

October - December 2013

# The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

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BIDEFORD

# THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

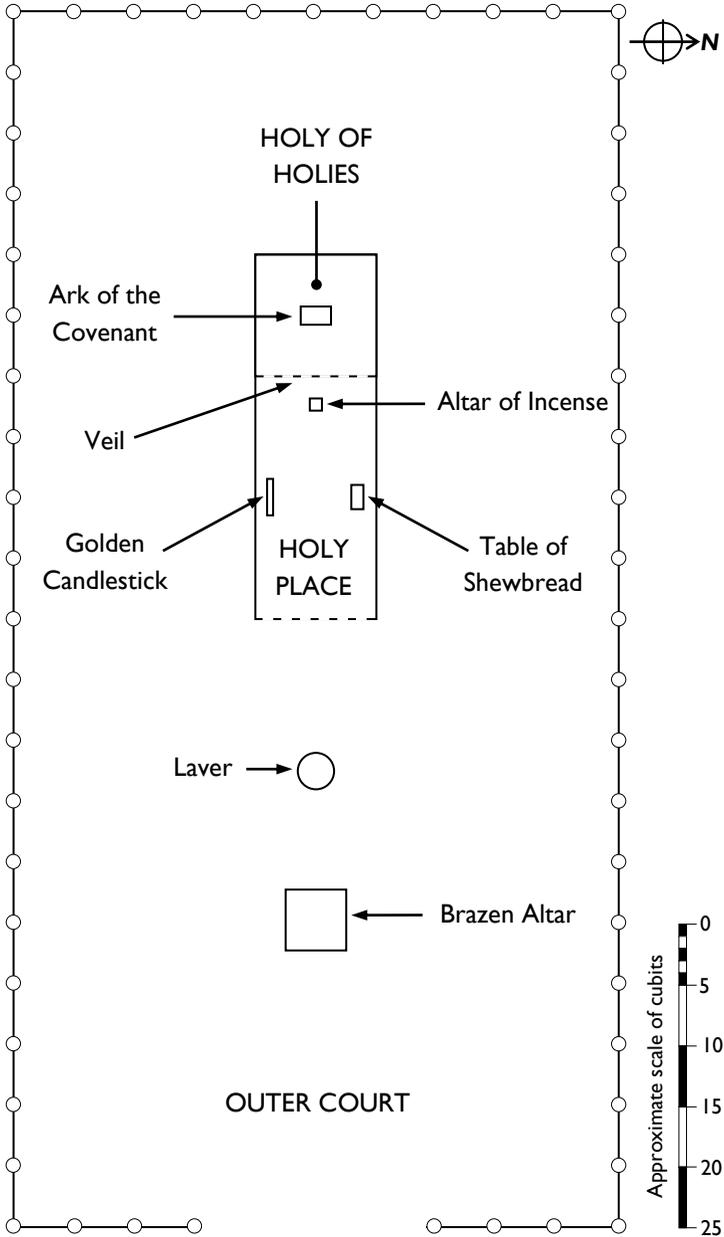
## Part 9

*“Thou shalt also make a table of shittim 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 hand breadth 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 shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before Me alway.”* (Exodus 25:23-30)

Before proceeding further to the next item of holy furniture, the **Table of Shewbread**, it is important to have a clear idea of the overall plan of the Tabernacle (see Figure 1, overleaf). The layout can be readily ascertained from the details given in Scripture. A large enclosed area comprised the Outer Court, with a single entrance at the eastern end. At the opposite side was the Tabernacle itself, divided into two compartments, that at the extreme western end being the Holy of Holies. The only article contained in that sacred spot was the Ark of the Covenant, with its covering Mercy Seat and important contents: the two tables of stone, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the golden pot of manna.

