

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 5)

The Menorah

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Many of you are aware that last night was the first night of the Jewish festival known as Chanukah, December 11, 2009, and it began at sunset. On the Hebrew calendar, it is Kislev 25. So, we are in the first day of Chanukah, which is an eight-day festival that purports to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and the spiritual over the material.

It is mentioned in the Bible one time. You will find it in John 10:22 where it is mentioned as a time marker—the Feast of Dedication, and it was winter. That all fits in where we are today. And, it is named the Feast of Dedication (its early name) because of the historical fact that the temple had to be rededicated after the Jews and Judas Maccabeus drove out the Greek Seleucids from Jerusalem in 164 BC.

So, roughly 190 years before Christ's ministry, this event happened where the Greeks were in charge of the holy land, and the Jews, after being persecuted, rose up in rebellion against them, eventually winning and regaining control of the holy land for a while.

Most of you have also probably heard or read the story regarding the menorah, the miracle of the temple lamp that goes with Chanukah. But, I think I will read it just to refresh your memories. This is from the website, chabad.org

More than twenty-one centuries ago the holy land was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian Greeks) who sought to forcefully Hellenize the people of Israel. Against all odds, a small band of faithful Jews defeated one of the mightiest armies on earth, drove them from the land, reclaimed the holy temple in Jerusalem, and rededicated it to the service of God.

When they sought to light the temple's menorah, they found only a single cruse of olive oil that had escaped contamination by the Greeks. Miraculously, that one-day supply of oil burned for eight days until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity.

To commemorate, and publicize these miracles, the sages instituted the festival of Chanukah. At the heart of the festival is the nightly menorah lighting—a single flame on the first night, two on the second evening, and so

on, until the eighth night of Chanukah when all eight lights are kindled.

Now that is a nice story. It is really neat, and beautiful. But, even though we want this to be true, the fact remains that there is no contemporary account of this ever happening. It is not mentioned at all in the books of the Maccabees, which you would expect it to be.

About 200 years later, when the rabbis were putting the Talmud together, they mention it as having happened, but its absence from the books of the Maccabees is telling—well, to my mind anyway.

If a real, well-attested miracle had happened, seemingly in support of the Jews and the Maccabees, and their revolt, would it not be likely that they would have made a big deal of it in their own writings? Why of course they would. But, it is not there.

It only mentions that the temple was rededicated after being cleansed.

Nevertheless, I thought it interesting to bring it up because today I will focus on the menorah. This menorah is also called the golden candlestick, one of the furnishings of both the tabernacle, and the temple.

However, we should not confuse the two menorahs. The menorah of the tabernacle, and the menorah of Chanukah are very different things. Did you know that the menorah of Chanukah has nine arms, or lamps? Whereas the temple or tabernacle menorah had only seven lamps. Also, the menorah of Chanukah in most cases used candles. However, the temple/tabernacle lampstand had bowls containing olive oil. It was always burning, not one after another each night, but continually burning.

Also an interesting fact (just to talk about the temple menorah just a little bit) that most people are not aware of unless they study history, is that the Roman general Titus, who conquered Jerusalem in 70AD took the menorah from the temple. He carefully packed it to bring it home as a booty of war. When he had his victory parade through the streets of Rome, the menorah, along with the table of showbread were among the two most conspicuous items that he brought back. As a matter of fact, these were so important to him as his booty, as his prizes of war, that he had the scene of his parade with these two items inscribed on his victory arch.

So, if you would go to Rome today and view the Arch of Titus, you would see the menorah being paraded through Rome. After he was finished with the parade through

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Rome, he did not throw it away, but rather he put it in a prominent place in the Roman Temple of Peace. I suppose you did not know that! Just like I suppose that you did not know that they had a Temple of Peace either. It was a kind of fuzzy hope, I suppose.

And believe it or not, it resided in the Temple of Peace 385 years, until 455AD when the Vandals (an interesting people, most likely Israelites) came up from Carthage against Rome.

The Vandals had had enough of Rome. Rome was getting in their way. One of the Roman rulers married his daughter to the Vandals' king's son, but then kept him a hostage in Rome. So the Vandal king said "Enough," and marched on Rome, and conquered them without much fighting. The Romans were shaking in their boots, because this Vandal army was outside their walls. What they did, instead of fighting a battle, the Roman authorities decided to allow them to loot Rome. And so they did, and went home. They actually did not "vandalize" Rome like the historians teach (even though that is where we get the word "vandalize.") But the Romans were the ones who wrote that history, making the Vandals the bad guys.

