

The Lampstand Imagery

Ex. 25:31-40

Introduction:

1. In the previous lesson we discussed the relationship between the garden of Eden, the temple of God and the work of the church in this series on the presence of God in the world.
2. We noted both the horticultural image of the garden and the architectural image of the temple.
 - a. The work of the church involves planting and watering and building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone.
 - b. So, the church in its work of preaching the word of God plants and waters and builds.
 - c. The imagery is powerful and extensive, originating in Genesis and extending through Revelation.
3. Our study today enlarges on this concept. We will give attention to the tree of life in the garden of Eden, follow the imagery through the golden lampstand of the tabernacle and temple, observe Jesus' introduction of Himself as the Light of the World and conclude by connecting the lampstand image of the church in Revelation.



Discussion:

- I. Gen. 2:9-14 presents the garden of Eden as a place of flourishing life. In the midst of the garden is the tree of life. After sin, death entered and man is exiled from the garden, "Lest he stretch out his hand, and take from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever—" (Gen 3:22).
 - A. Prov. 3:16-18 sees the wisdom of God as "a tree of life."
 - B. This "tree of life" finds its place in the lampstand of the tabernacle and the temple (Ex. 25:31-40; 37:17-24).
 1. It was located just outside the Most Holy Place.
 2. It was like a small tree trunk with seven branches with flowering almond blossoms. It, along with the water flowing from the garden, represented the life-giving fruitfulness associated with the presence of God.
 3. Psa. 27:1 says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?"
 4. Psa. 119:105 states, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Note the connection between the word of God and the metaphor of a lamp.)
 - C. Just as God was the source of life in the garden of Eden His presence in the tabernacle and the temple brought light and life in Israel.
 1. Not only was Israel enlightened by the light but she was to be a light.

2. As the servant of God, she was to convey the word of God to the world and thus be a light to the nations (Isa. 42:1, 7). You may remember this passage as quoted by Jesus in Matt. 12:15-21. There is a type/anti-type correspondence between Israel and Jesus.
3. This type/anti-type correspondence is made even clearer in Isa. 49:3, 5-6. Note Lk. 2:25-32 and Acts 13:44-47.

II. Jesus identified Himself as the light of the world.

- A. Most recently we considered this in a lesson I entitled "The Blind See the Light" on Jn. 9:1-12.
 1. During the Feast of Tabernacles there was a light ceremony at the temple in the Court of Women.
 2. Sixteen golden bowls were filled with oil and the used undergarments of the priests were used for wicks. These bowls were elevated 75 feet high. It was said that all of Jerusalem was illumined. It may have been during this ceremony (Jn. 8:20) that Jesus presented Himself as the light of the world.
- B. John, in his writings, is particularly concerned to identify Jesus with light. Those who believe in Him are associated with Light.
 1. He associates the Light and life concepts first in Jn. 1:4-13.
 2. New birth and Light are associated in Jn. 3:1-21.
 3. In Jn. 8:12 Light and life are again associated.
 4. Jn. 12:35-36 speaks of those who believe as becoming "sons of Light."
 5. 1 Jn. 1:5ff identifies God as Light. It is those who walk in God's light that are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.
 6. Those who abide in the Light love their brothers (1 Jn. 2:9-11).
- C. So now the word of God, evident in Jesus, is the Light illuminating those who were once in darkness. Thus, God's presence enlightens men and brings life (new birth, new creation) to those who believe.

III. As we have studied before Jesus is described as the temple and the church is described as the temple. The Light imagery is like the temple imagery. Jesus is the Light and then those who believe are Light.

- A. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).
 1. Note both the "Light" imagery and the "Lampstand" imagery.
 2. This light of the citizens of the kingdom is reflective of the glory of our Father. Thus, we are reflecting His image to the world.

- B. In Revelation Jesus walked among the seven golden lampstands. The seven churches are said to be lampstands (1:20). Some were in danger of having their lampstand removed.
1. What does this mean? Their light was going out. They were not communicating the message of God as they should.
 2. Like the priests of the tabernacle and the temple they needed to care for their light. Often when we think of the work of priests, we think in terms of offering sacrifices and doing the work around the temple. But their primary work was that of instruction. Listen to Mal. 2:1-9.
 3. The problem with the churches in Rev.? Left their first love. I take that to mean they had diminished their work for the Lord. Some held the teaching of Balak. Some held the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Some tolerated the woman Jezebel. Some were lukewarm.
 4. In Rev. 11 two witnesses are described that are two olive trees and two lampstands. They testify and prophesy for the Lord (6-7). They have power (5ff), but the beast makes war with them (7ff) and when they are destroyed the earth celebrates. But then they are raised from the dead (11ff) and called up to heaven.
 - a. So, as these witnesses are “growing the garden” and “building the temple” they are persecuted.
 - b. Their work of shining the light of God in communicating His word is met with opposition.
 - c. They are killed. Suffering must be endured. Like the church at Smyrna they are faithful until death (Rev. 2:10). But they are given the crown of life. They are raised from the dead.
 - d. Bringing the light of God to the world requires the giving of our lives to the work.
 - 1) That’s what Jesus did.
 - 2) That’s what He asked of the churches of Revelation.
 - 3) That’s what Paul asked of Timothy (2 Tim. 3:10-4:8).

Conclusion:

1. The Lord is calling on us to be lights for Him.
2. His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, but not to ours only. His word is a light to the world.
3. It is our work to use that word to enlighten those in darkness, to put our lamp on a lampstand so that it may give light to all.
4. We are the priests of God. True instruction is to be in our mouth. Our lips are to preserve knowledge. We are the messengers of the Lord of hosts. See Mal. 2:6-7.
5. We are to let our light shine in such a way that God may be glorified.