Adjacent to the Holy of Holies was the Holy Place. Within this area there were three items of furniture: the Table, the Candlestick, and the Altar of Incense. Only the High Priest ever went into the Holy of

**Figure 1: Arrangement of the Tabernacle**



Holies, and that but once in a year – on the annual Day of Atonement (cf Hebrews 9:7). But in the larger chamber, the Holy Place, the Levites served daily. In that sacred precinct, all that was visible of the articles of furniture was pure gold. Silence reigned within its confines. Reverence permeated the very air. There was an indescribable atmosphere of holiness. None but the priestly family ever came into this hallowed sanctum; theirs alone was the wondrous privilege of entering into that place.

Prominent amongst the fixtures of the Holy Place was the golden table, which is the subject of the present study. It was equipped with carrying staves, numerous dishes, bowls and vessels as set out in Exodus 25:29, and perpetually set with twelve loaves of bread. The description of its manufacture begins with the words: “*Thou shalt **also** make a table...*” which immediately suggests a link with that which has gone before. In the preceding verse it was stated: “*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat...*” (Exodus 25:22) closely followed by this instruction: ‘thou shalt also make a table’. The important point to be registered, is that the table has to do with **communion**.

This truth is borne out in other parts of the word of God. For example, a very lovely picture of the blessedness which a ‘table’ is intended to convey is found in the record of King David. “*And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?*” (2 Samuel 9:1). One surviving descendant of Saul’s line was found, called Mephibosheth, a man lame on both his feet, for whom David sent, and fetched unto himself. In order to show that man a kindness, and the fact that, though a relation of David’s arch-enemy, he was fully reconciled, the King “*said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and **thou shalt eat bread at my table continually***” (v. 7). Thus it was demonstrated that

Mephibosheth, poor wretch though he had been, was henceforth brought into the place of most intimate communion.

The table at which an individual sits is highly significant. Compare the former incident with the words written by Paul: “*But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be **partakers of the Lord’s table**, and of the table of devils*” (1 Corinthians 10:20-21). The Lord’s Table is a symbol of fellowship with Christ.

There are some Christians who say that the Lord’s Supper is solely a service of remembrance; certain denominations only ever refer to the ordinance as ‘the breaking of bread’, and would never use the term ‘Communion Service’. This is wrong. For whilst in the majority of cases, the New Testament references to ‘breaking of bread’ mean nothing other than a regular meal; the title ‘Communion’ is most certainly applied to the Church observance: “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not **the communion** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not **the communion** of the body of Christ?*” (1 Corinthians 10:16). It is a table of communion.

Returning to the description of the Table of Shewbread in Exodus 25 – and the use of the word ‘also’ which places it firmly in the context of the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat – the basis of fellowship and ground of communion becomes apparent. Shed blood, propitiation wrought, and mercy obtained, precede the Table at which fellowship can be enjoyed. Thus is set forth the fact that all communion which any sinner has with God is by virtue of the blood of Christ. His great work of Atonement must be effected before sinners can be reconciled to the Father, and know themselves accepted with Him. Christ becomes the Bread of Life to His people, only because He first, as a corn of wheat, ‘fell into the ground and died’ (cf John 12:24).

The record in Exodus then goes on to give the dimensions of the table, and the instruction that it was to be made of shittim wood, and overlaid with pure gold. In these particulars it closely resembled the Ark, excepting that it was half a cubit shorter than the Ark in both length and breadth. The Table was to have a crown or rim around its top edge, and four rings (one in each corner) through which the staves would be inserted for transportation. So once again, something of Christ is prefigured in the construction of the Table, the wood and the gold speaking of His two natures, human and Divine.

Yet the picture is somewhat different, for a Table is suggestive of food. “*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies*” (Psalm 23:5) says the Psalmist of Christ. While the Lord’s own words are these: “*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*” (John 6:32-33). Here the Saviour lays emphasis upon His Deity, and that He proceeds from the Father, that is to say, the ‘gold’. Furthermore He says: “*I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and **the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world***” (John 6:51). These words have reference to the Lord’s death, which act necessitated that He became man, and the ‘flesh and blood’ which He assumed at the Incarnation – namely His humanity, or, the ‘shittim wood’. It is by virtue of combining these two natures that the Lord Jesus Christ – Son of God and Son of Man – became the Bread of Life to His people, and their eternal provision.

