

Light and Life to All He Brings

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[0:00] We're going to go back, of course, to the book of Exodus, continuing our series on divine intervention and how God intervenes in our hearts and lives today.

23 to 40 this morning. So we read these verses last week as part of a longer reading about the tabernacle.

Now we're going to hone in on the table and the lampstand. Make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding around it.

Also make around it a rim, a hand breadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners where the four legs are.

The rings are to be close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. Make the poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold and carry the table with them.

[1:34] And make its plates and dishes of pure gold as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. Put the bread of the presence on this table to be before me at all times.

Make a lampstand of pure gold and hammer it out, base and shaft. Its flower-like cups, buds and blossoms shall be of one piece with it.

Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand, three on one side and three on the other. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand.

And on the lampstand there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair, six branches in all.

The buds and branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand hammered out of pure gold. Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it.

[2:49] Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. The talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories. See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.

The word of the Lord. Amen. So it was his very first creative act.

Light. The earth was formless and void. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. And God said, let there be light. And there was light. He made the stars.

Sun, the moon. He lit up the world. Later he gave light to his people during a plague of darkness.

After that he placed a pillar of fire above the camp out there in the desert to light their way.

Light up the camp for them out in the desert. And now here he's doing it again. Light in the darkness. He's laying out his plan for the tabernacle.

[3:58] And he says, let there be light. Make a lampstand, a big one. And make seven lamps. And put the lamps up there on the lampstand. And let them shine. Let there be light in my tabernacle.

Let there be light. The lampstand, it stood about five feet tall. It was made of pure gold, about 75 pounds of gold.

And it was all of one piece. So the kids and I, you maybe saw it back there, made our replica tabernacle. And when we got to the lampstand, there were about 35 pieces.

And it took a little while to put together. The original lampstand took a while to create, too. But it was all of one piece. One piece. You had the shaft in the middle and all the branches and all of the ornate pieces on there were all together.

Probably what they did is they took the gold and they put it in a wooden mold and hammered it out. Made it just the shape that God wanted them to make. So it was all very ornate.

[5:03] And it was quite something to look at. And it was quite the sight to behold. But it wasn't just about symbolism, this lampstand. It was also very functional.

You could just ask the people that were asked and required to donate the olive oil to keep this thing going all of the time. This thing was a working lampstand.

Just ask the priests who had to keep filling all of those bowls and trimming all the wicks and cleaning up all the soot. This thing did a real function for them. And it burned all evening and it burned all night.

Kept the place lit up. Topping the lampstand were the seven lamps. Seven oil lamps. They were kind of like bowls or saucers. You could take them on and off.

I picture them kind of like gravy boats with the olive oil in there like the gravy and then the wick kind of coming out the little spout part. For the tabernacle, they may have been made of pure gold.

[6:04] Usually they were made of pottery. But seven of these lampstands or lamps together on the stand, that would have thrown a fair bit of light. So the holy place, it stayed lit up.

Motel 6 will leave the light on for you. And God will too. That's kind of the message here. God did too. He left the light on for his people. And he made it clear that he was always there for them.

Those lamps always burning. And those lights, they testified to who our God is. They testified to who our God is and what he does. 1 John 1, verse 5.

God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. Psalm 36. In your light we see light. Psalm 27. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Whom shall I fear? And I love this from Psalm 43. This prayer. Send forth your light and your truth. Let these be my guide. Let them bring me to your holy mountain.

[7:10] To the place where you dwell. Right into the holy of holies. Send forth your light and your truth. Let them lead me right into your presence, Lord. And why seven?

Seven lamps. Well, it was so that there was sufficient light in there, of course. But beyond that, too, the number seven is the number of completion, perfection.

God is light. God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. That's the message. He's our light and our salvation.

And not just a little bit of light. And not just a little bit of salvation. Completion. Perfection. Sevenfold. Light for us. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Whom shall I fear? Of what shall I be afraid? Nothing. His light is sufficient for me. That's the message. I got nothing to fear because he saves me completely. And he gives me sufficient light to light my way.

[8:12] All sufficient. Sufficient light. Sufficient light. That sevenfold light to lead me on in life and lead me to Jesus Christ. And lead me right into his presence. What God reveals to us through his creation and through his word, his revelation to us, it's all sufficient for us.

