

“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:
nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Matthew 26:39 (KJV)

COMMUNION

Many years ago, my mom gave me a copy of *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* by W. Phillip Keller. As you may already know, he was a shepherd and, therefore, describes Psalm 23 from personal experience. He talks about unexpected blizzards and shivering sheep. The lambs were especially vulnerable since they didn't have a full, heavy fleece. Sometimes he would use a little brandy mixed with water to help the suffering sheep. He explains that they would "wiggle their tails with joyous excitement" as the warmth returned to their bodies (151).

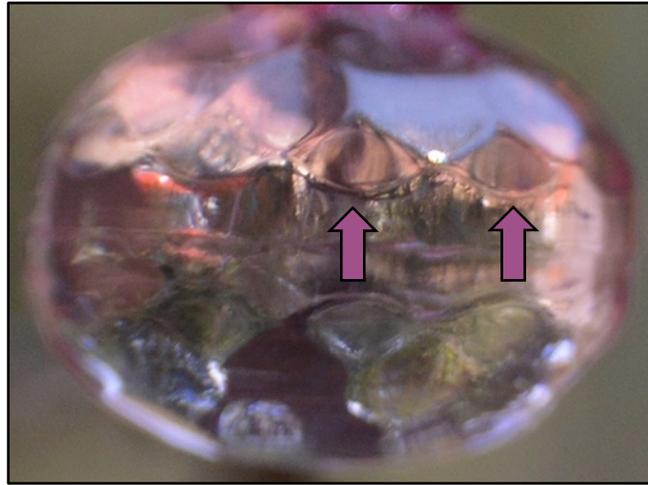
Keller writes, "It is here that I grasp another aspect altogether of the meaning of a cup that overflows. There is in every life a cup of suffering. Jesus Christ referred to His agony in the garden of Gethsemane and at Calvary as His cup. And had it not overflowed with His life poured out for men, we would have perished" (150).

When Jesus met with His disciples for the Passover meal, He took a cup, gave thanks, and then gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28). Every time we take communion, we remember what the Lord (the Lamb) has done for us (Luke 22:19). And one day He will drink it anew with us in His Father’s kingdom, possibly at the wedding of the Lamb (Matthew 26:29; Revelation 19:7).

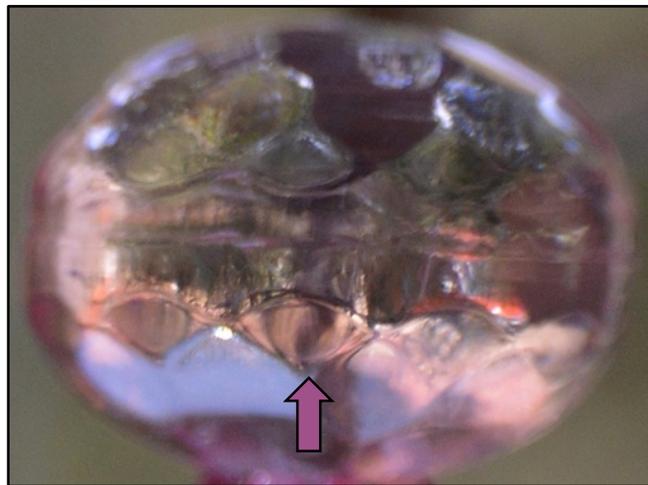


You may remember how one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear (John 19:34). Blood and water then flowed from His side. The arrow points to the possible piercing. And the dark purple color in the Lord’s middle is likely His belly. It could also represent the blood and water.