Now, one of the things that the Vandals took back to Carthage was the menorah. And it stayed in Carthage (in north Africa) for about 80 years, when Romans from Constantinople came and conquered Carthage. So, they took the menorah, then, to Constantinople where Justinian was ruling over the empire. Justinian, being a friend of the church—the Catholic Church, that is—decided that the menorah should not go back to Rome, or Constantinople, but it should be in Jerusalem. He sent the menorah back to Jerusalem, but there was no Jewish temple, and so, they installed the menorah in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher a few years before 538AD.

After that, though, the history of this menorah goes cold, because we do not know what happened to it after it was installed in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Quite possibly, since Jerusalem has been the battleground of the ages, some army came in, and took the menorah. Most likely, they were Arabs, or maybe the Persians. Regardless, nobody knows where it is now. It is very likely they melted it down.

But, this has been an interesting history about the menorah. Most people think that this was the menorah that was in holy place. It could have been the menorah that was stored from the second temple, not Herod's temple, but the temple of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. Some even think that it was the one from all the way back to the tabernacle that had been stored since the time of Solomon. But, nobody knows for sure.

Obviously, we will be considering the golden candlestick, or the menorah, today since it

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is the next piece of furniture in the holy place. And, as you can tell from the stories I have told already, it has become a symbol of Judaism, because it was one of the main items in the so-called Jewish temple. But, its symbolism is far greater than only being a symbol of Judaism. In fact, I do not like that at all. In fact, it did not have anything at all to do with Judaism. It has always had to do with the religion of God. (There is a difference.) It has a great deal to do with Christianity, once we properly understand it.

But, greater than all this, it represents the Light of the world—Jesus Christ. Without the light of Christ, through His spirit within us, we could never hope to approach God.

So, this next piece of furniture is going to show us one more way that we can come before the Father, something that we need before we can come before the Father, and Jesus Christ—the light of the world—supplies it.

Remember as we enter from outside the tabernacle, we go past the brazen altar of sacrifice, and then we go past the bronze sea, or brass laver, where the priests wash themselves, and from where the water was drawn to wash the sacrifices with.

Then we pass the first veil into the holy place—into the sanctuary. Remember, we are coming in from the east (going west). So we enter in through the opening, and while standing there, immediately to our right (north) would be the table of showbread on which the twelve loaves of unleavened bread were, topped with the little bowls of incense.

Directly in front of us (looking westward) across the room would be the incense altar, made of pure gold, with its burning incense wafting upward toward the second veil in front of the Holy of Holies. And then to our left (south) would be the golden candlestick—lampstand—the menorah.

The only reason we can see all this is because the lamps are burning. It was the only light source within the tabernacle. (I suppose that if the Shekinah (God's Glory) was behind the curtain, then maybe there would be some light seeping through that curtain, but the way that the tabernacle was constructed with all of the heavy curtains, it was pitch black inside the tabernacle, except when the menorah was lit.)

So, the wicks in the oil were constantly burning, and there was light coming from it, so you could see and the priests could do their work.

Turn to Exodus 25 please, and we will see some of the instructions for making the lampstand. There is another long section found in Exodus 37:17-24 where it shows the

work having been done. It is almost word for word the same as the passage below.

(Also, if you would like to see a representation of what modern Jews and Levites think the menorah looks like, go to "Wikipedia" and type in the search term "menorah," and it will come up with a small picture on the far right. Click on this to get a much larger picture so you can see what it might have looked like. Much of it was extrapolated from the Arch of Titus, and from other explanations and descriptions handed down through the years.)

Exodus 25:31-40 "You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers shall be of one piece. And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. Three bowls shall be made like almond blossoms on one branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond blossoms on the other branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower—and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand. On the lampstand itself four bowls shall be made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower. And there shall be a knob under the first two branches of the same, a knob under the second two branches of the same, and a knob under the third two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand. Their knobs and their branches shall be of one piece; all of it shall be one hammered piece of pure gold. You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it. And its wick-trimmers and their trays shall be of pure gold. It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

Now, this is a very interesting piece of furniture. Obviously, the most impressive bit of information that we get out of this is that it was pure gold. It was mentioned many times in this passage so that is very important.