The contents of the Table are described in greater detail in the Book of Leviticus: “*And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even*

*an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute"* (Leviticus 24:5-9).

It goes without saying that the Table and the bread upon it are intimately related. Everything in the Tabernacle points toward Christ, and this bread is no exception. In the account given in Leviticus, the term used is not 'bread', but 'cakes'. The Hebrew lexicon gives the significance and root meaning of the word thus translated. It denotes 'perforated' or 'punctured' bread. What a line of thought is suggested by this! Christ, the One who was pierced and wounded, then exposed to the fire of God's holy wrath upon the cross, in order that life and immortality might proceed to all His people. *"For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled... They shall look on Him whom they pierced"* (John 19:36-37).

There were to be twelve cakes, or loaves, prepared for the Table. These corresponded to the twelve tribes of Israel, all of which were party to the earthly covenant made with the nation. And in this too, spiritual significance is to be seen. For all that was in the Holy Place, 'made with hands' were symbols or 'figures of the true' (cf Hebrews 9:24). The twelve loaves speak of Christ in a covenantal relationship with His own people, the true Israel of God.

Leviticus 24:8 goes far beyond the earthly types, and Abrahamic covenant, having reference as is stated to the *"everlasting covenant"*. It conveys exceedingly precious truth. The twelve loaves were 'set in order', spread out in two rows; not piled up or thrown together in a basket. Observe also how that all were of the same quality, size and weight; showing that the smallest tribe was represented equally with the largest. The interpretation and fulfilment of the type is this: all

who are in the covenant of grace are equally represented in Christ. Christ's representation of His people in the presence of a Holy God admits no degrees or differential status. The same perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed alike to every redeemed sinner. The Tribe of Benjamin, as much as the Tribe of Ephraim had a cake of fine flour on the Table in God's presence. Manasseh was a tribe half the size of Judah, yet the loaves for each of them were of the same dimensions.

Is not this a great comfort to every saint? The weakest as well as the strongest; the faltering as well as the courageous; the hindmost as well as the foremost; by grace, all have exactly the same standing before God. Every one of His elect people stands in the righteousness of Christ. There is no other standing! In this matter, there is neither inferiority or superiority. Everybody in the covenant of grace is righteous because of the obedience of One, namely Christ (cf Romans 5:19). We are accepted in the Beloved (cf Ephesians 1:6). All are equally justified; all are equally precious; all are equally near unto God, and unto Christ.

Consider the ornamentation of the Table. *“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 hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about”* (Exodus 25:24-25). It is no coincidence that this decorative lip, or rim, around the Table is styled as a ‘crown’. Not only did it resemble that regal headgear; it speaks of Christ **glorified**. *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man”* (Hebrews 2:9). This crown around the top surface of the Table was designed to keep in place all that was placed upon it, for the bread was not removed even when they were upon the march, and the table was carried by its staves. *“And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a*

*cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof*” (Numbers 4:7-8). The crown thus served the vital purpose of preventing anything from slipping off the Table, or being lost in the wilderness pilgrimage.

More wonderful spiritual truth is here to be seen. Every one who is in the covenant of grace and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ is held secure by His crown. The risen, ascended, glorified Christ is their security. He is head over all things to the Church (cf Ephesians 1:22). No power in earth or hell can snatch a covenant heir from His hand (cf John 10:28-29). They are eternally secure. Not one is any less secure than another.

The Hebrew word translated ‘border’ literally means ‘to enclose’. This concerns the preservation of the Christian. The people of God are ‘walled around’; there is a hedge made about them on every side (cf Job 1:10) and their protection is the golden crown. No loaf could slip from the table unless a rift appeared in the border. The loss of one of those cakes would denote damage to the crown. The spiritual significance is this: the very glory of God is involved in the preservation of His people. The great and holy name of Jehovah is at stake in this matter! What did David say? *“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness **for His name’s sake**”* (Psalm 23:3), and again: *“For the Lord will not forsake his people **for His great name’s sake**: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people”* (1 Samuel 12:22).

