

Sadly, even Christians fail to see and rejoice in the goodness of God. They are pessimists and see the negative rather than God's positive working. Such an attitude prevents good worship. God provided Israel in the tabernacle and its contents visual illustrations pointing to His character. As the ark of the covenant reminded them of His mercy, the table of the bread of the presence reminded them of His goodness and the lamp stand of His glorious light.

I. *The table with the bread of the presence*

1. *The symbolism of the table*

A table in the Old Testament, as the place where people ate, represented the idea both of provision and privilege. Kings, for example, gave privilege to people by providing for them at their table. Cf. 1 Samuel 20:29; 2 Samuel 9:7–13; 1 Kings 2:7. David in Psalm 23 praised God for His provision with the figure of a table. In Psalm 78 God's provision for Israel in the wilderness was presented figuratively with a table.

2. *The symbolism of the bread of the presence*

The bread on the table in the tabernacle represented His provision for the people. He did not need their food (Psalm 50:12–15). The table was in His presence, pointing to His provision (cf. Exodus 33:14–15; Deuteronomy 4:37; Isaiah 63:9; Numbers 4:7).

The practice of burning incense as a memorial portion relates this to the grain offering, as Numbers 4:16 specifically terms the bread of the presence. The grain offering at harvest time was an expression of thanks for God's goodness and provision.

3. *The symbolism of "at all times"*

The importance of having bread on the table at all times is seen in its frequent repetition. It was "continual bread" (Numbers 4:7). As such it was a reminder of Jehovah's continual provision and a reminder to give thanks continually. The response was to match the provision.

God's provision is summarized in Psalm 23 as His goodness and loving-kindness. Therefore, proper worship acknowledges God's goodness in His constant provision and responds appropriately with thanksgiving.

II. *The lamp stand with the seven lamps*

1. *The lamp stand with the lamps shed light (v 37).*

The lamp stand with its lamps had the practical function of giving light within the tabernacle, but with the other items also served a symbolic purpose. Even the earliest readers would have been aware of the creation account (Genesis 1:2), God's control over light in the plagues (Exodus 10:21), and the pillar of fire to light their way. They also heard the connection between light and God's presence in the priestly benediction (Numbers 6:25), "The LORD make His face shine on you." Cf. Psalm 44:3; Psalm 89:15. The lamp stand with its lamps was a reminder that the LORD was the giver of light and being in the light of His presence was an important, special privilege.

2. *The lamp stand with the lamps displayed glory.*

The material and construction were magnificent, exceeding 1,37M CHF in value and composed of intricate flower design. Light and glory are sometimes associated with one another, even as parallel expressions (Isaiah 60:1, 19). The fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy is recorded in John's vision in Revelation 21:23. The apostle Paul also makes a connection between light and glory (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6). The gospel shines with the glory of Christ in His person and in His work. Cf. John 1:1–18; 1 John 1:5.

3. *The lamp stand with the lamps portrayed life.*

Light is necessary for life and the almond tree was particularly appropriate to represent life, since it was the first tree to blossom as early as later January or early February. The apostle John makes the connection that the life which was in the Word was the light of men (John 1:4), i.e., the life which is in all people is a testimony to the Word. The lamp stand with its lamps in the tabernacle appears to have had a similar symbolism of giving testimony to God as pictured in a vision given to Zechariah (Zechariah 4).

The lamp stand with its lamps was a glorious provider of light in the tabernacle but was especially intended to remind Israel that God is the giver of light.

Just as the lamps were trimmed every day, morning and evening, make it a habit to thank God for His goodness. In everything to give thanks because God remains good in every situation and always does good toward His children.

Give thanks for His provision and trust Him to provide. He has given His own Son, He will surely give all which His children need. His goodness and loving-kindness will always be with His children.

Thank Him for the light which He gives, for the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank Him for the cleansing in Christ and the fresh start which we can make every day.

Ask God to help you shine His light in the world around you. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the world, to be the light of the world and now commands us to be light in our generation.

It is our proper act of worship to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to our Lord.