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The Lampstand - Christ Our Light

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Exodus 25:31-40.

When we turn to the lampstand we see Christ our light, and we can look at the various components and features of this lampstand and see how Christ becomes our light, or is our light, and what that means.

In the first place this lampstand is all of gold. Here it is not acacia wood covered with gold, but it is gold throughout, all pure gold; signifying that all truth is in God Himself, and in no way is truth in man. Truth, which is another word for light, is essentially what God is and what God Himself possesses. It is God Himself.

Now, the Lord Jesus when He was here made some statements which bear this out. In the gospel by John we know that the governing object is to reveal and to bring men to know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In that gospel we have the term "Son of Man" used, but the predominant factor in that gospel is just the Son of God. The gospel opens with an inclusive and comprehensive statement to that effect. The gospel closes with the statement: "*These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is... the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name*" (John 20:31).

Now, that is the pure gold side of things. In that gospel the Lord Jesus makes several statements of this kind: "*The Son can do nothing out from Himself, but whatsoever He sees the Father doing, that doeth the Son in like manner*"; "*The words that I speak, I speak not out from Myself*"; "*The works that I do, I do not out from Myself*". Now He is speaking there in His dual capacity of Son of Man-Son of God, and He is saying that as Son of Man, although being such a Son of Man as He was, sinless, perfect in His humanity, nevertheless as Son of Man divine things did not have their origin there, they did not

spring from even perfected Man at all. Out from Himself as man, the Son of Man, and as perfect, sinless, Son of Man, nothing had its rise, its origin; even He must derive His knowledge and everything else divine from the Father, from God; putting the source, the spring, the origin of all divine things right into God Himself, and seeing that all truth, knowledge, understanding, power and all executive ability in relation to divine things comes directly out of God Himself.

Here you have the candlestick, which is all of gold, and from that candlestick there is to be derived the light of revelation in relation to the ministry of the people of God. There is no light in man, even redeemed man; there is no light in us ourselves, even when we are saved, sanctified, consecrated, when we are the Lord's people. The thing is not in us, it still remains in Him, and the Lord is very jealous about that, because the temptation of the devil in the garden at the beginning was in the other direction. The temptation came along the line of a suggestion that man could have the thing in himself, "You shall possess knowledge. Your position is one governed, you are compelled to live a dependent life, dependent upon God, a life of obedience; you have to go to God for permission for everything, and for knowledge about everything! God is withholding from you something that you might have! He has forbidden you to take that because He knows that if you do, you will have that knowledge, that spring in yourself instead of in Him, and a life of dependence! Why not have it in yourself? Why not be as God, knowing?" That was the subtlety of the temptation. It always makes an appeal to the soul to possess the power, and the knowledge in itself, so that, using it, there may be a position gained of advantage.

Now that suggestion to, as it were, have it out of God, and have it in himself, is what Satan has been working on all the way through the ages, and he still works. In the captured soul-life of man he is working to make man independent of God by his own ability, his own knowledge, his own resource, to dispense with God. In effect it is to say that God is not indispensable, we can get on without Him, we have it in ourselves. In smaller and greater degrees that is the temptation and tendency in the whole of the fallen creation, and even in believers. There is a love to have knowledge, a love to have power, a love, therefore, to have positions of influence, to be able to govern other lives and situations.

Over against that the very Son stands in a voluntarily accepted position that the Son can do nothing out from Himself. He, the Last Adam, strikes a tremendous blow at the thing that the first Adam has done. He stands in distinct and mighty contradiction to, and reversal of, the course of the first Adam; a life of dependence, a life of having everything in God and nothing apart from God. That is Christ. So that all things for divine purposes, unto divine intentions, are held in God and no one ever gets them out of God and possesses them in themselves. Right to the end, if we are going to be governed by the Lord, we shall be kept on that law of an utter dependence upon the Lord Himself for every bit of resource. And the further we go with the Lord the more deeply will that be wrought into our being, the consciousness and knowledge that we have nothing in ourselves, it is all in Him, and that we must be utterly dependent upon the Lord for every fragment. It must come from the Lord.

