

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 4)

The Door and Table of Showbread

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Have you ever noticed how much we eat? We get our three square meals every day here in America and Canada, and usually most other places around the world these days. We get those three square meals seven days a week, 365 days a year (well, except us true Christians who only get 364 days a year because of Atonement).

Some of us eat a lot more than others. I have seen some of our teenagers and young men eat enough to gorge a horse. Young growing guys in the prime of their strength eat a lot of food. (But to be fair, I have seen a lot of older men, and even some older women put a great deal away, too.) Needless to say, hunger is not a problem among us. We are a well-fed people.

Lately, I have been listening to *Undaunted Courage*, a biography of Merriweather Lewis of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, by Stephen Ambrose, and he mentions that while Lewis and Clark were paddling up the Missouri River, having reached the Great Plains where the great herds of buffalo, elk, deer, and other types of food (not what we would eat, however), it was said, that they were expending so much energy paddling against the current of the Missouri River that the 31 men were eating an average of 9 pounds of meat per man per day!

Later on, after they had reached some of the Indian tribes, they began to send some of the chiefs back to St. Louis, to be prepared and sent on to meet President Thomas Jefferson at the White House, because he wanted to meet them, after all, having become their leader after the Louisiana Purchase. On this trip to Washington, they provided food for these Indian chiefs. They knew that they ate a lot, but they did not know how much. They outdid the guys on the expedition. They ate 12 pounds of meat per man per day. And they were not even rowing boats or canoes. They were in coaches and on horses. It is really difficult to imagine.

Can you imagine eating 12 pounds of meat a day? If you spread it out over the entire waking period, it would be like eating eight 24 ounce porterhouse steaks daily, or about 1 of these steaks every two hours, leaving 8 hours to sleep.

Now I am sure that they had it in jerky, or other preserved forms, but even so, 12 pounds of meat a day for weeks on end. Of course, they were not eating their vegetables, or bread. Meat was all they were eating, and washing it down with water.

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But, it is just an incredible thing to think about.

These days, Americans tend to eat a lot of carbohydrates, much in the form of sugary drinks and snacks, as well as more wholesome foods made from grains. But, eating the wrong forms of carbohydrates is a major reason why we are not as healthy as we should be. God has provided us a land of plenty, and this land of plenty grows a lot more than carbohydrates, but you could not tell so by walking down the aisles of our grocery stores.

But it is a good thing that this is a land of plenty, where we grow oats, corn, rye, wheat, and other grains very abundantly, and God has blessed and given us a land that will grow just about anything. We have very fertile soil, and it is well watered.

Do you realize that if all the wheat fields in America were combined into just one rectangle or square field, that it would be large enough to cover the entire state of Wyoming? I have been across Indiana and Illinois, and I think they are full of corn—going down their roads, and all you see is cornfield after cornfield. That is why it seems to take so long to get across them.

But we have a serious bread addiction in this country. It is so bad that if we were taken off of it, we would crave it, just like the Israelites craved meat. We would crave bread, I am sure.

Listen to these statistics. According to National Geographic, each American eats more than one whole loaf of bread each week. In fact, it is 55 loaves every year, for each one of our 300 million persons. That means that the bread industry in this country has to produce 16.5 billion loaves of bread every year just to feed the American public.

Over a 70-year lifetime, an American will typically eat 3850 loaves of bread, which is about 77,000 slices of bread. That is a lot of bread. That is gargantuan to think about. If you put this into terms of sandwiches, you would have to eat ten sandwiches every week for your whole life. So, it is not just every day, but 10 per week.

Now, that is just "loaf-bread"—store-bought sandwich loaf-bread. These statistics do not include rolls, buns, biscuits, cookies, pizza dough, noodles, spaghetti, and such that we also eat.

Now, if we only added the hamburger and hot dog buns into this statistic, we would have to add to our lifetime total (3850 loaves), 12,129 hamburger buns, as well as 5,442 hot dog buns—that approximates to 35,000 slices of bread more. This brings our

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lifetime total to 112,000 slices of bread, or 5600 loaves, which is 80 loaves (equivalent) a year, per person.