Moses often fell back upon this fundamental truth when Israel so grievously sinned against God, and he made such petitions as: *“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven”* (Exodus 32:13); and, *“...Thou Lord art among this people, that*

*Thou Lord art seen face to face, and that Thy cloud standeth over them, and that Thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night...I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken...*" (Numbers 14:14, 17). His intercession with God is upon this basis and sure foundation. For God cannot deny Himself. That which He has decreed, and concerning which He has entered into covenant, He must, yea, He **will** perform. It is set forth in the Old Testament typology here. If a believer could be lost; if anything could impair his security; if the border or enclosure could be breached; then the crown must take the responsibility. Then would the very name of Christ, and the glory of God be sullied. Which thing is impossible!

"Here let my faith unshaken dwell;  
Immovable Thy promise stands;  
Not all the powers of earth or hell  
Can e'er dissolve the sacred bands." Steele

In conclusion, consider these words: "*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 shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them*" (Exodus 25:26-28). Like the Ark, this Table must go everywhere with God's people, throughout their wilderness wanderings. Wherever God led His flock, the Table accompanied them. It signifies communion with Christ, and a feeding upon Him.

So it is, that, wherever the Christian's lot be cast, in sickness or in health; prosperity or poverty; joy or sorrow; there with them always is the blessed Lord Jesus – to commune with, and feed upon. May the Lord bless this glorious truth, and seal it to the hearts of all who read.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

## THE BREAD OF LIFE

The object for which the Table of Shewbread was made, was that bread might be put upon it. Provision was thus made for a people who needed it. The great truth is here presented to us, that Christ must be the nourishment of the sinner's soul. You understand what this means, brethren. It is the doctrine of Christ received into the soul, which can alone satisfy the poor sinner. The gnawing of heart under the conviction of sin seems to be represented by the physical craving of hunger. The poor sinner looks here and there for peace – he cannot find it; he is sent to this, or that, or the other – it will not satisfy; but when, under the teaching of God's Spirit, he is enabled to take in the doctrine – when he is enabled to see what a rich provision has been made for the supply of all his wants in God's everlasting covenant, then, and not till then, his soul is satisfied. Let no man tell me that Jesus Christ is not able to satisfy the craving of every hungry soul, when He Himself has said, "*He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst*" (John 6:35).

I believe God's great object in having this bread put upon this table in the holy place was, to teach the people something of the holy food on which the Church of God ought to live. And not only this, but I believe it also represented a higher mystery. I believe it taught them this great truth, that God would bring His people into actual communion with Himself. It was not only telling the people of Israel, 'I shall feed you with manna – with heavenly food'; but, 'here, in My holy sanctuary, in the place where I have promised to meet with My people, I shall have food provided for them; I shall teach them that there is such a thing as communion between heaven and earth, between Jehovah and His Church'.

There is exceeding great beauty in the 29th verse of the 22nd chapter of Luke, where our blessed Lord says to His disciples, "*I appoint unto*

*you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom*". There is communion between the Lord and His people. So that, if I may so say, speaking after the manner of men, that which satisfies Jehovah Himself is the very thing which satisfies His people. He gathers His people together to His own banquet; and what is the provision He has made? Is it not the Lord Jesus Christ Himself?

We observe another direction which God gave with regard to the table of shewbread. God said to Moses, "*Thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread*" – not mixed up with it, but – "*on the bread, for a memorial*" (Leviticus 24:7). The 'pure frankincense' was to be placed on the 'pure table'. The sweetness of that provision which God has made for His people is here set before us. We want this idea to be fastened on your minds, dear brethren, that Jehovah is as much delighted with that which is the food and nourishment of His people, as they themselves can be, when they find their wants satisfied to the very utmost. There is such communion, such oneness between God and His Church, that the very thing His people want, is the very thing in which He Himself takes delight. So that when the believing soul feeds upon Jesus, the Bread of Life, this, like sweet incense, comes up with acceptance before the Lord.

