

The Table of Fellowship

Exodus 25:23-30

Thank you for joining us this week as we continue our study through Exodus. As we are going through this section of Exodus, don't lose sight of the big picture. Some of these chapters are filled with lots of small details and sometimes we wonder why all this information is in the Bible. If you start to feel that way, remember where this fits in God's story. God is building a kingdom and He will redeem what was lost to sin, He will restore His kingdom in the whole world.

I give you this short introduction to remind you of the big picture. God's plan will be accomplished, He was working then, and He still is at work despite how things appear. I thank you again for joining us on Hope for Today, let's go now with Bible teacher, J Mark, for a closer look at today's lesson.

One of the most loved Psalms of the Bible is Psalm 23. In it, David speaks of fellowship with God in the daily experiences of life. He finds God preparing a table for him which speaks of nourishment and fellowship. A table signifies satisfaction. It also signifies fellowship, a kind of oneness. There is a saying like this: "The crown of fellowship is eating together."

The feasts of Israel are times of fellowship around a meal. Jesus often reclined with people around the table. The New Testament commands us as Believers to show hospitality to everyone, but especially to those who cannot return the favor. According to the predictions of the Bible there is yet a great time of fellowship still ahead at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In the experience of Israel, we see that in the place of meeting, the Tabernacle, the LORD designed a table, THE TABLE OF FELLOWSHIP. The description is given to us in Exodus 25:23-30.

23. 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.

24. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold and make thereto a crown of gold round about.

25. And thou shalt make unto it a border of a hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.

26. 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.

27. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table.

28. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them.

29. 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.

30. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me always.

In this text we find certain DIRECTIVES for the construction of the table of fellowship which should be helpful to us.

The First DIRECTIVE God gave is,

The Dimensions.

God gave Moses the dimensions: about one meter long (39 inches), one half meter wide (19 inches), three-fourths of a meter (29 inches) high. Clearly, it is not a table for a large family! You could barely sit down to it yourself. So, it was symbolic, a table of fellowship. The dimensions of it were carefully prescribed.

Notice not only the size of it but the construction of it. It was made of acacia wood, very durable and light. Then it was to be overlaid with pure gold and to have a border of a hand breadth round about it. Also, it was to have a golden rim around it. It was luxuriously decorated.

There is no way the whole multitude of Israel could assemble around this table. Perhaps God never intended that anyone would sit down to it, but it was a table of fellowship. It wasn't large enough to accommodate any sizable group. Yet God said it was to be a table of fellowship.

The Next DIRECTIVE God gave is,

The Design.

The details are given: "Thou shalt make for it a border of a hand breadth, and thou shalt make for it four rings of gold...that the golden border be around about and the rings and the staves to carry it," and all the rest of those particulars. There was to be a ring at each corner for carrying it so that there was nothing permanent about the location of this table. It was designed to be movable. They were expected to carry it with them wherever they went. God wanted always to be in fellowship with them and this table was a symbol of that fellowship.

Among the people of Israel there were priests unto the LORD. They had a distinct role to fill in using the furniture in the Tabernacle. The sons of Aaron, called Levites, were the ones who served at the

table of fellowship. But every person among the children of Israel could have personal fellowship with the LORD as well. This small table was designed to express fellowship.

Today, the table of fellowship is the Lord's Table, or Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. There we symbolically partake of the blood and body of the Lord Jesus, recognizing the fact that He is the One who makes us worthy to enter into God's presence and have fellowship with Him. He is the Living Bread which came down from heaven and by His Holy Spirit we have continual fellowship with Him.

The Final DIRECTIVE God gave is,

The Dishes.

While it was a beautiful table overlaid with gold and well-proportioned in size and shape, it was not merely to look at. It had a purpose. It was to become a part of the services of the tabernacle. They were to make dishes, spoons, and bowls to cover what was on the table. They were to be made of solid, pure gold, no mixture or overlaying.

In Exodus 37:10-16 we can read how Bezaleel built this table exactly as Moses had instructed. This was the table of fellowship.

The shewbread was to be always on the table before the LORD. In Leviticus 24:5-9 God gave the instructions how this bread was to be baked. God, speaking through Moses, said to the people of Israel, *"You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the LORD. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due."* ESV

God expected this to be the table of fellowship so they were instructed how to prepare the bread and who should eat it. But notice that bread was on the table for a whole week. How did it not become stale or moldy? Evidently, it was matza, or unleavened bread. And these loaves were not small either. Each one was made from two-tenths of an ephah, about 4 liters or a gallon. Jewish sources say each loaf weighed about 5 kilograms or 11 pounds!

What was the purpose of this bread beside the fact that it was to be part of the priest's food supply? It is sometimes referred to as "the bread of the presence," or more correctly, "the bread that is in front of." There were 12 loaves to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. They were placed on two stacks of six each on the table. Every time a priest saw them, it most likely reminded him of several things.

First, bread was the “staff of life” in ancient cultures. So, this bread would have been a reminder that God was providing for the physical needs of His people. In addition, it was a reminder to God, if we can put it that way, of His responsibility to provide for His people. Remember, He had promised that if they would obey Him, He would bless them with plenty of food. It also symbolized the fellowship that occurs when people eat together.

Obviously, God was not eating this bread, but the priests ate it in His presence. So, it was still a symbol of the fellowship that He wanted to have with His people. God doesn’t eat with us at the Lord’s Table either, but it is a symbol of the fellowship we have with Him through Jesus, the Living Bread. By eating the bread that represents Jesus’ broken body, we acknowledge our dependence on Him and our gratefulness for His provision.

Fellowship with God is vital. By these instructions and this plan God was helping Israel to understand how vital it really is. For Israel this fellowship was symbolized with a table and the shewbread, the bread that was set out on the table. It was for them then a table of fellowship. Surely it should have reminded them of God’s daily care and the fact that the 12 tribes were continually represented there in the presence of the LORD.

Today, as Believers, we have the presence of God living right within us in the person of the Holy Spirit. We have the words of Jesus, the Living Bread, to feed on in the Scriptures. Through these we can have continual fellowship with Him no matter where we are.

This table of fellowship the children of Israel had went wherever they went; God was present among them. His presence was real to Israel at Mt. Sinai. Is His presence real to you?

Thanks J Mark for this teaching and thank you for being here for this teaching. It is incredible to realize the Lord of the universe wants a relationship with people. He wants your heart. Way back here at Mt Sinai, God came close. Again, many years after this, God came closer. This time he came as a baby. God came in the flesh and limited Himself to a body. His desire was and is the same. He desires a relationship with you, He wants to be the object of your worship, after all, He alone is worthy. We see God going to extreme measures to make this possible. Today we saw a small part of the story and thankfully Jesus has completed it. Through what Christ has done on the cross, we can come into the presence of our Holy God and be in relationship with Him. This is worth thinking about.

If you’d like a copy of today’s teaching, or if you’d like to contact us for any reason here are a few ways you can reach us. The best way is through email. Our email is hope@heraldsofhope.org. If you don’t have email, no problem, just write to us, our address is Hope for Today, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania

15533. Or you can connect with us on our website. Our website is HeraldsOfHope.org. On our website you will find some resources and under the listen tab there is other teaching similar to what you just heard. If you go to the connect tab you can message us directly. Again, our website is heraldsofhope.org.

Thank you so much for joining us. We look forward to being with you next week and till then go with God and grow in your connection with Him. He is an amazing God to love and serve.