Talk about a recession proof industry! We ought to all become bakers! People need to eat, and bread is (and always has been) relatively cheap.

In ancient times, daily wages were sometimes given in grain, or sometimes in terms of loaves of bread that might sustain the person for one day. When people were given coins for their daily wages, they then could go out and buy the equivalent of about one or two loaves of bread—but not much more for a typical day laborer.

Jesus commands us to ask God for our daily bread. It is in the model prayer. So, it is obvious where the bread comes from. It is from Him. And of course, His command in Matthew 6:11 highlights how important God's continuing providence is for our sustenance. If He did not give it, we would not have any to eat, and we would die.

We should be thankful because He usually provides us with far more than just the one loaf a day. We all show by the way that we live that He provides us with far more than that. In fact, let us start in Psalm 23 to show just what He does for His sheep—His people. God's providence is always overflowing. However, sometimes He withholds things from us in order to teach us lessons, but generally this is the way that it goes:

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

So He provides for us over and above—as a matter of fact, Jesus Christ tells us that God provides, "pressed down, shaken together, and running over." He gives us so much that we need to be thankful for.

Well, obviously I have been talking about bread today. Bread has much to do with the tabernacle furniture item we will examine today—the table of showbread. That the Holy Place includes an item devoted to bread shows just how important it is spiritually to our approach to God through Christ, whom we all know as the Bread of Life.

So we will go through that today. But before we continue, please remember that last time we were still outside the sanctuary. And we were in the courtyard where the brazen altar of sacrifice was, and the shining laver, also made of bronze. Both of these pieces symbolize the work of Christ in our behalf. The altar, from Part 2 of this series, illustrated the sacrifice's Christ made for our redemption and grace. That is where all the sacrifices

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were made in the wilderness, and when Israel also came into the land, symbolic of what Christ did. Every sacrifice that was made on there has some relation to Christ and teaches us something about what Christ did for us in bringing us together with God, forgiving our sins, and redeeming us from the world, etc.

The laver, as mentioned in the previous sermon, represents His ongoing work of cleaning us up so that we can serve Him—to serve God—and ultimately, also, to serve our fellow man. But we need to keep being cleaned up. So, we cannot approach the Father, we cannot have a relationship with Him unless Christ does both of these things—He gets us inside the door with His sacrifice, and He continues to clean us up, because only by this manner will we be worthy to serve God.

So, we are standing there at the laver, and we are about to enter the tabernacle from the outside, and the laver is behind us. We want to go inside, and study the interior furnishings. But, we need to notice a detail that many people gloss over, or some folks at least do not give it a thought. And, that is the door itself.

Exodus 26 talks about this door. Most people understand that there was a veil in front of the Holy of Holies. But there was also a veil, or curtain that was in front of the entire tabernacle, in front of the holy place, or the first sanctuary. Here are the instructions:

Exodus 26:36-37 "You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them."

These are fairly simple instructions. The front door, as it says here, is called a screen. It was a curtain. The Hebrews 9:3 alludes to it as the first veil. There were two veils. The first veil was to screen the holy place from the outside, and the second veil was the one we are more familiar with between the holy place and the Holy of Holies, behind which was the Ark of the Covenant, symbolic of God's throne.

It was a curtain woven by a weaver, and there is some dispute about whether this was a white linen weave with blue, purple and scarlet threads in it, or whether it was actually a blue weave with purple, scarlet, and white in it. Most people think that it was blue, and that blue was the warp, with the other colors in the woof. But, it is hard to know. It might have been white, or blue. The reason most people think blue is because it is the first color mentioned. And, that would be, you would think, the predominant color.