To make my meaning still plainer, I would say, every one of you who is enabled by the teaching of the Holy Ghost to make use of Christ, at the very moment his soul is feeding upon the precious truths of the Gospel, causes sweet incense to rise up before the Lord. You can never make use of Christ without glorifying Jehovah. Dear brethren, see what great encouragement is afforded to the believing soul. Oh, that we could have this idea fastened on the mind – the more I lean on Christ; the more I, as a helpless creature, live upon His fulness; the oftener I go to Him, and say, 'I am nothing, but Jesus is Jehovah, my righteousness'; the more I am enabled to do this; it, like fresh incense,

rises up before the Lord. There is nothing which delights Him so much as the holy person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His finished work, by which He has glorified every attribute of Jehovah; and therefore when His people make use of Christ, He is glorified in them. This is what I want you to do, dear brethren. Oh, may the Lord enable you by His Spirit, thus to live upon Christ!

W. H. Krause (circa. 1850)

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We find also the word “*continual*” applied to the bread. Though changed from week to week, yet it was ever the same bread in the presence of God. “*And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before Me alway*” (Exodus 25:30); “*before the Lord continually*” (Leviticus 24:8); “*the continual bread*” (Numbers 4:7); “*the continual shewbread*” (2 Chronicles 2:4). Our souls know the value of that which ceases not in its power and efficacy towards God for us. With us all is changing; our thoughts, our actions, our resolves, vary from hour to hour. In the ways of God alone is continuance, and we shall be saved. (cf Isaiah 64:5) His name Jehovah was revealed to Moses at the bush; for as the ‘I AM’ He was about to act towards Israel in redemption – a redemption of which He would not repent – and He was about to deal with His redeemed people in unchanging mercy, and with patient unvarying care, notwithstanding all their murmurings and evil that would be manifested in the way.

And our High Priest, who claims the very name itself of Jehovah, with unwearied unwavering affection, retains for us His place of excellency before God, like the ‘continual’ bread ever before Him, and presents for us now and ever the unfailing memorial of human perfectness and human obedience, in the full and blessed value of which we stand accepted before God.

H. W. Soltau (1805 – 1875)

## THE SCRIPTURES FULFILLED

Take away Christ for one moment, and I will give the Old Testament to any wise man living, and say to him, ‘Take this; this is a problem; go home and construct in your imagination an ideal character who shall exactly fit all that which is herein foreshadowed. Remember, he must be a prophet like unto Moses, and yet a champion like to Joshua; he must be an Aaron and a Melchisedek; he must be both David and Solomon, Noah and Jonah, Judah and Joseph. Nay, he must not only be the lamb that was slain, and the scape-goat that was not slain; the turtle-dove that was dipped in blood, and the priest who slew the bird; but he must be the altar, the tabernacle, the mercy-seat, and the shewbread’...

Now, I say it boldly, if all the greatest intellects of all the ages could set themselves to work out this problem, to invent another key to the types and prophecies, they could not do it. I see you, ye wise men; ye are poring over these hieroglyphs, one suggests one key, and it opens two or three of the figures, but you cannot proceed, for the next one puts you at a nonplus. Another learned man suggests another clue, but that fails most where it is most needed, and another, and another; and thus these wondrous hieroglyphs traced of old by Moses in the wilderness, must be left unexplained, till one comes forward and proclaims: “The cross of Christ and the Son of God incarnate!” Then the whole is clear, so that he that runs may read, and a child may understand. Blessed Saviour! In Thee we see everything fulfilled, which God spoke of old by the prophets; in Thee we discover everything carried out in substance, which God had set forth to us in the dim mist of sacrificial smoke. Glory be unto Thy name! “It is finished” – everything is summed up in Thee.

C. H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892)

*from a sermon on John 19:30, preached 1<sup>st</sup> December 1861*

# A SABBATH IN THE HOLY PLACE

*“Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually”*  
(Leviticus 24:8)

Amongst all the details given concerning the Golden Table in the Tabernacle, and the Shewbread placed thereupon, it is instructive to note the regularity with which the bread was to be eaten, and renewed. This was not a haphazard affair, or attended to sporadically as need arose. It happened according to a routine and weekly schedule. In fact, the day of the week upon which the loaves were to be changed is specifically mentioned, as being the **Sabbath day**.