A sevenfold light in the dark. That lampstand, it testified in another way, too. So I already told you that it was quite ornate.

And it was quite something to look at. But just looking cool and being all fancy and sparkly wasn't really the point. It was meant to convey something. The lampstand, it had a trunk.

And it had branches. And it had buds. And blossoms on it. It was meant to convey something.

Verse 33. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch. Three on the next branch. And the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. It was meant to be like a tree. Like an almond tree.

[9:29] A very lively almond tree. It had all the stages of life represented there simultaneously. From buds to blossoms to fruit.

I think the lamps were supposed to be like the fruit on the tree. This was a very lively tree. It was, as one scholar put it, a stylized tree of life. It's like there was a garden.

A little garden of Eden. Right there in the desert. Right there in the tabernacle. An oasis. You can think of it as an oasis. This life-giving tree. And it stood there as a testimony to our God.

Psalm 36 kind of sums this up. Because with you is the fountain of life. You're the fountain of life, oh Lord. That's our God. That lampstand.

It harkened back to Eden. And God's good creation in the beginning. God's tree of life there in Eden. It also pointed ahead.

[10:33] And if you were here last week. We talked a lot about this last week. How a lot of things in the tabernacle pointed ahead to God's new creation work. Coming up ahead. Coming yet.

The new creation. Revelation 22. Who specifically talks about the tree of life. It says. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life. As clear as crystal. Flowing from the throne of God. And the lamb. Down the middle of the great street of the city. And on each side of the river stood the tree of life. Again it's lively. It's so big. It's on both sides of the road at once. Right? The tree of life. And what does it do? It bears 12 crops of fruit. Not just one seed. 12 crops of fruit. Yielding its fruit every month. A lively tree. Fruit all year round. And what does this do? What does God's tree of life do? If we go on in Revelation 22. It says the leaves of this tree. [11 : 28] The tree of life are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. And what's the curse? It's death.

Right? And all things associated with death. War. Disease. Addiction. Abortion. Dead spirits too. And dead marriages.

And the death of civility and truth. And death by pollution. And death by neglect. And people just kind of giving up on each other. And maybe even giving up on life altogether. So we've got really good news here.

We've got really good news. That there will no longer be any curse. The leaves of this tree. Are for the healing of the nations. No longer any curse.

Our Lord will swallow up death forever. He'll heal and he'll make whole again. And that's what the lampstand stood for. This life-giving work of our God.

[12 : 29] And it was important because the Israelites. Well, they needed this testimony. Right? Because they tended to get sick of being out there in the desert. They got afraid sometimes for their lives.

And they got really grumpy and grouchy. And so God, he planted this tree there. This lampstand. And it stood for something. They sometimes wanted to go back to Egypt.

And to the pots of mead. And they had maybe an overly rosy memory of things. But these pots of mead. And they figured at least we'd have some predictability in our lives. And not so many unknowns.

So God put his tree of life there to remind them. Of his plan for them. And to stoke for them. Once again, his vision of something so much more. God wanted them to see him.

And to see this vision. And to get them to not give up. And to not lose hope. Those buds and blossoms on that tree. They were meant to whet their appetites for something more.

[13 : 31] And something far greater than Egypt could get. Ultimately, the lampstand. And those lamps on the lampstand.

They were meant to whet their appetites for the Messiah. And in a similar way for us. Meant to point to the Messiah for us today. That lampstand and those lamps.

What they do is they really help us appreciate all that we have in Christ. So at the end of the service today. We're going to sing a Christmas carol. We're going to sing.

Hark the herald angels sing. And we're going to sing it as a hymn of praise to our God. Because he sent the Messiah. Christ has come. The Messiah has come. And he's coming again.

And that lampstand. And those seven lamps. They testify to Jesus as our perfect savior. The light of the world. The one who turns our darkness into light.

[14 : 33] And with all those buds and branches and blossoms. It's also a testimony to us that Jesus is our tree of life.

Who died on a tree. To roll back the curse of death. So we sing. Hail the heaven born prince of peace. Hail the son of righteousness.

Light and life to all he brings. Risen with healing in his wings. For the healing of the nation. Light and life to all he brings.

You could have engraved that on that lampstand. Because that's really what it was about.

Summarize what that thing is telling us. Light and life to all he brings.