It was very beautiful, this mix of colors—blue, purple, and scarlet threads, and white. It would have been an amazing thing. It had no design on it, which is another difference between this, and the second veil. This first one only had these various colors woven into it, while the second had cherubim embroidered into them. So, if one were to walk through the first veil, and look up toward the Holy of Holies, he would see these great angels there on the veil (verse 31), as a pre-image of the cherubim over the ark itself, which was inside the Holy of Holies, and no one ever saw them, except the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement.

This first curtain or screen was probably 15 feet square. If the tabernacle was square, the curtain was also square. This is roughly the same size of this stage where I am standing. And, this screen covered this opening top to bottom, side to side—completely covered. It was hung from 5 pillars made from acacia wood. And, it appears from what it says here that the entire pillar was gilded. But, if you go to another place where it says what the men actually did, it says that they only gilded the capitals and the hooks, with the rest of the wood exposed, and probably set so that the pillars on the outside of the screen/veil with the hooks facing inward, holding up the screen.

These posts or pillars had bases of cast bronze. You can compare them to the pillars or posts that were used for the second veil, and those were made of silver. What you are seeing here is that as you approach the Holy of Holies, things get richer. So, on the outside, we had posts set in bronze bases with un-gilded wood. But as we go onward into the tabernacle, seeing some of the other things, all of the furniture inside the holy place was gilded. And also, that the next curtain with its gilded posts was set in silver bases.

This outer curtain was placed along 15 feet. So if you placed five of them across, then that would leave six openings. Now there were two ways you could do this. There would be six openings if you did them using the corners of the tent as posts, and then you put your five posts inside of that, there would be six openings, and they would be roughly 34 inches apart. It is plenty wide enough. Our normal exterior doors are 36 inches. So you could get in and out without any problems. However, if you put the five posts with the outside post right next to the wall, then you would get four places/entrances, and they would be three feet and three quarters wide (36.75 inches, or 45 inches?) so that would be a quite a bit bigger door.

We do not know how it was. It does not really say. The Bible is a bit vague on it, whether you put these outside posts right next to the wall, or whether you set them inside and made more openings.

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Just thinking about this, you have these openings made by these pillars, and you have a curtain going down behind them (as it appears approaching from the outside), how do you get in? How do you get in when it is one solid sheet curtain across?

Well, people do not know. They have been studying this for hundreds of years, and nobody had a real certain answer about how this worked.

Did the priests enter in at the corner where they could hold back a flap and get in? We do not know. Did it roll up from the bottom? Did they have to pick it up, and go in under that way? That would seem kind of strange. I do not know, but there is nothing in the Bible that says that there was a system of pulleys where they could roll it up.

Was the curtain itself actually divided at some point so that one could pull it back, and go in that way? Or, was there an actual door in it that one could go through? I do not mean a wooden door. There is also another idea that someone brought forward, and that was that the five pillars were not actually in line with the end of the tabernacle, but actually set forward just a bit, so that it was a screen, and not attached to the tabernacle, it was out a bit forward, so in that way the priests could go around the end, and there would be some opening of however many feet, and they would not have to touch anything, or lift anything, or open anything—it was always open, but the tabernacle itself was screened.

There is yet another idea, and this does not seem very likely to me, because of the word screen—everything about this is in the singular—the idea is that it was actually made of several pieces, so that they hung down from these hooks, and you could actually enter in at several places because there were three, four, or five openings for them to go in.

I do not know. The Bible does not say. There is no place I have looked that has given a definitive answer. It is an intriguing detail. And, I think about the screen, and look at it as the one idea where the posts are out a little bit, which seems likely to me, but I do not know.

In the temple, if you want to go to I Kings 6:31-35, Solomon actually put a door—a real wooden door in the tabernacle. There was not a screen, there was no curtain. It was a door made of olive wood that was carved with all sorts of things on it.

So, who knows? It is interesting to think about.

Before we go on, I need to go to John 10, because even this door is significant.

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John 10:7, 9-10 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

So, not only is He the altar, and the laver, and the showbread, and the light of the world in the menorah, He is the altar of incense, He is our intercessor in prayer, He is also the door that we have to pass through to go in and out of His presence.