The word "menorah," itself, simply means lampstand. There is nothing special about it. From all accounts, it appears that it stood about 42 inches (3 ½ feet) high. That is not very big. And, its branches came outward about 30 inches or so. There is some dispute among scholars as to whether they went out in an elliptical pattern, or straight out at an angle, or just straight out from the shaft. No one knows for sure. The Jews, pretty much by looking at the Arch of Titus, have gone with the elliptical curved branches.

So it had a central stem, or shaft, with three branches on each side, making seven lamps (the center had one too) in all. The look of it, because it was like this, was like a stylized tree, and the mention of almonds flowers here and there, makes one think that God based it on the idea of an almond tree.

Now, each of the six branches had three bowls—this is a bit hard to explain in words—but along the branch, as you go out from the central stem, there would be a place where these three cups or bowls began, and they were sort of stacked one upon the other. So, you would have a bowl, and then you have a bowl inside of it, and then another bowl inside of the second. But, they were all three the same size. It is like stacking cereal bowls or teacups in the cupboard. And, these bowls were ornamented on the outside either to look like almond blossoms (like the New King James Version has it), or perhaps almond leaves. Later on, there is a flower, so it might make you think that maybe there were leaves on these branches, and then you finally got to the flower on the end. But it is hard to say. But these three cups or bowls extended the branch out a little further because they were stacked one inside the other.

And then, at the end of the third one, was a knob. It was a round piece three or four inches in diameter, at the end of the third bowl, and it was also ornamented with various figures on it.

So, it had three cups, and then a knob. On top of the knob, then, you had a flower that appeared to be just opening up. And then on top of the flower, was the lamp. A small lamp like you would see commonly in the Middle East, looking almost like your hand being held out, being cupped slightly. There was oil in this palm area, and an opening for a wick to go in it.

Did you notice while going through Exodus 25, there, it says that the lamp would be oriented to give light in front of the lamp? So, these openings for all the wicks were on the side facing the middle of the room, with the light shining forward a bit.

So, each one of the branches had this pattern—a branch with three bowls set inside each other, a knob on top of that, a flower on top of that, and then the lamp filled with oil with a cotton or linen wick in it. We do not know for sure, but either would give a bright light.

The oil for the lamp was pure olive oil. But I am getting ahead of myself. We will get to this a bit later.

The central stem or shaft was very much like one of the branches, however it had four

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bowls stacked on top of each other, with its knobs, flowers, and then the lamp at the top. So, instead of three, this had four.

There was also one other major difference on this stem, and that is where each set of branches came out of the stem, there was another knob. And acted like a capital, covering the area where the branches came out of the stem.

So, it was quite nicely ornamented, with very fine etchings, or whatever, to give this idea of a very ornamental type of tree.

One thing not mentioned in Exodus 25 is that it had a base. You would have to have a very substantial base because we are talking about 42 inches by 30 inches of pure gold. Gold is heavy. And if it were just stuck into the ground, most likely it would teeter and fall. And so, it was given a very substantial base. From the replica that I saw, it appears as if the base was a two-tiered hexagon. It was not circular, but had six sides. Each one of these sides had some sort of ornamentation on it—it appeared like leaves or flowers to me.

But it was two tiers. The first tier, the bottom, was about 18 inches across, and about 6 inches high. The second one was about 12 inches across, and again about 6 inches high. Then the stem and branches came up out of this.

So, it was quite an impressive piece of furniture. It was all gold. It must have reflected the light of the lamps wondrously.

Now, I have made a deal out of it being made of pure gold. And it is a big deal. It was made from one talent of pure gold. A talent is not money, but rather a measurement of weight. For our purposes, all we need to know is that the common talent of the Old Testament was 75.6 pounds or so. This was a substantial lump of gold!

I use the term *avoirdupois*. This is a French term for our common weight system. What a substantial hefty candelabra!

Now, in troy weights—and we must go to troy weights because that is the standard way for precious metals, because you do not use common weights, you do it using the troy pounds and troy ounces. So, I found a calculator that would convert our 75.6 pounds avoirdupois to troy weights, and this is what it came out to: 1,102.499 troy ounces. I then looked to see what yesterday's gold price was, and it was \$1,114.80 per troy ounce! This means that the golden candlestick in the tabernacle using yesterday's spot market in today's dollars would be worth \$1,229,010.15. So, it is worth 1.23 million

dollars!