Imagine then the scene which must have obtained in the Tabernacle courts on that weekly occasion. Whilst labours of a secular nature (even the gathering of manna) were in abeyance on that day, the preparing of the Shewbread was Divinely commanded (cf 1 Chronicles 9:32). Thus freshly made, “*hot bread*” (1 Samuel 21:6) was placed upon the table, and the loaves of the previous week were distributed to the priests. The wonderful aroma which would inevitably have filled the Holy Place was further enhanced by the burning of the frankincense which had been laid out with the former loaves, and was burned in place of them, as an offering to the Lord by fire. Meanwhile, a new supply of pure frankincense was set out on the Table.

One can also envisage the joy with which the priests themselves must have anticipated this weekly event, and with what gratitude they took of the loaves for themselves and their families. Being close kindred of the line of Aaron, an atmosphere of mutual thankfulness and fraternity must have pervaded the sacred courts, as they went about the duties of the Tabernacle with renewed strength and vigour. What a privilege to be a member of the priesthood, in the Holy Place, on the Sabbath Day!

The centuries have rolled by, the New Testament age has been ushered in by Christ, and those former things have ‘waxed old and vanished away’ (cf Hebrews 8:13). Yet some things remain unchanged. Humanity continues to observe its seven-day week, for such a pattern God Himself decreed from the beginning of Creation. And with that universal statute it is declared: “*God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made*” (Genesis 2:3). In consequence, “*Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God*” (Exodus 20:9-10). In the purposes of God, as long as seven-day weeks continue to be granted upon Earth, for so long must one-day-in-seven be hallowed unto the Lord.

The furniture and functions of the Tabernacle, now decayed and perished, served in their time a vital function: they supplied ‘figures of truth’ (cf Hebrews 9:24), and the ‘shadow of good things’, which are now come (cf Hebrews 10:1). Though imperfect and limited in their physical representation of things spiritual, they suffice as signposts in the direction of truth and reality. Not one aspect or element of the Levitical system is recorded in Scripture without purpose. In every detail the Word of God is profitable either for doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction in righteousness. And in the description of the priests’ actions in relation to the Table of Shewbread upon the Sabbath, much teaching proceeds to New Testament believers, in how they too may enjoy the blessings of that occasion themselves.

### **Collective Appearance**

The Hebrew word translated as ‘Shewbread’ might be more literally rendered as ‘Presence-Bread’, or even ‘Bread of Faces’. The reasons for such an unusual title are evident. There were twelve loaves made, each corresponding to one of the Tribes of Israel. It was not possible for the entire company of the Hebrews, numbering in their hundreds of thousands all to assemble in the Holy Place; but every Tribe, and by

extension, each individual member of it, was represented by their Tribal loaf. In the twelve cakes laid out upon the Table, it was as though all Israel ‘presented’ themselves, and all assembled in the ‘presence’ of God. On numerous instances, a Divine commandment was given that ‘all Israel should appear before the Lord their God’ (cf Deuteronomy 16:16, 31:11), which was accomplished, not only on certain special festal days, but also figuratively in the Shewbread.

The Sabbath Day is an occasion on which all the people of God, particularly the members of the local Church, must collectively join themselves together. It is a source of joy and strength, as the Psalmist well expressed: “*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord... Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord*” (Psalm 122:1, 4); “*They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God*” (Psalm 84:7). United attendance in the earthly house of God, with none absent or missing, is one of the day’s highest blessings.

### **Corporate Offering**

That the Shewbread could exist at all, required first that the ingredients were made available for its production. The fine flour and other necessary components came, not from the priests themselves, but from the offerings made by all the congregation. This, and the accompanying frankincense were “...*continually, being taken from the children of Israel*” (Leviticus 24:8). This is further borne out in the record of contributions made by the princes of the twelve tribes (cf Numbers 7), and the practice of Nehemiah who arranged in his day that all the people should maintain the practical aspects of temple worship (cf Nehemiah 10:32-33). Not only was the whole nation symbolically represented by the Shewbread – they had all contributed materially to its production. It was the consequence of their united contributions and corporate offerings.