That's the message. And the apostle John. He picked up on that. And he just loved to testify. And to echo this message about all that we have in Christ.

[15 : 26] At the beginning of the service we read from John 1 verse 4. John says in him was life. And that life is the light of men.

And then in chapter 8 verse 12. I am the light of the world. Jesus said whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. But will have the light of life. But now what does it mean for us to have Jesus as

our light?

As our life. What does it mean? Well maybe it means you know you're going to be okay. Come what may. Because you have the light of Christ in you.

Perhaps you're finding yourself off in new territory somewhere. You've maybe had to leave your home. And you're in a foreign country. And it's hard. And it's scary. But you know you're going to be okay.

Because you have the light of Christ in you. Perhaps you're off to college. Or in the military. Or starting at a new middle school. Starting at a new job.

[16 : 33] At your old school. In your old job. You knew where everything was. And you knew what to do. And you knew all the people. And you had some clout. Now in this new place.

This new season. You don't. You don't feel like you know nothing. And it's scary. The unknowns are scary. But you know you're going to be okay.

Because you have the light of Christ in you. It makes all the difference. You know you're going to be okay. You have this promise that you'll never walk in darkness. There's that seven fold lamp.

And it's shining. It's shining. God's got us lit up. He's shining a light for you. What does it mean to have Jesus as your light?

Maybe you're finding yourself in the middle of some medical maze. And it just doesn't make any sense. And you just want to feel better. Or you're finding that suddenly you're old.

[17 : 33] And you don't know how it happened. But here you are. And you're dealing with all these things. And there's all these limits. And the losses kind of tend to pile up. And you're feeling the weight of it all.

But ultimately you know that things are going to be okay. Because you have the light of Christ in you. It makes a difference. Light in life to all he brings. Because he's the light in you. And he's at the same time the light of the world.

And one day you know. Even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Fear is not going to win out. Because he'll be with you. And he'll light the way for you. In his good time he'll carry you along into a whole new life.

A new creation. A new day. What does it mean to have Jesus as your light? But it also means that you have some light to pass around.

And to share with others. You've got something really good to share. Something eternal to share. With others. It's the honor of a lifetime.

[18 : 41] Really in this dark world. To be able to shine some light for someone else. It's especially an honor. If we're able to somehow. Delight their way to God. And to life in Christ.

Those seven lamps. In the tabernacle. They lit the way in. They lit the way in. To God's throne room. To the holy of holies.

And sometimes. By his mercy. God uses us. Kind of like those lamps. On that lamp stand. He uses us. Often we don't know it at the time. We don't maybe see the results.

But it's this profound thing. To serve like those lamps. In the tabernacle. And light the way. For someone else. Into the presence of the Lord. Jesus is the light of the world.

We know that. But Jesus said something else too. He said I am the light of the world. And then later he said. You are the light of the world. Before he returned to heaven.

[19 : 44] He said you are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp. And put it under a bowl. No. Instead they put it up on a stand. And it gives light to everyone in the house.

In the same way. Let your light shine. Before men. That they may see your good deeds. And praise your father in heaven. It's a profound thing.

But God uses us. In different ways. To light the way. To him. To draw others. To finding life in him. So we let our little light shine.

And by the grace of God. People come to see him. And come to praise our father in heaven. In 19. In the 1950s. J.B. Phillips. He published a story. A parable really. I've come to know it as. It goes by different titles. But I've come to know it as.

[20 : 42] The visited planet. The visited planet. And the story. Begins with a senior angel. Showing a very young angel. The splendors of the universe. The stars. And after a while.

The two angels. They come here. To our galaxy. As the two of them. Drew near to the star. Which we call our sun.

And to its encircling planets. The senior angel. Pointed to a small. And rather insignificant. Sphere. Turning very slowly. On its axis. It looked as dull.

And as dirty. It looked as dull. As a dirty tennis ball. To the little angel. Whose mind was filled. With the size and glory. Of what he had just seen. In the vastness of the universe.

Now I want you to. Watch that one. In particular. Said the senior angel. Pointing his finger. Well it looks very small. And rather. Dirty to me.

[21 : 39] Said the little angel. What's special about that one? That. Replied his senior. Solemnly. That. Is the visited planet. Visited.