It is no wonder that those conquerors wanted that thing, and kept it as long as they did. It was quite a prize. It would set them up for a long time. This is impressive to me. And, God keeps reminding us that it was pure gold, to be of pure gold of one piece of hammered work. He wanted us to understand that this was one very impressive piece.

Now, Exodus 25 mentioned wick trimmers, so obviously there were wicks to be trimmed, and also trays. The wick trimmers were basically scissors made of gold, specifically made to reach up there and trim off the burnt portion of the wick, or for trimming it to the correct length when installing the new one. And they were probably cotton, or maybe linen (flax), which some say is better than cotton. The Bible does not say.

The trays were kept with the wick trimmer. As far as I can see, there were no other uses for the trays. And all these pieces were made of pure gold. Notice that it was not cast, and not overlaid on wood. It was pure gold in hammered work. It took quite a master craftsman to do all this.

Turn over to Exodus 27. This section is called (in the New King James Version) "Care of the Lampstand." I wanted to show this to you too, as it is interesting.

Exodus 27:20-21 "And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually. 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.

First of all, the oil that was used in the lamps was the purest it could be. It was the best oil that could be had from the olives. It had to be obtained in a special way. Usually, it was not quite ripe, and they would put them in a mortar, and then beat them, or pound them. And the oil from this initial bruising was the best, purest oil possible. It was not from a press (as it says above), and they were not crushed. They just beat them or pounded them to get this first initial bit of oil. There was also no heat used to extract this oil. This had to be the finest extra-virgin oil that could be had with their technology.

The New King James Version used the term pressed olives, but this gives the wrong impression. The Hebrew word used is for "beaten olives."

This oil was clear and colorless, and when burned it gives a bright, clear light, with little or no smoke. Think about the tabernacle. It was enclosed all the time, except whenever a priest went in, or came back out, so, you would not want a smoky fire in there, but rather a clear burning light as much as possible. And that is what this olive oil did.

Notice a small point here, that is sort of mentioned off hand, but it says that, "You shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil." Now this shows that the children of Israel had a part to play in the burning of the oil, or in the offering of the oil. They had to be the ones who gave it to the Levites so that the priests could have it for use in the menorah.

What this shows me is that they were involved, even if only in this small way, in the work of the menorah—in the giving of light within the tabernacle. We will come back to this a little bit later. But just keep this in the back of your mind that God commanded them to participate in this function of the tabernacle—from a distance, maybe, but still, a specific command that they were the ones who had to supply the oil for the menorah.

This verse says that the lamp burned continually, and that seems to be the proper understanding of what God wanted to happen here, especially in view of the fact that the menorah was the only light in the holy place. The priests were not to go into the holy place and stumble about while doing their duties. There had to be light in there at all times. Even in the midst of the day, out in the wilderness, even at high noon, because of the tabernacle construction, it was still dark in there. And so, there had to be a light burning there.

There are two verses in the Bible that seem to contradict this fact—that the light was constantly burning. The first one is Exodus 30:8, which says that Aaron would light the lamps at twilight. Now, that sounds like the lamps were allowed to burn out during the day, and then the priests would come in later at twilight, and re-light them, burning through the night. However, here it may be that the priests were not re-lighting dead lamps, but that he was actually tending to them at twilight, making sure that they were re-filled with oil, and the wicks were replaced, and/or trimmed, so that they would burn through the night, with no further need to tend to them. So, if he noticed that the oil level was low, he would extinguish only the one, refill, and trim, etc., and then relight it, before going on to the next one; he most certainly did this for each of the seven. It was not that he had to go through and re-light, and so forth from scratch. So, there was never a time, then, even while doing his duties, that there was not a light shining in the tabernacle. There was at least one lamp lit, most likely more.

There is a second verse that seems to contradict this, and it is found in I Samuel 3:3.

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This is the story of Samuel, a young boy, where God called to him after he had gone to bed, to give him a prophecy of the house of Eli. Well, it says there that the lamp of God went out each night at bedtime. This also seems to be a contradiction to Exodus 27:20, the light burning continually.

Now, I do not believe this is a contradiction. I think it actually shows that the Levitical priesthood at the time of Eli had declined to the point where they were letting the lights go out at bedtime. It is a little sign from God to the reader to show how far things had slipped by the time of Eli. That they would allow the lights to go out at night, rather than specifically doing what it says in Exodus 30, where Aaron (the high priest) was supposed to go in at twilight to tend so that they would stay lit overnight.

