

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 24:1-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Leviticus Chapter 24, and today we will read verses 1-4.

In Leviticus 23, God instituted the feasts of the Lord, which the Israelites were to observe every year. These seven feasts were commanded by God. We have already studied the details of these seven feasts and come to understand that they are a miniature representation of God's complete plan of redemption. They portray how God intends to bring His Old Testament elect—the Israelites—and His New Testament elect—the church—together into the eternal new heavens and new earth. Because they relate to God's comprehensive plan of redemption, the content of these seven feasts is exceedingly rich. Due to time constraints, our daily Bible reading cannot delve into them further. However, I hope that saints who are eager to pursue God will continue to meditate on these seven feasts and their application in the New Testament.

In Leviticus 25, God continued to instruct Moses to teach the Israelites about the laws concerning the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee. The Israelites were to observe the 7th year as a sabbath year, and in the 50th year, they were to celebrate the Year of Jubilee. During the sabbath year, no work was to be done. In the 50th year, the Year of Jubilee, not only was rest to be observed, but all things were to be reset and started anew. These feasts reflect God's central will for His people, which is that they may find rest. Therefore, God established one day each week as the Sabbath day and designated seven feasts every year. Beyond these annual feasts that they should find rest, He also ordained sabbath years and the Year of Jubilee. This was to ensure that God's people could fully experience rest and enjoy all of God's provision during that rest.

It is particularly noteworthy that amidst these two chapters discussing the feasts of rest, Leviticus 24 is inserted, which is the chapter we are reading this week. This

chapter discusses four matters: the instructions for lighting the lamps, the instructions for the showbread, the punishment for blaspheming God's name, and the penalties for injuring people or animals.

Before delving into the text, we must first ask: why would God insert this chapter amidst the passages about the feasts? I believe that God, being a God of purpose and intent, always has specific considerations for His actions. While we may not fully grasp God's intentions, we must spend time and effort seeking understanding, and at the same time, pray for God to grant us light so that we may align with His will and comprehend His purpose. If we adopt this attitude of inquiry in our Bible reading, God's word will gradually unfold before us.

However, in this process, we must always remember not to be rigid in our interpretations and to remain open-minded. Each individual may perceive different aspects of light and consider different perspectives. Thus, we must learn to seek unity amidst diversity, coming together to share and fellowship so that we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of God's word.

In the feasts, God's will is for people to find rest and enjoy His abundant provision. Actions that dishonor God or harm others disrupt the atmosphere of rest and prevent people from truly experiencing it. Therefore, God established penalties to prevent such actions. External disruptions to rest must be avoided, but even more importantly, the matters within the tabernacle must be handled appropriately. While these things might not seem directly relevant to the Israelites in the Old Testament, their spiritual significance and New Testament application are highly important for New Testament believers. Proper lighting of the lamps and partaking of the showbread are key to experiencing inner rest. If one does not have inner rest, observing the feasts outwardly will not bring true rest. With this understanding, let us now read the instructions regarding the lighting of the lamps.

Verses 1–2: “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually.’”

The golden lampstand was located in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, while the sacrifices and offerings for the feasts were mostly conducted in the outer court. In terms of typology, the outer court represents our body, the Holy Place represents our soul, and the Most Holy Place represents our spirit. During the feasts, because of the numerous sacrifices and offerings, people's bodies were kept very busy. Can one truly enjoy rest amidst such busyness? Isaiah 30:15 says, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Rest, quietness, and confidence refer to a person being calm and stable before God, allowing them to truly enjoy the feasts according to His will. Therefore, God directs our attention to the golden lampstand in the Holy Place.

The entire Holy Place was enclosed by boards, curtains, and coverings, and the golden lampstand was its only source of light. The golden lampstand had seven lamps, and if the lamps went out, the Holy Place would be in total darkness. Thus, the lamps on the golden lampstand had to burn continually. Lighting the lamps required oil, and God instructed Moses to command the Israelites to bring oil for the lamps so that the lamps could burn continually. God did not designate specific individuals but rather told all the Israelites that whoever felt burdened and willing to offer could provide the lamp oil. This oil would ensure that the Holy Place remained lit.

From a personal perspective, the Holy Place represents the soul. For your soul to be illuminated, the first requirement is consecration. Without consecration, there can be no light. If you admire a certain saint for their spiritual insight when reading the Bible or their ability to give testimonies that edify others, you must first learn from their example of consecration. How much time have they invested in studying the Bible? How much effort have they devoted to serving others in the church? Without consecration, there can be no light.

Secondly, what is consecrated matters. Here, it mentions "pure oil of pressed olives". The oil specifically used for the lamps in the Holy Place had to be pure olive oil, free from impurities. Pure oil burns cleanly without smoke. If fragments of olive pulp remain in the oil, they not only clog the wick but also produce black smoke when burned, making them unsuitable for use.

