



June 7, 2024

Lessons from Special Cakes or Flat Loaves of Bread

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

We've just returned from visiting brethren in the panhandle of Florida. It is always encouraging to see God's children holding strong to Him through His faith in us.

Last week we began a discussion regarding "What does bread have to do with the Sabbath and with Pentecost?" We also began taking note of the ritual performed in the tabernacle holy place where special cakes or flat loaves of bread were placed on a special table each Sabbath. They remained there until the following Sabbath, when they were removed and could then be eaten by the priests in the court of the sanctuary. So, what lessons might we learn from this ritual?

"Bread" can symbolize food and sustenance in general. Jesus instructs us to include in our prayers, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" (Matthew 6:11) Some expositors comment on the uniqueness of the word translated "daily." Robertson proposes rendering it "for the coming day." There is nothing wrong with planning for the future, but we are to live each day by focusing on the needs and events of that day. There are physical needs for each particular day, whether food, or shelter, etc. Jesus instructs us, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*" (Matthew 6:34)

The term "breaking bread" simply meant "enjoying a meal" but does highlight the importance of bread as a food staple. "*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.*" (Acts 2:46)

Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3 in responding to the Devil's taunt, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*" (Matthew 4:4) The manna referred to in Deuteronomy was supplied day by day. But there was an emphasis on obeying God's instructions and laws - especially regarding the Sabbath.

There was this same lesson that accompanied eating unleavened bread during the feast of Unleavened Bread. "*Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days . . . It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth.*" (Exodus 13:7, 9)

There has to be something significant about placing the new fresh showbread or bread of presence on the table on the Sabbath. When would the laws of God and instructions of God be most likely brought to the people by the priests? It would be on the weekly Sabbath convocation. (Leviticus 23:3) The book of Malachi comments on the responsibility of the priests. "*For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.*" (Malachi 2:7) The priests need to ingest God's instructions and then bring them to the people, especially on the weekly Sabbath.

The tabernacle and its rituals focused on the work of Christ and His dealing with the church. Jesus explains about that ultimate bread that can energize one to receive eternal life. "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*" (John 6:51) Jesus went on to connect His bread with His words and instructions. "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*" (John 6:63) That message needs to be regularly given by God's servants to His people. The work of Christ and Him being the bread of life is a vital truth that needs to be often emphasized and reinforced.

Burning the Frankincense in association with the “bread of presence” seems to also be a connection of prayers with this special bread. (Revelation 5:8) Prayers of thanks and prayers of praise for God and His wonderful gifts and provisions.

As we pray for our daily bread and needs we apply the instruction in Philippians 4:6. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."* God has provided and God will provide what is needed for those who love Him, His laws, instructions, and gifts. Are we thankful for God's Sabbath and do we willingly respond to His instruction to assemble and worship our Father and His Son on that day before Him and be taught from His word? Some thoughts to reflect on as we once again enter God's Sabbath...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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