So, I do not believe it is a contradiction, but rather in actual practice at the time of Eli, they slipped up badly. They were not doing what they should have.

Josephus reports that only three of the seven lamps were lit during the day, but this was during the temple period at the time of Jesus Christ. Regardless, I do not know why they would do that, but maybe the temple let more light in, and they only needed the three. But, whatever the reason, it still means that the menorah was always giving light at all times during the temple period. So, they never let it go out either.

At this point, we will move away from the menorah.

Now, from beginning to end of the Bible, it is suffused with the imagery of light. Turn to Genesis 1, and the first verses of the Bible, and this imagery pops up, as a matter of fact, the command, "Let there be light," is the first command of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

So the first thing that we get from the Bible other than the idea that there is a God, and the beginning of creation, is light. God commanded it to shine forth to banish the darkness that had hung over the earth since the rebellion of Satan.

God said, "Enough of this! Enough of this darkness. I want light!" And so, light is the beginning of creation. So, light stands for God Himself, light stands for good, and light stands for truth. And we see it always in opposition to darkness, which stands for Satan,

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for evil, and lies—all manner of wickedness. We always have this straining competition, it seems, throughout the Bible in regards to light and darkness, and light always wins, which we will see in a moment.

But, here we see at the very beginning of the Bible that light is critical to the creation process—but specifically to His spiritual creation. God could have done His natural creation—the physical creation—in darkness, but He did not. He showed a pattern here by opening up His physical creation with light. And, it shone from Him.

The image of light goes clear through the Bible to even the last chapter. Please turn to Revelation 22.

What we see in Genesis 1 is God shining light upon the earth. What we find in Revelation 22 is the ultimate conclusion of that creation. This passage is regarding the new heavens, and the new earth.

Revelation 22:3-5 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

We go from a time of what we might call primordial darkness—the deepest of sin—and God shines His light upon the earth right away, and we now have a beginning—a commencement—of a plan that is going to bring light to everything, and everyone, and as we go through the Bible, the light keeps getting a bit stronger. Of course, 4000 years into it, we have the Light of the World come in and shine upon the earth, upon us, and all men (which we will get to). Then, we go through all of history after that great event, and we have God with us—He is our light, and He shines brightly, gloriously forever. We do not need any other light than what God can give us.

So now, we see the whole plan of God in terms of light, that there is a constant generation of light, a constant renewal of light, a constant growth of light toward a specific goal in which all is light.

That is how important the lamp is. Please turn back to Revelation 21. In this passage the New Jerusalem is being described, and John says here,

Revelation 21:22-23 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty

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and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Now this part echoes Isaiah 60:19-20, though it is not taken word for word, but Isaiah 60 is a prophecy to Israel that God is their light. This, here is the culmination of it at the end of the book of Revelation.

So, God's glory lights the entire world. There is no temple anymore; the Lamb is its temple. And, God's glory goes over the whole earth—and the whole universe as far as we know. So, there is no need for any lamp or menorah, because we have the real menorah—the Lamb of God—as our light source.

The Greek text says this better than the English, because literally in verse 23 it says "The Lamb its lamp." So, it is making a very direct connection to the lampstand of the temple, because it just had mentioned the temple, and then it says that the Lamb is the temple, and then in the very next verse it says that the Lamb is the lamp, which is very interesting to show how these things all pull together. He is specifically the lamp, but He is also the whole temple. And so we cannot just say He is only one of these things. He is all of these things, and more. It shows you just how central He is to Christianity, our lives, our futures, and why we are told that He is all in all. We must make sure that we understand that He is "the everything" for us. I do not know how to explain it any better. He is absolutely central to everything that we do in terms of our Christian lives, and for all eternity.

So, Jesus Christ Himself is the lampstand—He is the menorah, which is how He appears earlier in the book of Revelation among the seven candlesticks. I want to show this to you in Revelation 1.

Back in 1997 in the series of sermons I gave on the Two Witnesses, you might remember I went through this part very extensively talking about these seven candlesticks in terms of also the olive trees and whatnot, having to do with the two witnesses. But I went through this section of Revelation 1, and I want to go through it again because I think it is important to look at Christ in terms of the menorah and the candlesticks in this context.