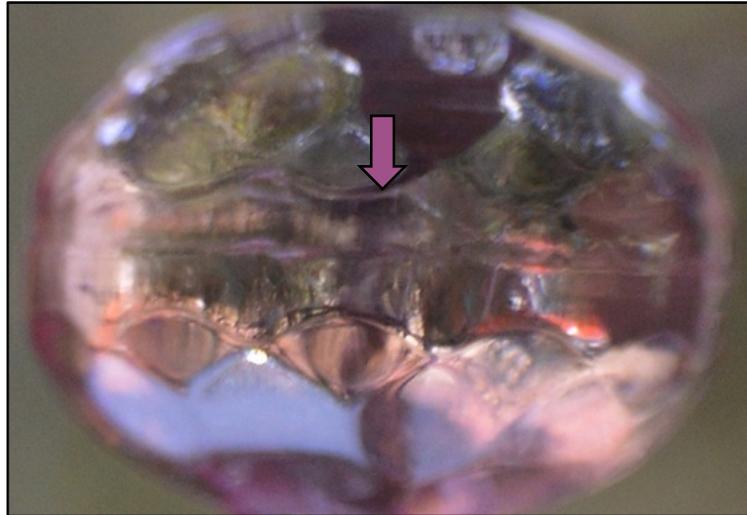
In *Looking Glass, The City God Loves*, I discuss the two bronze mountains from Zechariah 6:1.



When we turn the picture upside down, I believe the two bronze mountains represent two bronze bowls. The bowl near the center of the picture likely represents the bronze basin from the altar of sacrifice (Exodus 27:3). It is also called a “sprinkling bowl,” which was the kind of bowl used to receive the blood from the sacrifice.



Notice how blood and water flow from the Lord's side, and then it pours into the basin. We could even take it one step further and say that it is overflowing. In Psalm 23:5, King David says, "My cup runneth over" (KJV).

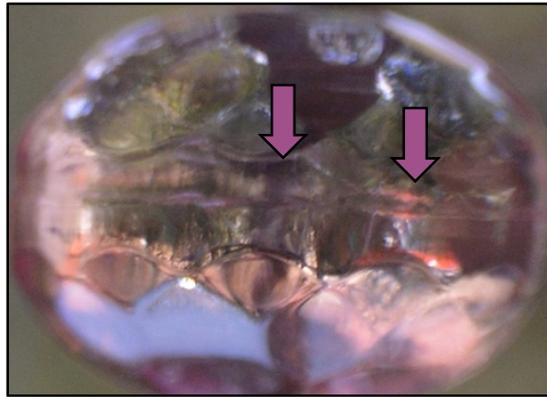


The west side of the tabernacle was closest to the most holy place where the ark of the covenant was kept. This is where God chose to meet with man, namely the high priest once a year. Therefore, God's presence was strongest on the west side. That is why, I believe, He portrays the heavenly temple on the west side of the pictures. The Western Wall in Jerusalem is where I experienced a miracle, a strengthening of spirit, soul, and body. I think these pictures have something to do with that day, even though a little over a year separates the two experiences.

So, recently, I considered the possibility that I have Jewish roots. The DNA test, however, confirms my Scandinavian heritage. It's likely that the characteristics I thought were

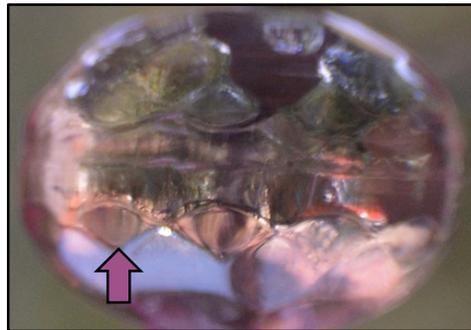
similar to the tribe of Benjamin actually come from my Nordic heritage. My husband recently brought it to my attention that the Lord gave the miracle pictures to a Gentile, one whose heart has been circumcised. I am blessed that He has given me a heart for Him, as well as a heart for His glorious city. I'm especially honored to have the opportunity to present His self-portrait to you. Each day I have to pinch myself. Even though I'm familiar with the photos, I don't think I'll ever get used to the idea that the God of the universe placed them in my hands. Every morning, when I awake, when I open my eyes, I have to try to wrap my mind around it. It's not an easy thing to process.