It is very interesting that what He says here is that if we enter by Him, we will be saved. This can be both spiritual deliverance, and safety and security. We can go in and out, meaning that we have freedom, which brings peace and prosperity; we have purpose and direction, which is the idea of going in and out. We will also find pasture, meaning we will find enough to sustain us, and more through Him, which is interesting, because that is where we go immediately upon entering the tabernacle—to the idea of sustenance.

So, once inside the holy place, we are facing west. We have got our back to the "door" or screen (east), and we are facing west toward the Holy of Holies. We would see the table of showbread to our right (north), while the menorah—the golden lamp stand—is on our left (south), and then right in front of us, in front of the veil, is the altar of incense. And, right behind that is the great veil with the cherubim embroidered on it separating us from the Holy of Holies.

These are the only things within the tabernacle.

Turn, now, to Exodus 25, and we will now see the table described.

Exodus 25:23-30 "You shall also make a table of acacia wood; two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold all around. You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around, and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around. And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that are at its four legs. The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring. You shall make them of pure gold. And

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you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.

Now, please turn to chapter 37, and we will see them when they make the table.

Exodus 37:10-16 He made the table of acacia wood; two cubits was its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made a molding of gold all around it. Also he made a frame of a handbreadth all around it, and made a molding of gold for the frame all around it. And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that were at its four legs. The rings were close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. And he made the poles of acacia wood to bear the table, and overlaid them with gold. He made of pure gold the utensils which were on the table: its dishes, its cups, its bowls, and its pitchers for pouring.

So we see that he did everything according to the instructions that God had given.

Now, this table is a very simple piece of furniture. It is like any kind of end table you might have in the house, except a whole lot nicer. It is three feet long, (using the common cubit) it is 18 inches wide, and 27 inches tall. It is, indeed, like an end table, except that it is covered with pure gold. It is made of acacia wood, completely overlaid with pure gold. Along its top was a kind of molding that went all the way around. This molding was an ornamental rim, like a crown, that went around the perimeter. But, more than being just a nice touch, it was made so that the things on the table would not fall off should there be some sort of jostling. So, this rim had somewhat an appearance of a crown, rising slightly above the surface of the table.

It also, underneath the top of the table on the outside, had a three or four inch band that went all the way around the table for support. And it was on that band or support, at the point where the legs came to it, that there was the rings for the poles for their transportation by the Levites.

So, that is basically it. Four legs, piece of wood on top, a band, a crown, and four rings with two poles; all overlaid with pure gold.

Now, I want to describe this acacia wood because it was used a great deal throughout the tabernacle. In the King James Version, it is "shittim wood," whereas in most modern translations, including the New King James Version, it is "acacia wood." The Hebrew

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word is "shittim" as the King James translators left that word untranslated. But most people these days know it as acacia.

It is mostly found in the desert and wilderness areas as a large shrub. But in some places that are better watered, it makes a small to medium sized tree with trunks sometimes two feet across through the center. So, some can become substantial trees.

It usually has somewhat of an umbrella shape to the top of it (like the mimosa trees in the United States that it is related to). But, it has rough, gnarled bark.

The wood that it has is very interesting, and I have seen some beautiful works, because this wood is an orangey-brown when finished, with a very close grain. So, when made into furniture, finished, stained, and varnished nicely, it would be a quite beautiful piece of work. Of course, God did not do all that. He had it covered with pure gold!

But because this tree grows in these desert places, and develops a very close grain, it means that it is very durable. It is also highly resinous, like the cedar or fir trees we are familiar with, and tends, also like cedar, to be insect repellent.

With all these attributes—close grained, durability, insect resistant—it should last you a very long time. So, it is very well suited to work and furniture within the tabernacle, both in the furnishing, and wooden boards.

I do not know if you are aware of it, but acacia is also the source for "gum Arabic," which you no doubt have seen in lists of ingredients from some items found in the store today. They use gum Arabic—the sap from this tree—in adhesives, and candy to even out the body from batch to batch. And, it is also found in a few pharmaceuticals.

