

SIMPLE TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD

“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 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 set upon the table shewbread before me alway” (Exodus 25:23, 26, 27, 30).

IN some of our watering-places, you will find on many houses a notice: “Rooms without board.”

As a rule the owners have large houses and are glad to let some of their rooms, but do not furnish meals to their guests. Our heavenly Father does not only provide for His children a dwelling-place; He wants to give His children a home and in a home a table is needed for the meals of the children.

In the sanctuary we have not only the golden candlestick but also the altar of incense and the table of shewbread. It is the royal table destined for the King. Joseph had three tables in his dining-hall, one for the Egyptians, one for his brethren and one for himself (Genesis 43:32). They served him by himself. Our King likes to see the happy faces of His children around Him and bids them take a seat with Him at His table.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

The table was made of the acacia wood of the desert and overlaid with gold, and so points us to the twofold nature of our Saviour: His divine and His human nature. In Him, the Godhead and Manhood were joined together in one person, Christ.

“As children partake of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same, that by death, he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is to say the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

Christ knew what it meant to be weary, to feel hungry and thirsty.

It brings our Lord so near to us. He is able to feel with us. He had to take our human nature in order to expiate our sin by His death on the cross. He had to be divine to give that sacrifice its infinite value, a full-sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. **“God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.”**

The dimensions of the table were small.

It was three feet long, one and a half feet broad and three feet high. On it Aaron placed each Sabbath morning twelve cakes or loaves of equal size, in two rows, each representing one of the tribes. Those of the previous week had to be eaten by Aaron and his sons in the holy place.

Two names are given to these loaves.

- It was called Bread of the Presence; bread that could be placed before the King, royal bread.
- It was also called the continual bread (Numbers 4:7).

The royal table is never empty, God calls His children to Him every moment. They need never be afraid to come to an empty table. Father calls the children: **“Come, for all things are now ready.”**

The loaves were made from the finest flour.

They are a type of Christ. Our Lord tells us so Himself.

“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). It is only as we are feeding on Him, we have life in us (John 6:53).

The golden candlestick's light fell on the bread of the presence.

The Father is well-pleased in His Son who gave His life a ransom for many, as typified by those two rows of cakes. Where Christ is, there are also His disciples; and so the Father is also pleased with His children, and even the weakest child is accepted in the beloved.

Every tribe had its loaf, not one failed.

They were also, of equal size. God looks at the branches of the church in a different way than we do. To us some of the loaves seem to be considerably larger than the others. We may even think that some of the tribes have no loaf at all on the table. God thinks differently. He looks at Christ and in Him we are complete.

Under the Old Testament dispensation only the priests, were allowed to eat the bread. Under the new covenant all God's children belong to the royal priesthood and, therefore, every child has a right to a seat at the table, whether he belongs to the tribe of Judah or Benjamin, or any other tribe.

It is not the table of Judah or Benjamin, but the King's table and He invites them all. It is very sad that the sacred legacy which Christ bequeathed to His Church as a continual memory of His sacrificial love, to give them food for their journey should have become a cause of separation and division instead of witnessing to the world till Christ comes again of that sacred bond of love which unites His children not only to their Lord but also to each other,

“For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (I Corinthians. 10:17).

When I look at the table of shewbread and see how close the loaves are one to another, I long for the time when Psalm 133:1: **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”** will be a reality.

You never need fear that the King will not be pleased to see you at His table.

He sent a special invitation to you and a King's invitation is a command. Perhaps you may consider yourself unworthy of a place at the royal table. Mephibosheth was of royal descent. He lived in Lodebar, the place where there was no bread. Besides, he was lame on both feet. David bade Mephibosheth to reside in his palace from love for his father, Jonathan.

He did eat continually at the king's table for Jonathan's sake. It seems to me that our King has a special love for lame people. Jacob wrestled with the angel at Penuel. It was only after the angel had touched the hollow of his thigh that he had to give up his wrestling and could only cling to the angel.

Then he received the blessing and a new name, and though halting upon his thigh, the sun rose upon the halting man. Lame people obtain the blessing by clinging, not by wrestling (Genesis 32:31). Why did Mephibosheth have a seat at the royal table? It was not because of his own merit; it was for his father's sake, for Jonathan's sake.

Read the touching story — II Samuel 9:13. Why are you, a lame child of God, a welcome guest at the royal table? For Jesus' sake.

Of all the furniture of the tabernacle, the table of shewbread was the lowest. It was only about two feet high. You will hardly have such a low table in your house. There is no child so small that cannot sit at this table. The important thing is not to look at the table, but to take your seat. The King has made all preparations. It is for us to accept the invitation which He sent us: **“Come for all things are now ready”** (Luke 14:17).

It is not enough to look at the table.

The bread had to be eaten (Leviticus 24:9).

How often Dr. Torrey at Montrose told us: “Meditate on the Word.” The Bible tells us to meditate on the Word in the night-watches. I cannot commend too strongly to my readers to memorize passages of Scripture.