Revelation 1:12 Then I [John] turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands.

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Remember that the menorah is one lampstand with seven lamps. Now, we see something a bit different. John turned to see who was speaking to Him, and he saw seven candlesticks. A candlestick is really different from a lampstand. In this case, it is not a lamp with many lights. It is one candlestick that has one light.

So, what we have here are the seven branches of the menorah, each having become one candlestick. So instead of being all in one, they are standing separate.

Revelation 1:13 And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Revelation 1:16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

It does not exactly mention light, per se, but what does the sun do? It gives forth light. So, His face is providing all the illumination.

What we have here is, if you will, the New Testament version of the menorah. This is seen in the Old Testament version, in the tabernacle, but this is a spiritual version here that more accurately points to the way that God is working.

This time, instead of there being one central stem and six branches, there are seven individual lampstands, each with one lamp. But they are still arrayed around the central figure of Jesus Christ. He takes the position of the central stem, if you will. But, they are not connected to Him like the lamps on the menorah. They are around Him, each individually, and they are around Him 360 degrees (a circle), because He is standing in the middle of them. They are there like a circle around Him.

It is clear, then, that these seven lampstands have Him as their common link. He is the One who shines upon them. He is the One that they are congregating around. He is their focus, and they are His focus. And in the imagery of the olive trees, and the other one in Zechariah 4, it is shown that the central one is supplying all their needs with the oil. But in this figure, Jesus Christ is the One supplying these seven candlesticks with their needs. He is central to them in all that they do, that they say, and that they are. He is their central figure. They are arrayed around Him. That is very important.

What it is showing us is a unique image of Christ's place and work among the churches

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of God, because it tells us in verse 20 what they are. These lampstands are the seven churches. So, Christ standing among them, they being arrayed around Him, is showing how Christ is central to the churches of God. And what this shows is whereas in the original menorah everything was connected to the one central shaft, this one is showing that they connected, yes, but it is spiritual. It is not a physical connection. But, it also shows them to be separate from each other too, whereas the original menorah showed them to be all linked together as one piece.

This new picture shows matters as they really are. Christ is in heaven. There is no physical link between Christ and each one of the churches of God. But, it is obviously there because He is shining His countenance upon them, and He is supplying them spiritually with what they need. But, each one of the seven lampstands is in a different place. They are not all in the same place on the same structure. They are in different places, yet arrayed around Him. If you go into Revelation 2 and 3, this shows that we would see seven distinct churches, all—each and every one of them—God's church. But they are separate, different from one another.

Now, whether you want to think of this in terms of eras, meaning separate in time, or if you would rather think of them as existing all at the same time, but being in different physical locations, or having a different attitude, it all works in this particular image. Christ is still the One central figure that links them all together through time, location, and/or attitude. He is the One who is directing all of them. It does not matter which time it is, or which place they are located in, or which attitude they may have. He is the One who is guiding them toward the Kingdom of God. And like I said, His face, His countenance is shining upon them all. He is in control. He is directing. He is guiding. He is supplying their needs. They are all receiving His light.

But, their ability to receive it, or their willingness to receive it is a different matter, and we see that if we go through the passage about the seven churches, they all have varying amounts of spirituality. Some are further along, while some are not far along at all. But He is working with them all, He is giving them His light. And, by His grace, they will all be in His Kingdom, but He is the figure that is doing this as the head of the church. He is the central shaft that is supporting all of them spiritually. They are all the focus of His attention, and He is doing all that He can to bring them into the Kingdom of God.

Now, we see Him a little bit more clearly in John 1.

John 1:1-9 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was

life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [the Baptist]. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which gives light to every man coming into the world.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Here Jesus is called several things having to do with light. He is called "The Light of Men," "The True Light," and "The Light." So, we get the impression that He is a divine being—which we are supposed to get—who was resplendent in glory, and became resplendent in glory when He returned to His Father—and then verse 14 adds that He had "The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," which is tacked on like an appositive to what that glory is.

These images—light, life, light of the world, full of grace and truth, glory—all tie together. First, John tells us in verse 4 that Christ has life inherent within Him, that He was life, in Him was life, He was God. Only God has inherent life. He had always existed, and always will exist. And when you have life inherent within you, you also have the ability to give life. And we see that when we went back to Genesis 1, He was that life that gave mankind life. He was also that life that is giving us spiritual life. And that is where the "light of men" comes in.

