

The Table of Shewbread

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to our service and as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing to be upon his word.

Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, our Heavenly Father, we give thanks unto thee that we have access into thine own nearer presence.

Through the merits of thy Son, that we can come with boldness and with confidence to seek thy mercy and to seek thy grace to help us in our time of need.

We give thanks to thee, O Lord, for all the promises of thine own word. And as we come before thee, acknowledging our sinnership, we give thanks for the great promise that thou hast given to us that if we confess our sins, that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the efficacy of the finished work of thy Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[1 : 2 2] We give thanks for his continual ministry at thine own right hand and the intercession that he makes on behalf of his people, those whom he has purchased through his blood, those whom he has redeemed from the bondage of sin.

O Lord, we give thanks for the great promise that he will return, not to offer himself again as a sacrifice for sin, but to engather his people and to bring them to be with himself in the inheritance that he has prepared for them.

And when we live in a world that is so uncertain, in a world that is changing every moment, we give thanks that our hope is in the unchanging God, the one who is the same yesterday, today and forever, that we have that living hope which is sure and steadfast.

O Lord, we give thanks that all thy promises have been sealed for us through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

As we give thanks to thee, O Lord, for thine own strength, help, encouragement and comfort in the year that has now closed, in the chapter that has now passed, and as we begin a new chapter in our lives, as we come to a new year, we seek, O Lord, that it may please thee that this year would be the year of thine own right hand, the year in which we would experience thy blessing.

[3 : 1 6] O Lord, we come before thee, acknowledging that in these uncertain times, in these uncertain days, that we need thee, that we need thine own guidance, that we need thine own upholding hand to be upon us, as we look back and reflect on all that has taken place in our nation and in the world, especially the plague that has caused so much devastation.

So many lives were devastated, loved ones taken away, causing so much loneliness and heartache during periods of lockdown and restrictions.

But we give thanks to thee, O Lord, for thy known protecting hand over us as communities. And we pray that thy protection would continue with us during this year.

O Lord, we know that we will face strange paths. We know that we shall go through new experiences, that we shall travel along new paths that we have never, ever seen before, that we will stand in places that we have never been before, that we will embark upon untrodden paths where we have never been before.

But blessed be thy name that we also know that God is our refuge and our strength, that the God of Jacob is our refuge for ever to abide.

[4 : 57] And what great strength and encouragement that is to thy people. O Lord, we pray that we may indeed put thee before us in all things.

We pray that thou would bless our communities, that thou would bless families, and that thou would, O Lord, come on a day of thine own power.

O Lord, O Lord, that thou would bring us days of revival within thy church, and days of awakening among those who are still dead in trespasses and in sin.

O Lord, we pray that thou would work mightily among us this year. O Lord, O Lord, that thou would come, and that thou would, O Lord, breathe upon us with thy Spirit, for we know that it is the Spirit that quickens, that the flesh profiteth nothing.

We are dependent upon thee, O Lord, and we pray that thou would bless our homes, our families, our young people. O Lord, that thou would raise up a generation that would fear thine own name.

[6 : 13] We pray that thou would bless the witness of thy people in our communities. O Lord, that they may indeed be faithful witnesses for thee in a world that lieth in darkness, a world that lieth in wickedness.

There are so many things to entice even thy people, but we pray that thou would grant to thy people thy grace, that they would be able to stand firm, and that they would go forth in the strength of the Lord.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless those who are ill. May thy healing hand be upon them, and those who mourn. We pray that thine own comfort would fill their hearts.

Bless thy gospel, we pray thee, to the ends of the earth, and all thy servants who have gone forth with thy word. O may they know the unction of thine own Holy Spirit upon them, granting them, O Lord, that they would be able to proclaim thy truth with boldness and with confidence.

We pray, O Lord, O Lord, that thou would continue with us for the moments that we are around thine own word. O grant to us the spirit of enlightenment, that we may be led into thy word, that we may learn from thy word, that our faith may be strengthened, that we would be able to go forth in the strength of thy word for many days.