*The table of
the Lord*



The altar of sacrifice is also known as the “table of the Lord” (Malachi 1:7). In the picture above, the Lamb is lying down on the altar of sacrifice (our right). And the altar continues across the middle of the picture. This longer altar is where the Lord Jesus is lying down. It likely represents the table of the Lord. In Psalm 23:5, King David says, “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (KJV).

Part of our preparation for fellowship with the Lord comes through remembrance of what He has done, as well as reflection of our lives in light of His sacrifice. When Jesus took the bread, He gave thanks, broke it, and then He said, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). The apostle Paul reminds us that when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). Therefore, we could sum up communion by saying that we look back, remembering Him. And we look forward, longing to see His beautiful face.

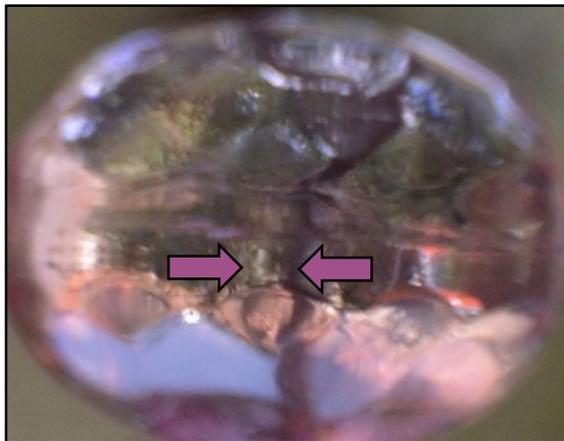


You may have already figured out the purpose of the second bronze mountain mentioned in Zechariah 6:1. I believe it represents the laver (KJV), also known as the bronze basin (NIV). After the animal sacrifices, the priests would wash their hands and feet at this basin before entering the holy place. If they did not wash away the filth, they would die in God’s presence (Exodus 30:19-21). This is symbolic of salvation. We must find cleansing before we can enter Heaven’s eternal tabernacle. Blood represents life taken, while water represents life given.

The bronze wash basin and its stand, interestingly enough, were made “from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting” (Exodus 38:8). The word “mirror” is also translated “lookingglass” (KJV). When a priest would look at his reflection, he would see his need for cleansing. We, as Christians, find cleansing when we apply the Word of God to our lives (Ephesians 5:26). The Bible, in a way, is like a mirror, although it is a mirror for the soul.



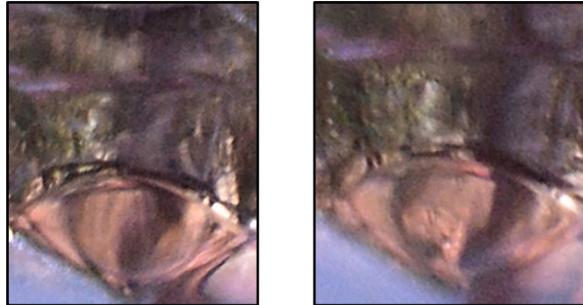
Isn't it interesting how the body and blood of the Lord Jesus are in the picture above?



We also see the manna right next to the vine, which represents the bread and wine, the body and blood. These elements are in both pictures.

Please note how the manna and the vine are directly above the bronze bowl (from the altar of sacrifice). To me, this points to the elements of communion, as well as the cup which offers them to us.

*Bronze
Bowl*



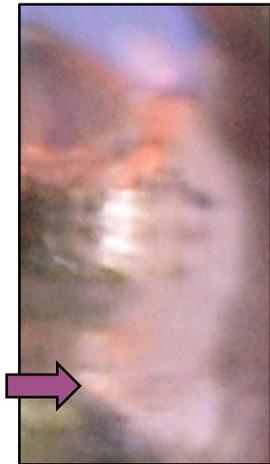
During biblical times, the priests possibly carried the loaves in large golden bowls. The covers and bowls may have been used for drink offerings as well. When I researched the articles in the tabernacle and temple, the only golden bowls I could find were a part of the table of shewbread. Exodus 25:29 says, “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” (KJV).