Said the little one. You don't mean. Visited by. Indeed I do. That ball. Which I have no doubt. Looks to you. Very small.

And insignificant. And not perhaps. Over clean. Has been visited. By our young. Prince of glory. Well that was beyond. The little angel's.

Comprehension. So to help him understand. The senior angel. Took him back. In human history. Well what am I seeing now? Quieted the little angel. Or queried the little angel.

You are. Catching this little world. As it was. Some thousands of years ago. Returned his companion. Every flash. And glow of light. That you see. Is something.

[22 : 34] Of the father's knowledge. And wisdom. Breaking in. To the minds. And hearts. Of the people. Who live upon the earth. And the angel. And the angel. Not many people. You see. Can hear his voice. Or understand what he says.

Even though. He is speaking. Gently and quietly. To them all the time. Why are they so blind. And deaf. And stupid. Said the junior angel.

Rather. Crossly. Oh it is. Not for us. To judge them. We who live in the splendor. Have no idea. What it's like. To live in the dark. We hear the music.

And the voice. Like the sound of many waters. Every day of our lives. But to them. Well. There is much darkness. Much noise. And much distraction. Upon the earth. Only a few.

Who are quiet. And humble. And wise. Hear his voice. But watch. For in a moment. You will see something. Truly wonderful. The earth.

[23 : 33] It went on. Turning. And circling. Around the sun. And then. Quite suddenly. In the upper half. Of the globe. There appeared. A light. Tiny. But so. Bright.

In its intensity. That both the angels. They had. Hide their eyes. I think I can guess. Said the little angel. In a low voice. That.

Was the visit. Wasn't it? Yes. That was the visit. The light himself. Went down there. Into the darkness. And lived among them. But in a moment.

And you will be able to tell. Even with your eyes closed. The light will go out. But why? Could he not bear the darkness? And stupidity? Did he have to return here?

No. It wasn't that. Returned the senior angel. His voice was stern. And sad. They failed to recognize him. For who he was.

[24 : 29] Or at least. Only a handful. Knew of him. For the most part. They preferred their darkness. To his light. And in the end. They killed him.

The fools. The crazy fools. They don't deserve. Well. Neither you. Nor I. Nor any other angel. Knows why. They were so foolish. And so wicked. Nor can we say.

What they deserve. Or don't deserve. But the fact remains. They killed. Our prince of glory. While he was man. Amongst them. And that.

I suppose. Was the end. I see. The whole earth. Has gone black. And dark. All right. I won't. Judge them. But surely. That is all.

They could expect. Now just wait. We are. Still far. From the end. Of the story. Of the visited planet. Watch now. But be ready.

[25 : 24] To cover your eyes again. In utter blackness. The earth. Turned round. Three times. And then. On the third day. There blazed. This unbearable. Radiance.

A point of light. What now? Asked the little angel. Shielding his eyes. Well. They killed him. All right. But he conquered death.

The thing. Most of them. Dread. And fear. All their lives. He broke. And conquered. He rose again. And a few of them. Saw him. And from then on.

They became. His utterly. Devoted servants. Thank God. For that. Said the little angel. Amen. Open your eyes. Now.

The dazzling light. Has gone. The prince has returned. To his home of life. But now. Watch the earth. And as they looked. In place of the dazzling light.
[26 : 19] There was. A bright glow. That throbbed. And pulsated. And then. As the earth. Turned. Many times.

Little points of light. Spread out. A few. Flickered. And died. But for the most part. The lights. Burned steadily. And as they continued.
To watch. In many parts. Of the globe. There was a. A glow. Over many areas. You see what is happening. Asked the senior angel.
The bright glow. Is the company. Of loyal men and women. He left behind. And with his help. They spread the glow. And now.
Lights. Begin to shine. All over the earth. Let's pray together. Light of the world.
[27 : 13] You step down. Into darkness. You came. To this earth. Into this dark world. And you've come. And you've. Opened our eyes. And you've. You've lit a fire. In our hearts. Lord. And we love you. We want to live for you.

Shine on us. We pray. Shine through us. For your glory. We know our lights are. Are pretty little. But we know Lord. That you'll. Help us let our little lights shine. And you'll. You'll take our meager offerings. And beef them up. And use them to make a real difference. And we pray you'll do that Lord. Shine on us.
And shine through us. For Jesus sake. Amen.