eaten in the place of communion. Of Elijah it is said, he went in the strength of the meat which the angel brought him forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the Mount of God, and in the strength of the food which a precious Christ constitutes, we can go forth along life's journey to serve and glorify our Lord, looking forward to the time when we shall see Him face to face.

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts!  
 Thou Fount of Life, Thou light of men,  
 From the best bliss that earth imparts,  
 We turn unfilled to Thee again.

7.

We taste Thee, O thou Living Bread,  
And long to feast upon Thee still,  
We drink of Thee the Fountain Head,  
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

God grant that we may know by sweet experience more and more of this