Gold was used in the holy place, as well as the most holy place, since it represents God’s divine presence. Those who have received the gift of salvation through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus are welcome to enter His presence, to join Him at His heavenly table. At one time we were enemies of God, but those who receive Christ have been reconciled to Him (Romans 5:10). God, in His great mercy, allows us to share His table. Once we were going our own way and doing what we thought was right. When our eyes were

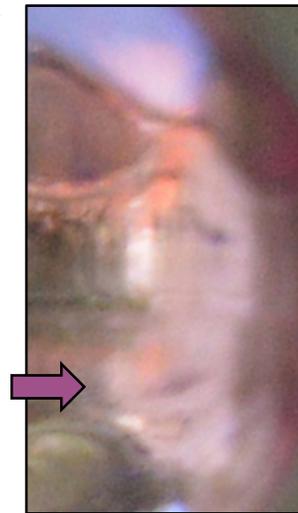
opened, however, when we humbly received the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, we were no longer enemies. Instead, Jesus calls us friends (John 15:15). We are welcome at His table. And one day, we will have the opportunity to partake of the Lord's table in Heaven. We share in His cup of suffering on earth, so we can share His heavenly cup eternally.

Golden Vials

There are three references to golden vials that I would like to share in this section. Let's take a look at each one in the King James Version. We find the first one in Revelation 5:8. It says that "the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." According to the Strong's Concordance, the Greek word for "vials" is *phiale*. It is a broad shallow cup. Interestingly enough, the two main miracle pictures have an image of a cup that fits this description.



*The New
International
Version calls
them "bowls."*



These bowls are full of “odours.” The Greek word is *thumiama*. It is “an aroma” or “a fragrant powder burnt in religious service.” Basically, it is an incense. The prayers of saints, therefore, are incense to the Lord. They are not *like* incense. But rather, the verse says that the heavenly odours *are* the prayers of saints. I am reminded of Psalm 141:2, which says, “May my prayer be set before you like incense.” David, of course, was speaking of earthly incense. Please keep in mind, however, that we are talking about the incense in Heaven.

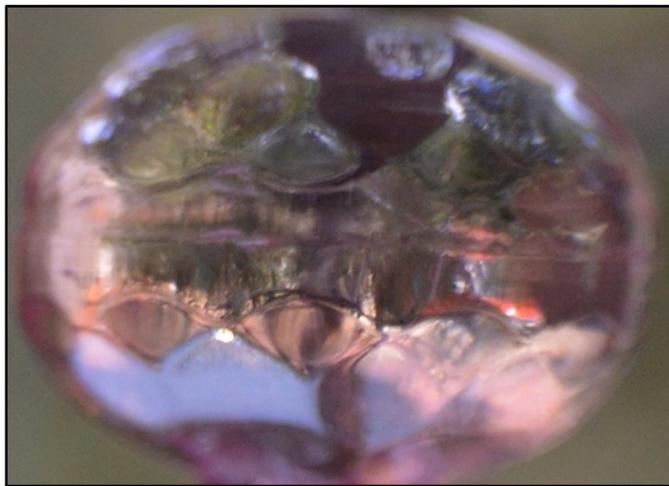
One of the primary ways we commune with the Lord is through prayer. That is why the vials (or bowls) are filled with odours. They are filled with the prayers of people like you and me. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word “commune” means “to communicate intimately.” Our most intimate connection should be with the Lord. Our prayers are sweet-smelling to Him. Of course, we may have close relationships with people at times, but the Person of Christ should be the loveliest and most transparent relationship in our lives. Come to think of it, the gold in the pictures looks transparent, which reminds me of Revelation 21:18. The verse says that the city was made of “pure gold, as pure as glass.”