In the ongoing Sabbath worship of the people of God, this aspect is to continue: the incorporated people of God, rendering gifts unto Him in unity. Not now such physical things as frankincense and flour, but the ‘calves of their lips’ (cf Hosea 14:2); the offering of their persons (cf Romans 12:1 ); sacrifices of joy (cf Psalm 27:6) and of praise (cf Hebrews 13:15). To engage in this work, in unison with one’s fellow saints, both near and far, is another great blessing of the day: “*My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear Him*” (Psalm 22:25).

### **Complete Provision**

Whilst the twelve loaves represented an offering of all the people in a God-ward direction, they simultaneously stood as a type of God’s provision for them. For each Tribe, a cake of fine flour was supplied; and these, though offered first to God, were ultimately received and enjoyed by men. Nor is there any contradiction here. For whilst the worship of God seems initially to make demands of men, they are ultimately the beneficiaries! Their humble offerings to Him are at once repaid, in ‘good measure, pressed down and running over’. They resolve to bless the Lord, but it is quickly seen that, ‘the less is blessed of the Better’.

Thus it ever proves in the service of God. It is the worshipper who receives the blessing. The greatest supply is from God, unto His people. And the Sabbath day is an occasion on which that full and free provision may be most especially enjoyed. The priests were sustained by manna throughout the week, but on the Sabbath enjoyed a superior food. This was a nobler portion still, the like of which the saints of God can enjoy to the present. For in those earthly ‘Zions’ that God has chosen, and in which He is pleased to dwell, He has promised: “*I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy*” (Psalm 132:15-16).

## Memorial

It is significant that in regard to the Sabbatical ceremony with the Shewbread, the priests were instructed: “*thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord*” (Leviticus 24:7). There has ever been a ‘memorial’ aspect to the Sabbath Day, from its very inception. Thus God instructed at Sinai, “**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy**” (Exodus 20:8). From the beginning, it commemorated God’s creative work, and the pattern laid down for humanity thereafter. In the New Testament age, transferred to the first day of the week, the Sabbath takes on a still greater memorial significance. For it bears witness also to the Saviour’s rising again from the dead. And it provides the occasion upon which Christ’s death may be set forth, as the Lord’s Table is observed, in **remembrance** of Him.

It is of particular note that the frankincense effectively became a ‘substitute’ for the loaves of Shewbread. As an offering unto the Lord by fire, the bread itself ought rightly to have been committed to the flames of the altar. Yet it was not. Instead, the pieces of frankincense which had laid amongst the loaves for the preceding week was burned, in their place; in order that the bread might be received and enjoyed by the priests. The connection between this pure fragrant substance and the Lord Jesus Christ is made, both by the language used in the great allegory of the Song of Songs (ch 3:6); and also in the acts of the Magi at His incarnation (cf Matthew 2:11). The manner in which He “*offered Himself without spot to God*” (Hebrews 9:14) in the sinner’s stead, delivering them from wrath, and securing their eternal blessing, is recorded in the Gospels – and is surely the greatest memorial on the New Testament ‘Lord’s Day’.

## Setting in Order

Another feature of the ritual observed by the priests, week by week, was the regularity and organisation of the event, described as a ‘setting

**in order**' of those things. There was a simplicity and beauty to the way in which the loaves were prepared and exchanged, the incense laid out, and the offerings made. This 'good order' both characterised and enhanced the whole operation. Alas that modern man (and sadder still, many Christians) despise regularity or routine, clamouring instead for novelty, gimmickry and continual change. When this attitude infects the local Church and its observances, grievous damage is done, and much blessing is forfeited.