This eternal life that is Jesus Christ is the light of men, that is, He is the revelator of truth, and the guide along the way to eternal life. See how much He means to us? He not only reveals the way, and the truth, but He is also the life that gives us eternal life.

So Jesus says in John 15:5, "Without Me, you can do nothing." He is the beginning and the end. He is the alpha and the omega. It is just incredible to think about how much we truly depend upon Him. He starts everything, and He will end everything for us. And along the way, He is giving us gifts constantly helping us along the way to get us where He wants us to go. There is nothing we can do in this Christian life that cannot be traced back to His help, His revelation; He is *everything* to us. That is why He is the light of men. Because, without that light that He gives us, we would have no hope. We could not get off square one. So, we need Jesus Christ as the light of men to give us everything that we need along the way.

The part that we play is almost infinitesimal compared to what He does. We do have a part to play, do not get me wrong. We are free moral agents. But ***we are so dependent upon Him for just about everything.*** I cannot stress that enough.

He said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This is just another way of saying that He does everything. He is everything to us.

So, He is the key to eternal life, and if men want to live forever, then they must turn to Him, listen to Him, do what He says, take His direction, follow His lead, tread His paths, and however more ways that it can be put to you. This is the only way to eternal life—through Him.

Then John calls Him "The True Light." What this does is distinguish Him from other lights, because there are other lights. You, by the way, are another light.

Did you know that you are a light? We do not think of ourselves as a light, but you are.

Christ said, "You are the light of the world." Do you know what He said of Himself? "I am the light of the world." Wow! We sit in pretty high places. If He is the light of the world, and we are the light of the world, then we should feel just about this big (quite small). But, it should also give us a great deal of hope, because He considers us to be the light of the world, like Him. Not, by any means, to His magnitude, but He calls us the light of the world. We are just mere reflections of the true light that is Jesus Christ. He is the originator of what little feeble light we cast. Like that olive oil, His light is pure, and undefiled. His light is sinless and holy. It is perfectly righteous and constant.

Our light is smoky, dim, and feeble; our oil needs changing. There is no comparison between our light and His light. But we are reaching for His light. He is our example. The One we look to as the pattern for all that is good, and true, and right in the light that we do cast. I was going to go to John 8:12, and John 9:5—jot them down, and read them later. They are the passages where Christ tells us, "I am the light of the world."

Now, the last thing that John does is he informs us that Jesus Christ radiates glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, and this glory is manifested as the fullness of grace and truth. That is specifically how it was manifested while He was here. But it is also how He manifests it even today. The glory of the only begotten Son of the Father is manifested as the fullness of grace and truth.

In a way we could say that these two things—grace and truth—are the primary elements of the symbol of light in the Bible. That if we are going to say, talk about the symbol of

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light, every one of them could be drawn back to these two elements—grace and truth.

You know, we understand the part about truth pretty well. I think we all get that part easily. We recognize as Peter said in John 6:68 when Jesus asked if he would go away too, and Peter replied, "No, You are the One who has the words of eternal life." To put it another way, You are the One who has the truth that leads us to eternal life. We get that part. That is easy to understand. We know that His teachings are the bedrock on which the rest of the Word of God is founded. And though these things that He tells us to do may be hard to understand sometimes, and particularly hard to apply to our lives, we acknowledge that He is the final authority on true knowledge and understanding. If we ever have a question about something Paul has written, or something that John has written, or something that Moses has written, if we find the words of Jesus Christ on the matter, that is what we stand upon, because He is the ultimate authority of truth on any matter.

He told God the Father, "Your word is truth." But, seventeen chapters earlier, John had said that Jesus Christ is the Word of God. So, Jesus Christ is truth.

So, this equation of the symbol of light with truth in God's Word and law is found frequently. Let us turn to a few of them.

Turn to Psalm 19. This is one we sing occasionally. As a matter of fact, several of these are ones we sing.

Psalm 19:8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

So, God's commandments give us light.

Psalm 43:3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.

Here he says that Your light and Your truth is what leads us to God's tabernacle. They are what leads us in worship. They are the ones that lead us, then, to dwelling with God in His Kingdom of God.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

So, if we have any darkness, or confusion over what way to go, and how to walk in this life, then if we go to God's Word for the answer, it will light our way, and show us the path so we do not stumble.

