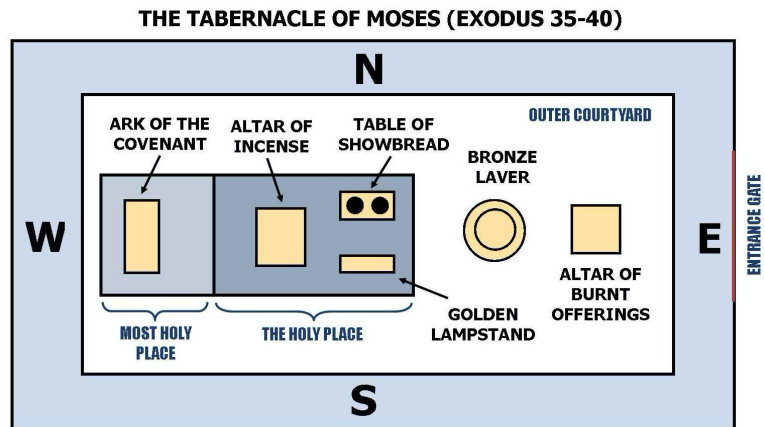


THE TABLE

This series has been leading us through the Tabernacle, stopping along the way at each piece of furniture. Today, we enter The Holy Place. This is the tent of worship within the Tabernacle perimeter. The first room of the tent of worship contains three pieces of furniture. The first of which is The Table of Showbread, also known as The Table of the Bread of Presence.

Exodus 25:23-30—“You are to construct a table of acacia wood, thirty-six inches long, eighteen inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. 24 Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding all around it. 25 Make a three-inch frame all around it and make a gold molding for it all around its frame. 26 Make four gold rings for it, and attach the rings to the four corners at its four legs. 27 The rings should be next to the frame as holders for the poles to carry the table. 28 Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, and the table can be carried by them. 29 You are also to make its plates and cups, as well as its pitchers and bowls for pouring drink offerings. Make them out of pure gold. 30 Put the Bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.”



God had instructed that the table be built of acacia [ah-cay-sha] wood and covered over by gold. Remember the Altar of Burnt Sacrifice was wood covered in bronze, and the Laver was also made of bronze. Bronze was symbolic of judgment. But everything in The Holy Place was made of gold. Wood symbolized _____, while gold represented _____. So this special table was a _____ representation of the place where God and man came together in communion. However, the PERFECT representation of God and man coming together was accomplished through the life of _____. While the table was man wrapped in God, Jesus was God wrapped in a man!



TOGETHER AROUND THE TABLE

Most of us can probably think of at least one or two times when at the table with family or with a friend had a conversation that we won't forget. Whether it was a positive or a negative

experience, a memory was made as people gathered around a table.

Can you remember any significant conversations that have taken place around your table?

Have you ever invited a person out to eat with you because you wanted to figure out if they were good “friend” material?

How has the pandemic affected your table?

The table was a place of communion and fellowship in Moses’ day, just as it still is today. Scripture shows us time and again the table has always been a place where God has conducted business. of the heart more than of the belly. Take these examples:

MEPHIBOSHETH [Ma-fib-o-sheth]

He was the grandson of King Saul, and the son of David’s best friend, Jonathan. He was lame in both feet. His servants carried him away after David became king for fear that David would try to kill him.

2 Samuel 9:7, 11— “Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “since I intend to show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all your grandfather Saul’s fields, and you will always eat meals at my table.” ... So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table just like one of the king’s sons.

To Mephibosheth, the table was a place of _____.

DAVID

Psalm 23:5—You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

In David’s time, when a man was running from someone who was trying to kill him and he came upon a house with the door open, it was a sign that he was welcome to enter the home. There he would be fed and cared for, and his enemy could not come in and get him.

To David, the table was a place of _____.

LEVI

Luke 5:27, 29-32 — After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, “Follow me.” ...29 Then Levi hosted a grand banquet for Him at his house. Now there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining at the table with them. 30 But the Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to His disciples, “Why

do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” 31 Jesus replied to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Tax collectors were despised in Jesus’ day. To the Jews, they were the lowest form of human being. But when Jesus sat down at Levi’s table...

To Levi, the table was a place of _____.

MARY

John 12:1-3— Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they gave a dinner for Him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus’s feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

It was customary for the host/hostess to wash the dusty feet of their guests with water, but to wash them with expensive perfume was going really going the extra mile. Mary had been so grateful for Jesus restoring her brother to life that she just had to do something special for Him.

To Mary, the table was a place of _____

What words would describe your table is to the people who sit there with you?

What do you wish for your table to become that maybe it isn’t now?

Do you spend more time thinking about the food you will eat there or about the other types of needs your family and friends need from their time at the table?

How might you “prepare” mealtimes to bring yourself and others closer to God? Try this recipe:

1. _____ about the conversations you will have at the table.
2. Begin your meal with _____.
3. During the meal _____ that God has done for you that day.
4. Encourage others to look for something for which they can be _____.
5. Establish _____ with everyone at the table.
6. Make sure everyone feels _____ whatever is on their mind.
7. Don’t let anyone leave the table until they feel they are _____ as an equal family member or friend.