Only a few days ago it was my privilege to visit a lady eighty-four years old who had been confined to her bed for several years. I was delighted to listen to her repeating one passage of Scripture after the other. A sleepless night will neither seem long nor wearisome to you if you meditate on the Word and have the Holy Spirit as your Teacher at your bedside.

Have you been to the Table today?

Have you had your breakfast? As a rule, children, healthy children, do not forget mealtime. The dinner-bell is useful for the grown-ups, but the stomach is a good substitute for children. It is sad that in so many Christian families there is no family-altar any more, as there was in preceding generations.

I once heard a startling statement at Massanetta Springs from Bishop Henderson in an address wherein he pleaded eloquently for regular family worship. He said that in a district-meeting of his church officials he asked how many of them came from homes in which there was family-worship.

Ninety-five per cent held up their hands. He continued that when he went into the auditorium downstairs he repeated the same question to the young people; not five per cent held up their hands. The children of the church-workers in the church. I do not infer that the parents did not read their Bibles. I suppose they did, but not with their children.

I have found the same sad state in many churches where I have ministered.

I thank the Lord that a new start has been made by some excellent little publication with a short daily explanation of a Scripture-passage.

It is wonderful to go with your children to the table of shewbread, but you must not consider that this suffices. You must go alone as well. Father will want to speak to you in private. The Bible will be a blessing to you when it has a personal message for you for the day. Do not go away from your closet until you have received it. I am sure you will need it during the day.

It is a sad thing that theological students often occupy their time reading books about the Bible rather than reading the Bible itself and consequently have an insufficient knowledge of the Bible. Better read the Bible than ten books about the Bible.

I repeat the same advice to every child of God.

Devotional books and commentaries are a great help, but the best way to study the Bible is to let the Bible explain itself. Take time for your Bible. Study in the early morning if possible. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you. Dig deep and God will give you the hidden treasures of darkness. (Isaiah 45:3). Dig for yourself; your joy will be all the greater if you discover a special treasure which perhaps you never have seen before, although you might have many times passed over the same spot. Only babies require feeding with a spoon.

Healthy children, who live on the mountain-top in pure air and have plenty of exercise, are sure to have a good appetite. If we begin to find fault with our food, if we say with the children of Israel: **“Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread”** (Numbers 21:5), there is sure to be something wrong with our health. You better go to the good Physician and tell Him all about it. He will put you right.

You do not get filled by reading a cookery book. If you eat too many cookies, you lose your appetite. There is desire with many congregations for topical, social sermons, interesting sermons, but often there is little gospel in them. It is the old-fashioned gospel only which has the power of saving souls.

Paul was not ashamed of it (Romans 1:16).

It is by the sincere milk of the Word that people grow (I Peter 2:21). I belong to the plain people; give me plain food — that suits me best. “Tell me the story simply, as to a little child.”

They shall eat it in the holy place (Leviticus 24:9).

Every child of God should have a holy place where he can be alone with God. In our crowded cities that might appear to many a poor child of God an impossibility. Then follow Studdart Kennedy's advice he used to give his missions. He told his hearers to make a mental picture of their private prayer room.

Well I remember the picture-room of the young daughter of a farmer. A little gable-room, looking out on the cornfields; the little table set ready for tea, a chair awaiting the Saviour. I am sure the Lord loved to enter that little room.

A young girl gave her heart to the Saviour. Her mother was afraid the girl would become religious and spoil her chance of a good marriage, and tried to stop her reading the Bible. The girl wanted food for her soul and asked the Lord to wake her every morning at six o'clock, and the Lord did. Half an hour in the morning spent with the Lord tunes your soul for the whole day. Moses' face shone when he had been alone with the Lord; so will yours.

The table of shewbread had four golden rings.

It went through the desert, and even a wilderness is not a bad place for you when the Lord speaks comfortably to you (Hosea 2:14).

God can prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies (Psalm 23:5). He did it for David when he fled from Absalom.

If you leave the holy place, take the holy table with you. If Martha had taken it with her into the kitchen she would not have grumbled at Mary. Take it not only into the kitchen, but take it with you into your office and shop.

I thank the Lord for the Pocket-Testament League. It provides a wonderful method of winning souls for Christ. I have given away many New Testaments. I was on one of the liners and had preached on Sunday. Before we left the steamer a society girl came to me. She was the first at sports, the first at the dance. She thanked me for my sermon.

I looked at her rather surprisedly. Tears were in her eyes as she answered my unspoken thought. "That life does not satisfy," she said.

I asked her if I might give her something to remind her of our voyage and showed her one of those beautiful New Testaments. I told her, however, that I could only give it to her under two conditions. "Will you promise to read some portion of it every day?"

She gladly promised. I smiled as I told her my second condition.

"Could you promise to take this little book with you wherever you go?"

She thought a moment.

"It is an awkward book at times, it may begin to talk." She took it. "I can manage," she said. "**Give ye them to eat**" (Mark 6:37). I have never seen that girl since. I hope I shall some day. "**Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days**" (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

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