Now, this table also had various pure gold utensils—dishes, pans, pitchers, and bowls. Most people are not aware that these things are at this table, but they are.

The dishes—or plates might be a better translation—was for the bread to rest on. The pans—or more probably spoons—were for holding and burning frankincense, which was burned with the offering while setting the bread. Most people are not aware especially of the pitchers, or jugs that were there on the table. They were there because the table also held wine. There were drink offerings that were made along with the bread offering.

Is it not interesting how often the bread and the wine appear together? In Genesis 14 it appears with Abraham and Melchizedek, and the serving of bread and wine. There is bread and wine in this instance, here. And, there is bread and wine (if we would go

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further into Christ's life), and it all comes together in the symbolism (especially Passover).

So, the bowls (or cups) were also for the wine. Most likely, there was an entire jug of wine sitting on this table throughout the week, and it was poured out into the cups as if it was being served.

Now, I need to mention that these were used at the end of the week on the Sabbath.

What we have here, then, with all these things is a dinner service. We have a table laid out for dinner for one person. This is the table of the Lord's House. The tabernacle was His house, and this was the table that was set for all those who could approach to Him. And it is interesting that He provides bread and wine! And that is exactly what He provides us—which we will get into a bit later.

I have mentioned a great deal about pure gold in all of this. And the Bible is very specific that it was pure gold. It was 24 carat gold. It had nothing in it other than gold.

The primary feature of gold in the Bible is its obvious high value. Everybody on earth knows that gold is worth a lot of money. I mean, just look at it—if you had no idea of what it was, just seeing pure gold would make one want to covet it. It is beautiful. It is the most precious metal, and always has been, but not because it is relatively rare. One glimpse of something that is pure shining gold, and our minds automatically begin to calculate costs. We think, "Wow! That is really expensive!" A thing that is pure gold is rich, and its owner must also be rich, and wealthy. And it is likely that the owner is very powerful too, especially if he can afford to have all his dishes and utensils made of pure gold and all his furniture overlaid with pure gold.

So God wants to impress us as we come into His house, of His splendor and beauty. He wants us to see as we come into His house, that He is rich beyond avarice. He owns everything. And, He is very powerful as well. That is what gold represents—what it tells us automatically.

Symbolically, when something is made out of gold, it signals superiority and excellence. "You, Nebuchadnezzar, are that head of gold," meaning that out of all the Gentile kingdoms of that age, his was the most powerful, the best, the most excellent of them. He had his problems, obviously, but he was far better than what came after him—Persia, Greece, Rome.

So, that is the idea we get from gold.

Another quality of gold that we may not think of is that it is quite permanent and durable. Gold does not oxidize or tarnish like silver does, even though we think silver is wonderful. But, silver, if you leave it out, tarnishes very quickly, and darkens, becoming unsightly and messy. But gold is not like that. It retains its luster. And despite being soft and malleable—able to be reshaped, or marred—it is almost impossible to destroy it.

Putting it in the fire only purifies it. And, there are scriptures about that too. That is the way that God wants us to be in our character—pure as gold, refined in the fire.

We also know that it is very heavy. And, this is also a quality of gold that tends to give it a type of gravitas. (Remember that word from the first presidential campaign by Mr. George Bush in 2000?) Gravitas is a Latin word, which means that a thing has a type of enduring dignity, depth, and formality. Therefore, let gold bring to mind God's dignity, depth, and formality. God is gold, is golden. Everything that God does is wonderful, and formal, and beautiful. And God wanted these qualities of gold to impress us so much in terms of the tabernacle that everything, even the smallest utensil, hooks, rings, and whatnot, were designed of pure gold in His house. He wanted us to think of these things as we entered the tabernacle.

Now, we have gone through all of the things—the table, and its furnishings—except for the bread itself.

God is speaking to Moses, and the priests.