[7 : 53] We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us as we wait upon thee, and all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins, is in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. We shall now read from the word of God, from the Gospel of John, and chapter 6. After these things, Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles, which he did on them, that were deceased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred penny-watt of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

[9 : 05] One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes. But what are they among so many?

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, a number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down, and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would.

When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above, unto them that had eaten.

Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth, that prophet, that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

And when even was now come, his disciples went down into the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea to Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

[10 : 33] And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rode about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking in the sea and drawing nigh into the ship, and they were afraid.

But he saith unto them, It is I, be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land where there were the wind. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one where into his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples unto the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone.

Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh into the place where they ate bread, after that the Lord had given thanks. When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping and came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus.

And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when comest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for whom hath God the Father sealed.

[12 : 05] They said unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

They said, Therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our Father stood eat manna in the desert as it is written.

He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord evermore, give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life.

He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you that he also hath seen me and believe not.

[13 : 07] All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. And so on. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

And now seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn to the book of Exodus and chapter 25. And let us read from verse 23.

Thou shalt also make a table of shooting wood, two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about.

And thou shalt make unto it a border of an handbreadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof.

Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shooting wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be born with them.

[14 : 24] And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover with all. Of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before me always.

A fortnight ago we drew back the heavy curtain that formed the entrance into the first room of the tabernacle called the Holy Place.

And there we discovered three pieces of furniture. We looked at one of them, the candlestick. But opposite the candlestick there was another piece of furniture called the Table of Showbread.

The table was to be made of shodham wood, overlaid with pure gold. The length was to be two cubits, or three feet, and its breadth a cubit, that is, eighteen inches, and its height was to be a cubit and a half, that is, twenty-seven inches.

There was to be a border of a handbreath surrounding it, and a crown of gold inside the border. There were golden rings at the corners beneath the border, through which the golden staves were put for carrying the table.

[15 : 46] There were other utensils of pure gold connected with the table. We read, And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover with all of pure gold shalt thou make them.

The dishes, or plates, would be for the showbread, the spoons for the incense, and the covers, or flacons, and bowls was to be used to pour the drink offering.

The drink offering consisted of wine, which was likely to be consumed by the priests on the Sabbath as they ate of the showbread. On this table were placed unleavened loaves of bread, made out of fine flour.

There were not loaves in the modern sense, but more like large round cakes. The number of loaves were twelve, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel.

According to the King James Version, they were placed in two parallel rows, and thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row upon the pure table before the Lord.

[16 : 59] However, other versions, like the ESV, reads, and you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the Lord, indicating that they were stacked up upon each other in two piles.

But I prefer to think that they were placed horizontally the length of the table in two rows. the loaves were removed every sabbath so to be always fresh.

When placed upon the table, the loaves were covered over with a layer of frankincense. Frankincense was a pure white powder, and when the loaves were removed on the sabbath, the powdered frankincense was gathered into one of the golden dishes, connected with the table, and burnt before the Lord as an offering made by fire.

The loaves, when taken from the table, were reserved for the use of Aaron and his sons. In Leviticus, we read that it was not lawful for any to eat of them but the priests only.

On the sabbath, the priests would eat the bread and drink the wine, and then freshly baked bread would be placed upon the table and new wine would be placed in the flasks.

[18 : 16] Most of the instructions that God gave concerning the table like the border and crown along with the dishes, plates, spoons, and covers were not symbolic but functional.

But the one thing that was symbolic was the bread that was placed upon the table. Now, the Terran showbread comes from a Hebrew word that means bread of the face or bread of presence because the laws were set before the presence of God because the Ark of the Covenant which was the symbol and earthly throne of God was only a few feet away behind the veil in the Holy of Holies.

The bread reminded them of the presence of God. Now, the table of showbread suggests many things.

We know that a table speaks of fellowship and communion and this table with a bread of presence upon it speaks of God's fellowship with his people.