This olive oil had to be not only pure but also “pressed”. The NIV translates this as “pressed”, which is not entirely accurate; the KJV and ASV translate it as “beaten,” consistent with the term “搗成的” in the Chinese text. Unlike mass production of olive oil using millstones, which could introduce impurities, the process of making pressed olive oil was entirely manual. Only the finest and plumpest olives were selected, placed in a mortar, and crushed with a pestle. This was a meticulous and time-consuming craft. The olives were first broken into fragments, then further crushed into oil, and finally filtered through cloth to produce pure, clean olive oil suitable for the lamps in the Holy Place.

Crushing the olives symbolizes a person's experience of the cross. Before one can offer themselves, they must first undergo the work of the cross. This is a personalized, handcrafted cross designed by God for each individual to yield pure olive oil. When saints offer the pure olive oil produced through their refined experience of the cross to the High Priest, it is placed on the golden lampstand to burn, providing light not only for themselves but also for their households. As Matthew 5:15 says, “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.” Dear brothers and sisters, have you offered pure olive oil to make the golden lampstand in the church shine brightly?

Verse 3: “Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the Lord continually; it shall be a statute forever in your generations.”

Before believing in the Lord, our soul was in complete darkness. When we believed in Jesus Christ as the Savior of our lives, the life of Christ entered in and lit the lamp of our lives. This lamp shines to illuminate our previously dark soul. The darkness has not overcome the light, and light has now come into our soul. However, we still need the work of the cross and consecration so that our lamp will always have oil—meaning that we are constantly filled with the Holy Spirit, allowing the lamp to keep shining brightly.

The light of an oil lamp works through the capillary action of the wick, which continuously draws oil to the tip of the wick for combustion. Ideally, only the oil burns while the wick remains intact, so the lamp emits no smoke, and the light is pure and bright. However, as human beings, we are often not transparent and frequently mix in our old self, becoming an impure conduit. Sometimes the wick burns along with the oil, turning into ash that clings to the wick, forming soot. This soot hinders the flow of lamp oil and causes the light to dim.

At this point, the high priest must use snuffers and trays, both made of pure gold. As described in Exodus 25:38, "Its wick-trimmers and their trays shall be of pure gold." The high priest trims the wick, cutting off the burnt part of the wick and placing the soot into the golden tray. This signifies Christ's pruning work in us, removing the fleshly and natural parts of our old self, making us even more transparent and pure, so we can become a clean conduit through which the Holy Spirit flows without contamination.

This verse specifically mentions the location as outside the veil before the Ark of the Testimony in the Tabernacle. We know that the Ark of the Testimony is in the Holy of Holies, while the golden lampstand is in the Holy Place, with the veil separating the two. In the Old Testament, the high priest could not enter the Holy of Holies except on certain occasions. However, the Ark of the Testimony, also called the Ark of Witness, represents God's testimony. On a personal level, God's testimony begins in our spirit, illuminating our soul through the supply of the Holy Spirit, ultimately manifesting in the actions and expressions of the body so that we become God's testimony.

On a corporate level, the church's testimony begins with the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, then proceeds to the golden lampstand in the Holy Place, becoming a light that shines brightly, and finally reaches outward, becoming a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. In the dark world, it becomes a shining testimony.

Verse 4: "He shall be in charge of the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the Lord continually."

Here, "he" refers to the high priest, who is to be continually in charge of the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before God. The entire lampstand is made from one talent of pure gold, hammered into shape, and has seven branches, with each branch bearing a lamp. Each branch also has cups, buds, and flowers, representing God's work in the church. The golden lampstand is a symbol of the church. In Revelation 2–3, the seven churches are likened to seven golden lampstands, and the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, is seen walking among them. Christ addresses the needs of each church with encouragement, reminders, rebukes, and discipline, and He calls for overcomers among them.

Christ is our eternal High Priest, bearing the responsibility for building the church. However, Exodus 27:21 says, "In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel." This specifically mentions Aaron and his sons. Aaron represents the high priest, while his sons symbolize those serving as priests.

From a New Testament perspective, on the one hand, Christ is our High Priest, responsible for the church's building. On the other hand, we are all priests, serving together under Christ's leadership and learning to fulfill our duties in building the church. The church is the collective body of all the saints, and the growth of each individual saint is the building up of the church. Therefore, the first step is the spiritual growth of every believer. Following that, we must fulfill our duties in the church to help the saints around us grow together. This enables the church to be adorned and prepared to welcome Christ's return as His bride.

Christ bears the primary responsibility for building the church, but every saint must contribute under His leadership. First, through the work of the cross and consecration, they provide pure olive oil for the church's golden lampstand. On the one hand, they receive the ministry of the High Priest, who lights the lamps, adds oil, and trims the wicks. On the other hand, they learn to serve, helping fellow saints walk the way of the cross and learn to consecrate themselves. In this way, the church's testimony shines brightly.

Let us pray together: Lord, we pray for the church where we are. The church is the golden lampstand, and its testimony shines brightly when the saints are willing to walk the way of the cross and consecrate themselves to You. Dear Lord, do the work of pruning in my church so that it may shine like bright light in the dark world as a clear testimony for You. Bless the church where I am. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.