Leviticus 24:5-7 "And 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 in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD.

Okay, here are the Levites' instructions for baking the bread. In various places this bread is called "showbread," "cakes" (as it is here), "hallowed bread," and "continual, or perpetual bread," which is an interesting name for it.

The term "shewbread" or "showbread" is not a very good translation. It came to us from Luther through Tyndale, and then through the King James Version. Luther used a German word that sounds like "shoat-brot," and it was basically copied over from that. It is not a good English way of describing or naming this thing.

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Literally, showbread is, "bread of the face"—so, I guess you could call it "face-bread." It is also called "bread of the presence." This is what "face" implies. The "face" is God's face. So this is bread that is in front of God's face, therefore it is the bread of His presence—the bread in His presence. God was behind the veil, sitting on His throne—the mercy seat—so it was the bread of His presence, the bread that was always before Him.

Remember that we saw, there, in Exodus 25:30 that the bread was to be there always. This is the idea of the continual, or perpetual bread comes from. It was always supposed to be there. There was never, ever to be a lack of bread in His house. And when they came in to change it, there was new bread to replace the old bread. So there was always 12 loaves of bread in the tabernacle at all times. So, it was there perpetually before Him.

The table had bread, wine, frankincense—all of these in God's presence perpetually, symbolic of His people—us—sharing fellowship and a relationship with God. When we eat with God, we are partaking of fellowship with Him. You are having a relationship with Him. And that is what this is to symbolize in the overall sense. Hold onto this idea of fellowship and relationship with God.

As to the bread, these loaves—each of the twelve loaves was made from two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour. The best I can tell, this two-tenths of an ephah is about 18 cups of flour. This is about 6 and a half pounds of flour—each. And it was unleavened, so these "cakes" were flat, heavy loaves.

Now, it never says in the Bible that they were unleavened, but the Bread of God—Jesus Christ—was unleavened, and He would not be approached with sin in any way. And so, it is most likely that these were unleavened.

These were big loaves. I do not know just how big they were, but to put them in rows—two rows of six each—side by side, would not fit on the table, because you also had utensils and such also on this table. And it is only the size of an end table, 36 inches by 18 inches. And, you had to get twelve large loaves on this thing.

The way it worked out at the temple in the time of Christ is that they were in two stacks—they were two rows, with six stacked loaves of bread each. So it was relatively high even for flat bread, because there was 18 cups of flour in each, plus whatever else they put in it.

Now, a cup or a spoon, was placed on top of each of these piles of bread. And inside

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the cup or spoon was the frankincense. It is difficult to know how the frankincense was used. If they tried to keep this incense burning every day, it would use up an awful lot of incense. Most authorities say that the incense was burned on the incense altar, not on the bread.

Probably what happened was that when the new bread was set out on the Sabbath, they put the cup or spoon on top, and put incense in there, and let it burn until it was consumed. But it was this offering, it says here, an offering made by fire to the Lord, as part of the consecration of the new bread. More than likely, this is what happened.

Symbolically, incense represents a person's reverent allegiance and dependence upon God. And when it is burned, it makes a perfect illustration of prayer. If you would go to Revelation 5:8, you would see, it is told there very specifically, that the incense is the prayers of the saints.

So, what do we do when we pray? Well, we are obviously showing our reverent allegiance and dependence on God, because we affirm to Him that we are of His body, that we are His people, and we ask Him for things. That is what prayer does. And so, incense indicates a person's reverent allegiance and dependence on God.

It is very fascinating to our senses because not only would the smoke go up, but it would also produce a wonderful smell—a balsamic sort of fragrance.

So, the inside of the tabernacle was a fragrant place—it smelled good. Not only was incense burned over the bread, but the incense altar was used both morning and evening showing the prayers of the saints going up before God's throne.

Let us pick up verse 8 here.