Have you ever considered how many struggles that people have experienced in their lives that eventually manifested themselves in eating disorders? Could it be that a distorted or even broken relationship with God has led them to a distorted and wrong relationship with food?

Does this idea make you rethink what happens at your mealtime table?

THE PROVISION

The Table of the Bread of Presence held 12 loaves of bread—2 stacks /or rows (scholars aren't for sure which) of 6 loaves.

Exodus 25:30 —Put the Bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.”

Leviticus 24:5-9 — “Take fine flour and bake it into twelve loaves; each loaf is to be made with four quarts.[a] 6 Arrange them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before the Lord. 7 Place pure frankincense near each row, so that it may serve as a memorial portion for the bread and a food offering to the Lord. 8 The bread is to be set out before the Lord every Sabbath day as a permanent covenant obligation on the part of the Israelites. 9 It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, for it is the holiest portion for him from the food offerings to the Lord; this is a permanent rule.”

MULTIPLE CHOICE— Here's what we know about the Bread of Presence:

How many loaves were laid out?

- 6
- 2
- 12
- 14

How many days were there to be loaves left on the bread?

- Sporatically
- Always
- Sometimes
- During the high holy days

Why were there 12 loaves?

- 12 Tribes of Israel
- 12 Disciples
- 12 months of the year
- 12 days of Christmas

The loaves were to be a reminder of God's ...

- 1. Priorities
- 2. Hunger for relationship
- 3. Covenant
- 4. Provision to Israel

Loaves were to remain on the table at all times. One Levite family was given the responsibility of baking the bread, using a secret recipe that made the bread not rise and never to become moldy or hard. This one family took their task so seriously, that they shared the recipe with no one.

They never made the recipe except to make the bread for the Table of Showbread. When they made bread for themselves, they used a different recipe. According to the Jewish historians, this family was so honest that they never allowed their children to be seen eating the same kind of bread for fear that their neighbors may think they were eating the bread reserved only for God.

For seven days the bread lay on the Table. On the Sabbath Day, the baker's family would come to the Tabernacle and give the new bread to the priests to take into The Holy Place. The priests would switch out the old bread for the new. Then the priests would eat the old bread together.

In what ways is this like a picture of our coming to worship each Sunday?

Do you find that your spirit gets "crusty" and "moldy" between Sunday services?

What part of Sunday services refreshes you most?

The Bread was to serve as a reminder to the nation of Israel that God would always provide what they need. Understand this powerful statement:

God is not just THE _____, He IS THE _____.

For example, when Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus had died, Jesus had this conversation with Mary just before He raised her brother from the grave:

John 11:21-26— Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. 22 Yet even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You." 23 "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her. 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. 26 Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Notice here that Jesus didn't just provide the breath of life, Jesus said He IS the resurrection and life! If you limit yourself to only seeing Jesus for what He can do, you will question whether or not He will. But if you see Jesus as the PROVISION, you can walk in a state of knowing He is all you need and He will always be there.

WHAT'S THIS?

When the people of Israel were wandering in the wilderness and became hungry God provided a special bread to fall overnight called _____.

Exodus 16:31—The house of Israel named the substance manna. It resembled coriander seed, was white, and tasted like wafers made with honey.

This bread was like a sweet flatbread. They had been demanding Moses feed them, but when they saw this white substance on the ground they said, “manna.” They had never seen anything like it before.

The Hebrew meaning for manna is “_____?”

Have you ever cried out to God for His provision in a matter, but when something happened that you weren't expecting you said, “Wait! What's this?”

Do you think Israel expected bread on the ground when they said they were hungry?

Does God's provision always come in a way we expect?

Has God ever come to your rescue in a way different from what you expected?

Did you recognize it as an answered prayer?

Perhaps the real question should be “Who's this?” Our provision is not a “what” so much as a “who.” When we look at “what” we are expecting God to do, we limit what we want God to do. But when we look at the “who,” we can see God's hand at work in a variety of ways.

John 6:31-32— “Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” 32 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.”

John 6:58— “This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the manna your ancestors ate—and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever.”

What bread is He referring to here?

Mark 14:22— **[At the first Lord's Supper the night before Jesus died.]** As they were eating, He took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is My body.”

Keep your eyes open! God is the fresh manna of provision that you need for any situation you might be in!

PRAYER TIME

As you pray, consider these prayer points:

- Take some time to thank God for the times in your life that He came to your rescue.
- Thank God for the church where you can be refreshed as you meet with Him each week.
- Pray for God to help your table become a place where your family and friends are strengthened in body, mind, and spirit. Pray that God's goodness will always come up in your conversations with others.
- Pray that God may help you always view Him as your Provision and be completely satisfied in Him.
- Pray for the others in your small group to develop an atmosphere of fellowship and relationship at their own tables too.