Psalm 119:130 The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

So when God's words enter into us, when we begin to understand, we are enlightened. We have a light for our way, and soon have understanding.

So, we get this equation of light and truth.

The idea of light and grace, though, is a bit less understood with us, because the idea of grace has been so cheapened by the theological circles and mainline Christianity for many years. So, we do not understand God's grace in a more full way like maybe we should. Many think of grace as merely God's gift of redemption, and eternal life. It is that. It is used that way quite often, that the grace of God came, and yanked us out of the terrible way that we were living, and put us on the right path. However, other people widen the definition a bit to include His many gifts to us. And these are certainly true—gifts of His grace. So, it is a grace when He gives us pardon, or gives us faith, or gives us hope, it is a grace when He gives us favor in men's eyes for a job, or whatever it might be. These are all graces of God.

But if we want to put it in its fullest understanding, in terms of how it is used in John 1, then we have to broaden it even further. The grace, in this context of John 1, manifested in Jesus Christ is His absolute goodness—going beyond His gifts, giving us justification, and eternal life, but it also encapsulates all of His goodness. Another way you can put this is to say that His grace is His holy righteous character. It is how He is. He cannot act any other way, because He is godly. He is divine. He is perfectly good. And so, everything that He does for us is grace. It is a manifestation of His goodness toward us.

And our English word "good," according to the etymology of it, is derived from "God." It is how God is—God is good! God is godly. It is His perfect nature. And that is the light of Jesus Christ. He is our pattern or example of God's goodness in everything that He did.

Psalm 33:4-5 For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Now, we can think of this in physical terms, or in spiritual terms. But, obviously the psalmist is thinking in spiritual terms. He uses terms like "right," "truth," "righteousness," and "justice." Everything that God does is good. It is an aspect, then, of His grace. Even His justice, when He does something that we do not know what to think of, it is still part of His grace—it is how He is. He has to uphold the way that He is. It is His perfect righteous character that He is manifesting to us.

And who was the One to show us this most fully? Jesus Christ. He showed us God's grace, through His goodness, and truth. That is the light that He is shining to all of us so that we come to follow both His goodness, and His truth—they have a lot of intersections, obviously.

His truth is good, for sure. But, this example of His perfect life in Jesus Christ is found in His perfect character, His perfect attitude, His perfect speech, His perfect interpersonal relations with others, and on and on it goes.

His light is still shining on us through the example that He gave to us.

So, His goodness did not shine just when He spoke, but also in every word, every action, every expression on His face, every thought—you name it, it was an expression of God's goodness, of His light.

This is where the idea of a witness comes through, because what He did was witness for the Almighty God and Father how God acts. He showed us God's grace.

In II Corinthians 9, I want to show you that it does not end with Him. Remember how I told you that the Israelites had to supply the Levites with oil so the menorah could shine? I think this is where that all fits in here. Paul is talking about the Corinthian's gifts that had been taken to the people in Judea who needed it.

II Corinthians 9:10-12 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God.

What he is saying here is that this gift that they had given was going to do a great

work—more than just giving them food, but also it was going to witness for God to the church of God.

II Corinthians 9:13-15 While, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Did you catch what he said there at the end? What they had done by doing this service for the Judean brethren was showing the grace of God in them. That, they were manifesting the grace of God in their own lives, just as Jesus Christ throughout His life had manifested the grace of God and truth toward us all. These people—these Corinthians—these "horrible" Corinthians" who had so many problems (see I Corinthians), and still had some problems (as mentioned elsewhere in II Corinthians) had shown that they were growing in the grace of God, because here they were doing a wonderful service for their fellow brethren in Judea. They had shown that there was growth in the grace of God in them. The goodness of God was coming out of them in acts of service.

It is the same witness that we are to give all the time, the same light that we are to shine upon the world. This is what Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world." Do not hide it under a bushel basket, but give light to the whole house. Our witness, too, has to be one of grace and truth. We are following the example of the Light of the World—Jesus Christ.

Let us conclude, then.

II Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The same God who commanded, "Let there be light," also commanded light to shine toward us in the person and example of Jesus Christ, to give us knowledge, and the example we need to become His children, and to glow and radiate with the same light He had. Because of Jesus Christ, the truth light of the world, we can approach the Father in grace and truth, and lay hold upon the promise of eternal life in His Kingdom.