Leviticus 24:8 "Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

This is very interesting in terms of Sabbath observance. The renewal of the loaves every Sabbath shows that we, in the place of the priests are to use the seventh day to rededicate ourselves to God, by coming before His presence afresh. That is what the loaves represent, especially since they were made and baked on the Sabbath day also. This was referenced by Jesus in Matthew 12, that the priests are blameless when they bake loaves of bread on the Sabbath day. That is okay. They make new bread for God

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every Sabbath. And so they go before God, with fresh minds, fresh willingness by coming in with new bread.

It is interesting, however, that they did not eat the new bread. They left it there for the whole week. They ate the old bread. Now we would think—hard, old, stale bread? Well, it was the bread of affliction. But, they ate it there. They could not take it out of the tabernacle. When the bread was brought in, it never left the tabernacle, except in the bodies of the priests, unless they could not eat it all, and then it would have to be burned on the altar outside. But it is very interesting that they had to eat the old bread. And, by the way, they drank the old wine. So they rededicated themselves with the bread and wine every week on the Sabbath.

So, eating the old bread on the Sabbath in the sanctuary symbolizes being fed by God—with His Word—on that day. And the fact that they ate the old bread, has an interesting little twist to it. Please turn to Jeremiah 6.

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it. Then you will find rest for your souls. But they [Judah] said, 'We will not walk in it.'"

Now, is that not interesting? They were not supposed to eat the new stuff. They were supposed to eat the old stuff. And if we add that to this verse above, it is saying that these are the old traditions and truths set out by God, the things that were from the beginning, not the new stuff that people are thinking about, and trying to foist off on us as some wonderful new revelation, or new truth, or something. But God says to go back and eat again the old stuff. He says there that you will find rest for your soul—in the old ways.

I thought this very interesting that even though they had to eat week-old bread, it was full of wonderful symbolism for all of us—God's truth is always, and enduring. We do not need "new" truth. We eat the old stuff. And that is how we are going to grow.

Now, the last half of verse 8 of Leviticus 24 reads, the loaves were symbolically "being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant."

These loaves represented the children of Israel as a pledge of the eternal covenant between God and the 12 tribes. So, as a symbol of all that nourishes and sustains life, the bread was a constant reminder that Israel's existence depends on God's providence. God was there—He was providing for them at all times. This bread, then,

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was Israel's way of showing, though commanded by God, that they were totally dependent on God for all their sustenance.

So, God provided their daily bread by giving them manna throughout the forty-years wilderness wanderings. He brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey that produced abundantly, or would have if they had only obeyed God.

Notice Deuteronomy 8:

Deuteronomy 8:7-10 "For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

Yes, but they should have understood the spiritual aspect as well. Go back and look at verse 3:

Deuteronomy 8:3 "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

So, obviously He wanted them to get the understanding through the table of showbread that God provided them with physical food, but He wanted them to remember that there was a spiritual food that He would also provide them, because they truly could not live by that physical bread alone; that if they really wanted to live, and live abundantly—remember we walk through the door, and Jesus said that if you come through Him, you will live abundantly—they would have to go beyond just the physical bread; they would have to go and eat the spiritual bread too.

Now to us, the twelve loaves, beyond anything having to do with physical tribes of Israel, represents us—spiritual Israel—the Israel of God found in Galatians 6:16. We should all already know that verse by heart by now. We talk about that all the time. Revelation 7:4-8 shows the 144,000 and what does He do? He splits it up into the 12

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tribes of Israel, 12,000 people apiece.

So, according to Leviticus 24:8, the loaves on the table, for us, symbolize our consecration and covenant with God, and our recognition of His providence and grace. *The showbread, or the bread of the presence on the table in the sanctuary symbolizes that we are admitted to God's holy table, and His presence, and we can see, and know, and be nourished by God in the person of Jesus Christ—who is the Bread of Life.*

What a mouthful! But all of it is all true, believe me.

Turn to John 14, because it is more than all that. (I am mostly thinking in terms of His presence, and His nourishment at the moment.) Jesus tells His disciples:

John 14:19 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.