In Exodus chapter 24 we read that Moses and the elders of Israel saw God and to eat and drink. And now what we find is that this privilege was extended to the priests at the tabernacle in the Holy Place at the table of showbread as they ate and drank every Sabbath day in the presence of God.

[19 : 56] It was also a reminder for them of the Lord's covenant commitment towards them. We are told that in the ancient Near East sharing a special meal together was an act of friendship and personal communion.

Bread is known as the staff of life. In Psalm 104 the psalmist wrote bread which threateneth man's heart.

So the table speaks of fellowship communion sustenance provision and supply. When Jesus taught us in his prayer pattern to petition give us this day our daily bread he was teaching us to ask God to meet our everyday needs.

Now I would like to think that there is a connection between the table of showbread and the manna that was provided for the children of Israel Israel in their wilderness journey and also when we come to the New Testament that there is a connection between the showbread and when Jesus says of himself I am the bread of life.

In other words that the table of showbread is a prefigurement of Christ as the sustainer of spiritual life for the church. At least I'm going to go forward with our study on that thought.

[21 : 32] The manna and what Jesus says of himself as the bread of life is brought together for us in the Gospel of John in the chapter that we read together in chapter 6 where we read that when the crowds that was following Jesus and his disciples got hungry that Jesus took five barley loaves and two fishes from a young boy and that it multiplied in the hands of Jesus and that it provided food for the physical needs of five thousand men and many who ate of the bread began to follow Jesus and they followed him to the other side of the lake and Jesus says to them ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled labour not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life which the son of man shall give unto you for whom hath God the father sealed then someone in the crowd asked the sidetracking question and spoke of the heavenly manna what sign showest thou then that we may see and believe thee what dost thou work our father stood eat manna in the desert as it is written he gave him bread from heaven to eat in other words they were asking could he produce a sign of his authority similar to that of the manna and the wilderness but

Jesus corrects any misunderstanding that it was Moses who provided the manna for he said verily verily I say unto you Moses gave you not that bread from heaven but my father giveth you the true bread from heaven he is instructing them that it was not Moses who gave them bread but God and then he gets back to his point for the bread of God to see which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world the crowd answered Lord evermore give us this bread and then Jesus said I am the bread of life he that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst Jesus refers to himself as the bread of life I am that bread of life then he goes on to say I am the living bread which came down from heaven if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever and the bread that

I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world A.W. Pink summarises Jesus' meaning by saying I am that which every sinner needs and without which every sinner perishes now the Jews were upset with his language and so they strove among themselves saying how can this man give us his flesh to eat according to the Jewish food regulations this was a revolting thought even made worse when Jesus said except ye eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you whoso eateth my flesh and drink my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day for my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed he that eateth my flesh and drink my blood dwelleth in me and

I in him well what did Jesus mean by these words well these words are not referring to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper these words the words that the Roman Catholics use as a text for their doctrine of transubstantiation which teaches that the Lord's Supper involves eating the physical flesh and blood of Jesus transubstantiated into the form of a wafer and a cup of wine life when Jesus said the bread that I will give is my flesh he was not looking even at his incarnation either but he was looking to something in the future the key to understand this can be found in John chapter 6 verse 63 where Jesus says the flesh profiteth nothing the words that I speak into they are spirit and they are life in other words what

I am telling you has a spiritual meaning Jesus is clearly referring to his substitutionary death on the cross and we shall say a little more about that later on now what else are we told about the show bread well in Leviticus 24 we read the directions regarding the show bread and they shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes thereof two tenth deals shall be in one cake and they shall set them in two rows six on a row upon the pure table before the Lord and they shall put pure frankincense upon each row that it may be on the bread for a memorial even an offering made by fire unto every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant the show bread was produced from fine flour now naturally for bread to become a source of nourishment for us it has to go through certain processes to make rain into frying flour it must be crushed and it must be grounded here we read and thou shalt take fine flour and bake twelve cakes thereof all for