The second example of golden vials that I would like to share is found in Revelation 15:7. The King James Version says that “one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.” This is pretty much the opposite of our first example. Instead of close communion with the Lord, we see judgment. Those who have chosen not to commune with Him, who never received His forgiveness and mercy, will receive judgment. Of course, the Lord does not want anyone to perish. Second Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” We currently live in a time of grace. We have an opportunity to receive Christ right here, right now. I often wonder why more people aren’t trying to get to know Him. There are so many resources, especially within the tech-savvy world, and yet people seem unconcerned. I do not understand why there is no time or, perhaps, no desire to research Jesus. Josh McDowell and Lee Strobel are wonderful examples of skeptical men who became believers through their research. Their devotion to searching for the truth should be an inspiration to us all. Jesus says, “Seek and you will find” (Matthew 7:7). He also says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Revelation 3:20).

I hadn’t planned on sharing the next verse, but I’m starting to see it in a fresh way. Jesus says, “To the one who is

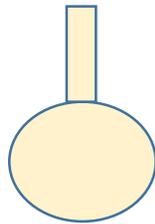
victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne...” (v. 21). Just last week, I was thinking about God’s throne in Heaven. I believe it is made up of the ark of the covenant as well as the table of the Lord. That means there is a seat as well as a table. Simply put, there is a place for someone to sit down and eat. In verse 20, Jesus tells us that He will come in and eat with the one who is victorious. This meal could very well take place around His throne. The wedding supper of the Lamb suddenly comes to mind. When Jesus says that He will give us the right to sit with Him on (or in, KJV) His throne, He could be speaking of communion, like the Passover meal. He could also be referring to the wedding supper of the Lamb. Please take a moment to imagine the Lord sitting on His throne (instead of lying down on the altar). Perhaps we will all sit around His table to commune with Him and enjoy a meal.



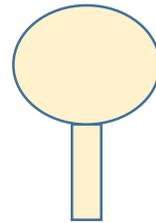
The idea of a throne also points to ruling and reigning. If you look at the context, however, it is likely speaking of a meal.

Next, we arrive at our third and final example, which I hadn't planned on sharing until last night. It is the pot of manna. In Exodus 16:32, the Lord says that an omer of manna should be kept for generations to come. Then, in Hebrews 9:4, we read about the three items inside the ark of the covenant: (1) the golden pot of manna, (2) Aaron's rod that budded, and (3) the stone tablets of the covenant.

The Hebrew word for "pot" in Exodus 16:32 is *tsintseneth*. It is "a vase (probably a vial tapering at the top)." I started to imagine a pot with a wide body and a narrow neck. The root word, interestingly enough, is *tsen*, which means "to be prickly;" "a thorn; hence a thorn-hedge." I couldn't help but think of the tree of life. In chapter three, we learned that the ark of the covenant was "hedged in," while the way of the tree of life was "hedged about." Now, the pot comes from a word meaning "prickly like a thorn-hedge." Since I wondered how on earth (or in Heaven) all these things connect, I decided to draw a picture of a vial. After I stared at it for a minute or two, I suddenly saw the connection.



If we turn the image upside down and pretend to pour out the manna, the vial suddenly looks like a tree.



It is important to note that the shape of the vial is different from the broad shallow cups in Revelation. All the vials, however, whether earthly or heavenly, are made of gold. And, as already mentioned, golden bowls are a part of the table of shewbread. Therefore, we may see a pot of manna at the Lord's heavenly table one day.

Since the Israelites experienced a taste of Heaven for forty years in the wilderness, perhaps we will have an opportunity to try the heavenly bread as well. We'll probably have to wait until the Lord establishes His kingdom, though.

Preparation

When the Israelites gathered the manna, they ground it in a hand-mill or beat it in a mortar (Numbers 11:8). Then, they baked it in pans. The Hebrew word for "pans" is *parumr*. It is "a skillet (as flat or deep)." The New International Version says that "they cooked it in a pot and made it into loaves."

Isn't it interesting how every group of people in the world enjoys some type of bread? Since I have a Scandinavian heritage, Norwegian lefse was a popular snack for me after school. I would spread butter on it and then sprinkle a little sugar. As I grew older, I preferred honey because of its texture. I would carefully fold the delicate flatbread and then roll it. Sometimes I would fold it once again, depending on its size.