Is this not a theme that keeps coming around—living; living abundantly?

John 14:20 "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

So, we do not have to go into a tabernacle to be in God's presence. We do not have to have a temple in which we worship Him. We have been invited into the presence of God. And beyond that, He lives in us. Are we not the temple of God? Is not Christ the temple? We are in Him? And He in us? He is the temple, we are the temple?

Talk about being in the presence of God! We are not before a physical mercy seat, or physical throne. We are in His presence, because He is in us, and we in Him! We are continually in His presence—just like the showbread was continually before God in the tabernacle. It is always, all the time.

Leviticus 24:9 "And 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 offerings of the LOORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute."

Please turn to Hebrews 13.

Hebrews 13:10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

This may seem to be a stretch, but I thought I would bring it up. The word altar, here, is the typical Greek word for altar. But, Paul is alluding to the symbolism, which was understood by just about everyone who ever lived under a sacrificial system of worship, that the altar represents God's table. We could just have easily said that we have a table from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

Aaron and his sons had a right to eat the old showbread every Sabbath. But, Paul says here that we Christians have a table that even they have no right to eat from—meaning the high priests, and the priests under the old system. See? They were not brought under the blood of Jesus Christ. But, we have been. We are very special people, because we are a kingdom of priests, we are a kingdom of spiritual priests, God's true priesthood—the Melchizedek priesthood, of which Jesus Christ is the High Priest.

And all true Christians commemorate this ability—as noted in Hebrews 13:10—each year at the Passover service. We, out of all the people of this world, have an ability to eat at this table that no one else can. We are symbolically fed at God's table with unleavened bread, the symbol of Christ's body, our true food, and the wine found also on the table of showbread, which is the symbol of Christ's shed blood for us.

I wanted to go on into John 6. But you all know John 6, where Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life." And, the Jews had a hard time understanding that because they did not see the spiritual aspect of it. It appears they thought He spoke of cannibalism! But, He was talking about eating His flesh, and drinking His blood in the Passover ritual by eating a piece of bread, and drinking a bit of wine from a cup, because that represents our acceptance by Him, and His sacrifice, and everything that this entails.

Now, in John 6:29 is where that conversation takes place, where they asked Him what the work of God was. And, He said to them, "The work of God is our believing in Him—that you believe in Him whom God has sent." He said that is the work of God.

Then they ask Him for a sign, and He tells them that He will not give them a sign like that. Rather, "I am the bread of life." He then goes through that whole thing about the bread of life through most of this chapter, running about 30 verses, talking about the

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bread of life, and how you must eat that bread, and drink His blood in order to have eternal life in you. And in verse 63, He gives a clue as to what He was talking about.

John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, [they] are spirit, and they are life.

And then,

John 6:66-68 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

So, He asked them if they would leave Him too, because many had left Him, and Peter's reply shows that he understood what Christ was talking about because he said, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." He understood that Jesus was talking about not only His body and blood in the spiritual symbolism, but also talking about ingesting His words—that it was the teaching that would bring them, after Christ's sacrifice, after God's grace to them—that would bring them to eternal life, because in those words, which are spirit, is life.

The idea is that if we want to be in God's presence forever, then we must ingest, and accept what Christ provides for our spiritual life. We must be eating all His words on a continual basis.

So, in terms of the table of showbread, even though there was also wine there, even though it was all gold, and so beautiful, the actual emphasis of the table of showbread is on the bread itself—the symbol of God's providence of spiritual nourishment, which is embodied in Christ. Everything that God teaches us—the truth—is found in Christ.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one

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comes to the Father except through Me.

The way to life, will be through the truth of God.

Let us conclude in Isaiah 55. Think of the table of showbread. Think of those twelve big loaves of bread—such an abundant amount of bread that God provides.

Isaiah 55:1-3 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.

This is what God is teaching us through the table of showbread. We are in covenant with Him. And He will gladly provide an abundance of delightful and beneficial food to satisfy our craving for the true bread of life!