[27 : 48] Jesus to become the bread of life for us he had to be spotless just like the fine flour but like the bread which had to be baked before being presented on the table Jesus to be the bread of life had to go through the furnace of sufferings he that came into the world spotless just like the fine flour but had to pass through the hot oven in order to become the bread of life he had to be despised and rejected to become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief he he had to suffer being stricken and smitten and wounded and afflicted he had to be crushed and bruised and ultimately had to give his life over at the cross Jesus himself pictured his life as a grain of wheat which must die to produce fruit he said verily verily

I say unto you except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone but if it dies it bringeth forth much fruit the grain falls into the ground and dies but through its death the life of that single grain is freed from its encastment to regenerate itself into thousands of other grains possessing the same nature like the seed that first is buried and dies Jesus bears the fruit of his kingdom through the cross and the grave in which his body was laid on the basis of his spotless life and death on the basis of Calvary's completed transaction Jesus can lawfully claim that he is the bread of life the bread of those twelve in number and that was in accordance with the number of the tribes of

Israel in order that each tribe might equally have its memorial presented before God on the table the bread was of the same material of the same weight and of the same size the tribe of Judah may have a more honoured and prominent position in the camp or even on the march others like the tribe of Dan be comparatively little esteemed as been the high most of all the tribes but in the presence of God they are alike in perfectness the same fragrance before God is presented for each and so it is now respecting the church as the body of believers we have presented each one of us as a memorial of acceptance before God in Christ alike each with the same glory and each with the same perfectness the tribe of

Dan as much as the tribe of Judah was presented on the table in God's presence on this table the weakest as well as the strongest stands in the same fullness of acceptance there are two great truths of salvation you know first we are declared righteous because of the obedience of one and secondly we are accepted in the beloved and upon those truths the weakest and the strongest stand declared righteous because of the obedience of one and accepted in the beloved and that is true of every believer whether we are weak or strong these truths are equal to each of us now we noted that when placed upon the table the loaves were covered over with a layer of frankincense frankincense was a pure white powder the song of

Solomon in chapter 4 speaks of the trees of frankincense the frankincense speaks of fragrance and each loaf of bread was spread there with the same fragrance now the loaves were removed every sabbath so always to be fresh and the jug or the flagon was filled with new wine then the priests would sit down and eat the bread that was taken from off the table and drink the wine we have already referred to the gospel of John chapter 6 and said that we will return to it when Jesus starts to explain to the people what he's doing in the world and what his mission is and says to them and the bread that I will give is my flesh which

[33 : 08] I will give for the life of the world his teaching was offensive and many of those who had followed Jesus up to this point walked away and did not walk with him anymore we read that many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him you know later on in the Bible in the letters of Paul he tells us that the gospel is foolishness to the Gentiles that it is a stumbling block to the Jews and we know what the gospel is the good news of a crucified Christ the good news of Calvary or the good news of Golgotha and here we find that the gospel that good news the good news of Jesus that he was to give himself for the life of the world became foolishness to the

Gentiles and became a stumbling block to the Jews well what is it for yourself today is it offensive is it foolishness is it all a stumbling block well there is no use in bread being available unless it is actually eaten no one gains any benefit from bread unless one eats it even the days of Moses the manna would not be of any good on the wilderness floor it needed to be gathered and taken in and consumed it had to enter into the body it would be of no use admiring it and observing it smelling it or even touching it unless it was eaten likewise it is no use to be admiring and observing Jesus

Christ as the bread of life unless it is eaten and the only way to eat the bread of life is by faith as the priest sat down and ate the bread and drank the wine there is a thought there of rest and joy this was done on the Sabbath day and the meaning of the Sabbath day is rest we'll read in Genesis chapter 2 and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made and we know that wine in the biblical sense is symbolic of joy this activity of eating and drinking every Sabbath day was symbolic of the rest and joy that we have in Jesus Christ as the bread of life have you learned to feed upon