In the holy place, the table was on the right-hand side of the priest as he entered. And the bread of Presence sat on the table before the Lord at all times (Exodus 25:30). In Leviticus 24:5-8, we find precise instructions for the bread. It says to “take the finest flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. Arrange them in two stacks, six in each stack, on the table of pure gold before the Lord. By each stack put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a food offering presented to the Lord. This bread is to be set out before the Lord regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant.”

Since the people brought flour to bake the bread for the temple, perhaps we will do the same thing in the New Jerusalem. I would like to consider another possibility, however. Perhaps we will follow the example of the Israelites in the wilderness. As we already know, God rained down manna from Heaven. The Israelites then gathered it and ground it into something that resembles fine flour. After that, they used it to bake the loaves or cakes.

What if someday, while serving the Lord in His temple in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:3), we receive some hidden manna and a white stone. Perhaps we will grind the manna with the stone and then use some of it to bake the bread. We may also use some of it as incense, whether at the altar of incense, in a censer, or at the Lord’s table. What an amazing thought! What if, when we visit the city, we can

go directly to the tree of life and take some manna from the side of it? The Lord says He “will give the right to eat from the tree of life” to those who are victorious, so perhaps manna is included in this promise (2:7).

It is my humble opinion that everything necessary to serve the Lord in His heavenly temple will come directly from Him. He serves us with His life, so we can serve Him in His temple. As I think about it, it would make sense that the tree of life will provide everything that we need.

Revelation 22:2 says that “in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month...” (KJV). It is possible that there will be a different fruit each month. Or, since the tree of life is the most glorious tree ever, it may produce twelve fruits simultaneously. Either way, I believe the fruit will be useful in the temple. (Remember, the Lord and the Lamb are the temple.) Sure, we will get to eat from the tree of life.

However, I think different parts of the tree will help keep the heavenly temple running smoothly. Whether it’s the leaves for the healing of the nations (v. 2) or an edible gum for the bread, everything will have a heavenly purpose and will glorify God.

Stacks of Bread

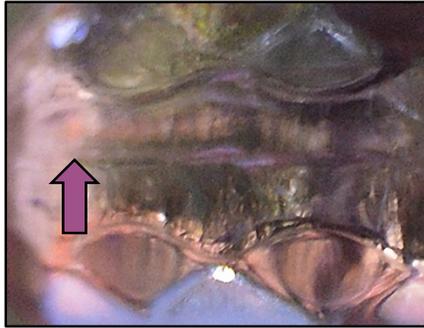
You may have noticed a pattern within the temple. For example, the Lord told Moses to arrange the bread in two stacks, with six loaves in each stack (Leviticus 24:6). This,

of course, is similar to the two stones on the high priest's shoulders. Each stone, as you may recall, had six names of the sons of Israel. The two stacks of bread were then placed "on the table of pure gold before the Lord" (v. 6). Some people believe the two stacks represent the Jewish people and the Gentiles. Then, in verse 7, it says, "By each stack put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a food offering presented to the Lord." I used to find this verse confusing. I wondered how incense could be considered a food offering. When I began to see the origin of the manna, however, that it could come from the tree of life, then I realized it could very easily provide food as well as incense.

What is fascinating about the Lord's table is how He shares it with His people. Every Sabbath, the priests would place twelve fresh loaves of bread and fresh incense before the Lord. The priests would eat the week-old bread (Matthew 12:4), while the incense, from what I understand, was poured out on the altar of sacrifice. The table, therefore, was shared by both the priests and the Lord. The food was placed side by side—the loaves to be eaten by the priests and the incense for the Lord.

Just as the Lord provided manna from Heaven for the Israelites in the wilderness, the Father has given us the true bread from Heaven (John 6:32). Jesus came down from Heaven to give life to the world (v. 33). He is the bread of life (v. 35). Jesus says, "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Whenever we take communion, we remember the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).