That is, as I see it, the meaning of a candlestick, a lampstand, being what it is, and the purpose that it is called to serve, being *all of gold*, for here everything for this purpose is of God Himself.

There are seven lamps here, and we refer to the spiritual perfection of knowledge and of truth in Him. It does not matter how you approach this number, you always arrive at the same end. Here it is set forth in two three's and a one. You can approach it that way. Three represents divine perfection. One added in to the six represents spiritual perfection. Or take six, which is the number of man, and one more, which goes beyond man. One is the number of unity. Spiritual perfection of knowledge

and truth is set forth in the number here, however you approach it. With Him, knowledge and truth are spiritually perfect.

Then, the lampstand being wrought out of one piece of gold is very strongly emphasised as you notice. It is dwelt upon, it is made as prominent a feature, if not more so than everything else, that it should be wrought of one solid piece, that there are to be no joins in this form and surely this emphasises the oneness of divine nature and divine truth. There are no separate pieces joined together. Divine truth is all of a piece, divine revelation is all of a piece, and that is just where people have made such grievous mistakes in isolating truths and circling round truths; that is, separate truths, standing for some particular truth and isolating it from all the rest. The result is that everything becomes unbalanced, and only one particular emphasis is there, and a great deal of the Lord is missing or left out, resulting in serious weakness and usually in a great deal of confusion. In this lampstand there is one thing that is quite obvious, and that is balance. You have a perfect balance and poise. It comprehends all the needs of man (there are six; three on either side), gathered up into God Himself, the spiritual perfection for all the needs of man in a perfect whole, a perfect balance. We have to be very careful that we do not upset the balance of divine revelation, but that it is comprehensive.

Now, the way in which the balance of revelation is preserved is to cease to deal in truths and to be occupied with the Lord, for it is the Lord here, it is not this truth, that truth, and another truth. If people would stop talking about sanctification as such, the second coming as such, and all these things which are taken up as subjects and themes and isolated truths, and if they would concentrate upon the Lord Himself, they would reach the same end. They are bound to come to the same end, but with much greater profit and with the exclusion of a great deal that becomes unbalanced and harmful and unnecessarily schismatic. Of course, truth does often divide, but there is a good deal of unnecessary division, simply because of a constant hammering upon some line and going out in emphasis along that line, an inflation, an exaggeration, out of proportion to all its related truths. To guard against that we need to be occupied with the Lord and not with things. That is the safeguard. So we come to see Christ as the full revelation of God.

I know that from time to time the Lord does lay special stress upon some particular aspect of Christ. He holds people to that because that particular thing was in danger of losing its measure; not because He wants that to be emphasised out of proportion to all the rest, but because that has lost its measure and has got to be restored. But you will find that when the Lord reacts to a faulty state of things He brings back something that has been lost, but then He goes on and brings back all the other things that have been lost. God is out for the full range of Christ, and it is not the work of God to bring back some lost aspect of Christ and then hold His people indefinitely to that, but when that has been given its proper place to go on with the fulness. That is all of great importance in relation to a consideration of a vessel of revelation, for that is what is before us. Here we have the oneness of divine nature and divine truth, or divine light if you like. It is all of a piece. Much more could be said about that.

The next thing is the form of this instrument. The branches of the lampstand are to be shaped with the form of almond blossom, and each bowl for containing the oil giving forth the light is to be like an almond blossom with its knop (that is, with the fruit beneath the blossom, so to speak; with the fruit under it), and we know that in the Scripture the almond and the almond blossom is a type of resurrection. It is the first to break the reign of winter, and to proclaim the coming of Spring, and the almond is, therefore, resurrection in type, and it is what Christ is as risen, what Christ is in the power of resurrection, what Christ is in His resurrection life that is the channel, the vehicle of testimony. This light is testimony, and testimony comes out of Christ risen. Testimony is on the basis of

resurrection, and we know that this is made true in the sanctuary, in the church, that the Lord constitutes testimony along the line of resurrection. In order to do that we have to know the working of death in us, that there may be life in others. *"Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, in order that the life also of Jesus may be manifested..."* that the life whereby Jesus conquered death might be made manifest. That is the testimony. The testimony is not declaring doctrines and truths. The testimony is that which comes out of the knowledge in experience of His resurrection, and there are ever deeper depths for us to be baptized into that there may be ever clearer and stronger revelations for testimony. This is ministry.