Christ by faith are you drawing spiritual nourishment from his word do you know the rest and joy that you find in Jesus Christ Jesus left the New Testament church a meal of bread and wine so that we could spiritually through faith feed upon him this table of show bread teaches us our total need of God our needs are not merely physical and temporal but they are spiritual and eternal in John chapter 6 we noted the reason why the people followed Jesus for he said to them he sought me not because he saw the miracles but because he did eat of the loaves and were filled all they wanted was more bread they wanted Jesus for what he could do for them not for who he was in himself is that the way you are

Jesus said to them labour not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth into everlasting life which the son of man shall give you for whom hath God the father sealed now faith in Jesus is personal when you sit at a table no one can eat for you in the same manner no one can believe on Jesus for you your parents your husband your wife the church cannot believe in Jesus for you only the priests ate of the bread and drank the wine now we have already noted that the whole tabernacle and all its service prefigures Jesus Christ and his atoning work and all the blessing that belongs to all those who will put their trust in him for salvation the work at the present altar and the present labor is complete and united to Christ as the light of the world we come as priests unto God to feed upon Jesus as a bread of life by faith

[38 : 46] J.C. Ryle says whenever a man feeling his own guilt and sinfulness lays hold on Christ and trusts in the atonement weighed for him by Christ's death at once he eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks his blood this is an eating and a drinking by faith it is a spiritual act the table of showbread like all the services of the tabernacle could be looked upon with anticipation and expectation and hope a longing for the shadows to be removed and that was done in the fullness of time by the coming of Jesus Christ into the world now as we noted before he suffered and died he instituted another supper of bread and wine for the New Testament church which we call the Lord's Supper we're reading the gospel of Luke chapter 22 and he took bread and gave thanks and break it and gave unto them saying this is my body which is given for you this do in remembrance of me likewise also the cup after supper saying this cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you but the New Testament church also takes this supper in anticipation and expectation and hope and longing in the heart of the New Testament church for the present supper to be removed and them to become partakers of the last of all feasts which we call the marriage supper of the Lamb well do you know Jesus Christ as the bread of life he is the sustainer of spiritual life for the believer he is the show bread for the priests of

God for believers to feed upon to sustain and to strengthen them every believer stands on the same ground of relationship and shares alike in the participation of the heavenly food Paul could write in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 for we being many are one bread and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread oh yes you must come by the brazen altar which is the cross of Jesus Christ which is Golgotha you must be cleansed and you must be united to Jesus Christ to enjoy the blessings of rest and joy by feeding upon Jesus Christ by faith that of which we have just spoken about well where do you stand do you stand outside the court do you stand around the tents or have you come inside the court to the altar where the sacrifice have been offered have you come to

Calvary have you come to Golgotha have you come to the cross have you come to the labor where you have been cleansed have you come into the holy place united to Christ and feeding upon him by faith well where do you stand on the first Lord's day of 2021 may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we give thanks to thee for all thy provision for us we give thanks that thou art the door that leads to the prison altar where the sacrifice is offered that thou art the door that leads to the cross of

Golgotha and we give thanks O Lord that thou art the prison labor where we can be cleansed and made acceptable to enter into the holy place united to Christ as the light of the world where we can feed and be sustained and grow through the bread that is upon the table of sure bread that there that we can have peace and joy and fellowship and communion with thee oh we give thanks that thou art the God who provides that thou art the God who has made every provision for thy people and we pray that as we stand on the threshold of a new year that we would have that assurance that we have left the outer court that we have left been around the tents and that we have entered through the brazen altar and through the brazen laver that we have come united to

[44 : 27] Christ and that tonight that we are truly spiritually feeding upon him by faith that he indeed has become the bread of life for each and every one of us and whatever the year will bring we know that in him that we are accepted that in him we are made perfect we pray oh lord that thou will continue with us and forgive us for all our sins and we ask these things not because of any merits that belong to us in ourselves but through the merits of Christ who is at thine own right hand may the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all now and forever more amen