We see the open bread bowl on our left, the blood and water pouring out on our right, and the Lord's face in the middle. The arrow points to the bread bowl.

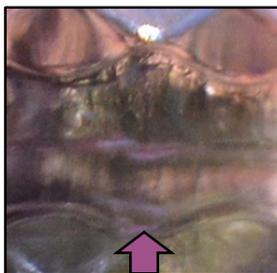
Bread of Presence

The next section of this study is very interesting since we are going to take a look at the word “shewbread.” Exodus 25:30 says, “And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway” (KJV). According to the Strong’s Concordance, this word has two meanings in Hebrew. The first word *lechem* means “food (for man or beast), especially bread, or grain (for making it).” The second word *paniym* means “the face.” When we put the words together, we get the phrase “bread of the face,” which is also called the “bread of the presence.”

There is definitely a connection between prayer and God’s presence. When Jacob plans to meet with his brother, Esau, he is afraid (Genesis 32:7). He prays and asks God for help (vv. 9-12). The night before their scheduled meeting, Jacob wrestles with someone until daybreak (v. 24). Some people

identify the visitor as an angel of the Lord. Others, however, think it was the Lord Himself. Oftentimes, just like Jacob, we struggle or wrestle with our faith. In verse 30, Jacob calls the place where they wrestled “Peniel.” This comes from the word *panah*, which is *paniym* in the plural form. Therefore, it is from the same root word as “shewbread.” It is interesting to note that Jacob named the place “Peniel” because he saw God face to face, and yet his life was spared (v. 30). The King James Version says his life was preserved. When we see Jesus face to face one day, we will know that our lives have been spared, that our lives have been preserved. The concept of a covering comes to mind. The apostle Paul says, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4).

I have to make one last observation. Genesis 32:31 says that the sun rose above Jacob as he passed Peniel. In the picture, we see the Lord’s face, an angel above Him, and then the dawn of a new day, symbolized by the white spot.



Thanksgiving

The timing of this section couldn't be any better since today is Thanksgiving Day. Before people gobble up turkey and pumpkin pie, many take a moment to say a prayer of thanksgiving. When Jesus sat down for the Passover meal, He gave thanks before breaking the bread. After the prayer, He said to His disciples, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24, KJV). What a wonderful example for us all!

The Israelites, on the other hand, grumbled and complained about the manna in the wilderness (Numbers 11:4-6). If you have ever read 2 Timothy 3:2, then you know that the words "unthankful" and "unholy" go hand in hand. It seems that when people are ungrateful, the unholy part often follows. If we can't find anything to be thankful for, we probably haven't thought about the death of the Lord Jesus. His sacrifice alone is enough for us to overflow with thanksgiving. When we take communion, we are to do so in remembrance of the Lord. We are to remember His love for us, that we have not been left alone in our sins. Rather, we find forgiveness through His shed blood. We have been welcomed into His family. Whether we have a natural family on earth isn't as important as knowing we have an eternal spiritual family in God's kingdom. To be truly thankful, therefore, is often linked with holiness. Heaven, of course, is the most holy place. It is there, in our eternal home, that we will be able to share a

thankful heart in its sincerest form.

Psalm 100:1 says, “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.” Verse 4 continues with the thankful theme as the psalmist approaches the temple. It says to “enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” Can you imagine approaching the throne of God in the New Jerusalem? Perhaps we will bring a loaf of freshly baked bread to the Lord’s table. The Bread of Life Himself will smile as He receives the thought-filled gift with open arms. He will know that His sacrifice has been remembered.

What are you thankful for today, not just on Thanksgiving Day, but always? As I think about communing with the Lord at His table, I’m truly amazed that I’m welcome there. Jesus invites me to break bread with Him in remembrance of His great sacrifice. He is my daily bread. It seems fitting to end this section with the Lord’s prayer. Let’s read Matthew 6:9-13 in the King James Version:

“Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever. A-men.”