The same God-honouring regularity in worship once manifested in the Tabernacle is to be emulated in the Church today. "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (1 Corinthians 14:40) said the Apostle, by inspiration; instructing in one place that, "*that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting*" (Titus 1:5); and saying of another: "*yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ*" (Colossians 2:5). Steadfastness of faith, the changelessness of God, and the immutability of His Word, can all be testified to by godly **order** in the gatherings of the local Church.

### **Perpetual Statute**

The instructions given concerning the Shewbread in Leviticus 24 conclude by describing the whole procedure as a "*perpetual statute*" (v.9). words which convey a sense of constancy and longevity. Elsewhere in the passage it is emphasised: "*Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually*" (v. 8). There was to be a permanence about this observance – and so it was for many centuries – until the types and shadows of the Ceremonial Laws gave way to a yet more permanent reality: the person and work of Christ. Who Himself testified to the perpetuity of the Word of God: "*And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail*"; "*Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away*" (Luke 16:17, 21:33). Christ came, not (as the Antinomian would claim) to destroy the Law, but to magnify it, to fulfil it, and to make it honourable.

Amongst the tenets of the abiding Law of God, is the keeping of a Sabbath Day. Here is a universal ordinance; a broad commandment; a perpetual statute. Let none seek to reduce this wondrous and Divine institution by making it pertain only to the Jewish nation, or to Sinai, or to the Old Covenant. It is to be found in Old and New Testaments alike; from Genesis (ch 2:2-3) to Revelation (ch 1:10); observed by Jews and Gentiles, by the Apostles, by the early Church, and by the Lord Jesus Himself while upon earth. Here is a perpetual statute, in the keeping of which, the people of God have cause for great joy. For, *“This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it”* (Psalm 118:24).

### **Everlasting Covenant**

The Christian Sabbath holds a further blessing still. For it pertains to the Everlasting Covenant. The appearance of these words in Leviticus 24:8 should at once direct the reader away from the earthly scene, away from temporal and material things, to that which is spiritual and eternal. The contracts into which God entered with men – whether Noah, Abraham, Israel, or David – were but faint foreshadowings of that better covenant, made through Christ the Surety, with all His true people. In what sense then, does the observance of the Sabbath Day pertain to the Eternal Covenant? The Apostle gives the answer: *“For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest... There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God”* (Hebrews 4:4-5, 9).

Coupling the Creation Ordinance with the promises of God, the Scriptures conclude that the Lord’s people must ultimately share the same rest as God Himself – namely the eternal felicity of Heaven above. Thus every earthly Sabbath kept upon earth is an earnest, and foretaste, of the Heavenly Sabbath to come.

R. J. Steward

## EDITORIAL

There is very little about the duties of a doorkeeper that would appeal to a natural man. The onerous responsibility of standing at an entrance-way; maintaining a vigil; observing that which occurred within whilst still exposed to the elements and hazards without; is not a job which immediately commends itself. But what if the door in question belonged to a great and noble house? What if the gate to be kept was that of a regal and exalted person? Why then, the honour and privilege of waiting on such a place and its occupants would be its own reward, and dignify even the lowliest of its servants.

As often as a child of God comes into an earthly place of worship, he arrives at 'none other than the House of God', and the 'gate of Heaven'. What a delight to take a turn of duty there! Though yet upon the outside, he may see from this vantage point something of that which lies within: glimpse the glories of the eternal realm; hear the songs of the angelic hosts; catch an occasional ray of Divine effulgence, pouring forth from the opening heavens; hearken to the voice of his Master. Humble doorkeeper he may be, but one who serves on the very threshold of Eternity.

Viewed from the House of God, the best dwelling places of the wicked are as mere tents by comparison. Oh – who then would miss one golden opportunity thus to stand on the perimeter of Glory? Who would ever forsake the assembling of themselves together? Who would forfeit a single Sabbath day? They who have long kept the door of God's House know best how they will ultimately be admitted there, and welcomed home.

“To spend one sacred day,  
Where God and saints abide,  
Affords diviner joy  
Than thousand days beside:  
Where God resorts, I love it more  
To keep the door, than shine in courts.”                      Watts