Now you turn to the first chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, and you have a beautiful sidelight upon this very truth. Here is Jeremiah, a young man, living in the day when priesthood was spiritually at a discount, ineffective. Priesthood in the days of Jeremiah was in a very bad state. This young priest was taken hold of by the Lord in relation to this state of death amongst the Lord's people, and when the Lord called him he was overwhelmed with the sense of his own weakness and inability and incapacity: "I am a child...". How did the Lord meet the need of the day through one so conscious of weakness and inability? How was the Lord going to fulfil this ministry through such an instrument? The Lord gives the answer in a very small - so far as the narrative is concerned - but a very effectual illustration. He asks the prophet what he sees, and the prophet says, "I see an almond tree". The Lord revealed an almond tree, and then the Lord says, "Yes, and *I will watch over My word to perform it*". Now, the Hebrew word for "almond" is "watch", and the Lord took up the Hebrew word and said, "*I will watch over My word to perform it*". What was the Lord saying in that figure and in that statement to Jeremiah? In effect He was saying, "Look here, Jeremiah, My word cannot die, My word may be planted in a realm of death, My word will prove to be an imperishable word, it will be like the almond, the word of resurrection will come. You may have to wait a long time to see it come up, it may seem to have been lost or buried, it may seem that it has been set aside, refused, it may be that you will have to suffer terribly because of that word, and it may seem in your sufferings that the word has not only been in vain, but rather that the enemy has completely triumphed over it. Nevertheless, Jeremiah, that word is going to come up in fulfilment in the long run. In the end that word will be living with its result, *I will watch over My word to perform it.*" He is the God of resurrection. Is it not true? You go on to the end of the prophecy of Jeremiah and you see that the end of the prophecy is the beginning of the resurrection of the remnant: "*It came to pass that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia... that the word which was spoken by Jeremiah might be fulfilled*", and Cyrus uttered his decree for the remnant to return. Yes, it was resurrection from the dead by the word through Jeremiah.

That is ministry. Once we have a revelation of Jesus Christ, once He comes to us by revelation and our ministry is a ministry of the revelation of Jesus Christ in our hearts, there is something going out which is imperishable, indestructible. The fruit may tarry, the enemy may seem to have completely submerged and swamped it all, but it is going to come up, it is bound to come up, it partakes of the very nature of God. It is indispensable, indestructible; His Word is like Himself, His revelation stands. So, Jeremiah, you may be a child, "*but thou shalt speak all the words that I command thee; I have put My words in thy mouth and I have set thee over the nations... to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow, to build, and to plant.*"

Here in the lampstand, therefore, we have revelation as in the risen Christ for the Lord's people; the testimony not just in the sanctuary. In relation to that, priestly ministry operates.

Now we see our ministry. The secret of ministry is revelation, the revelation of Jesus Christ. Oh, how important it is that our ministry may be revelation. There is all the difference between Bible Study and Bible reproduction, and a ministry of revelation by the Holy Spirit as to the inner meaning of the

Word of God which is Christ. Our ministry begins there. Paul saw the Lord, and that is where his ministry began, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose...". And in the case of all those who have been vessels of the Lord's purpose, it has been a matter of a basic revelation of the Lord, nothing else, and no real heavenly ministry has ever commenced until there has been such a revelation of the Lord. There can be ministry of a kind, but it is not that in the power of resurrection which is utterly of God. Such is what the Lord desires.

Our object is to see that priestly ministry is a matter of revelation, and that the revelation of Jesus Christ; the revelation of what is wholly of God and nothing of man.