

## 27.1 Lamp Lighting

Last week we spoke of the origins of *Hanukkah* or the *Feast of Lights*. It is also called the *Feast of Dedication*. Today marks the end of this year's Hanukkah celebration.

This feast celebrates a miracle of God at the time of the Maccabees. He supernaturally multiplied the oil for the Menorah in the temple. Instead of only having enough oil to burn for one day, it burned for eight!

It is also a celebration of Israel's independence. *Passover* is a celebration of divine deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. *Hanukkah* is a celebration of their deliverance from Greek tyranny. There is a special nine lamp Menorah, called a "*Hanukkah*." It is a symbol of that deliverance as well as the miracle of the oil.

The original Menorah was of great value. It was made from one large piece of gold. Craftsmen hammered it into its form. It contained seven lamps to burn olive oil. If you are interested, **Exodus 25** gives the distinctive details.

The lampstand or Menorah was positioned in the Holy Place of the tabernacle and later the temple. It, along with other pieces, were considered "holy." An interesting text that jumped out at me is **Exodus 30:29-30** (ESV):

**<sup>29</sup> You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy. <sup>30</sup> You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.**

These items were holy. They made those who touched them holy. Remember that Jesus was touched by a woman with a twelve year issue of blood and she was healed and cleansed. Jesus also touched lepers. They too were healed and cleansed. Jesus was not infected or made "unclean." Rather, he made them clean and fit for the service of God, i.e., He made them "holy."

The Menorah is from God and brings God's light into the world. Whenever light ceases, darkness fills the void. How often have we observed that about evil and good? Whenever good ceases, evil increases. We see it in politics and anywhere the light of God is intended to shine.

Of course, Jesus is the ultimate light of the world, just as He stated in **John 8:12** (ESV):

**Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

In addition, He knew His job was to make disciples who would imitate Him. His public ministry was only to be three years so He acted to be the light of God so that people could see the light. He passed onto us the privilege of being light. Notice the familiar statement in **Matthew 5:14-16** (ESV):

**<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**

In the face of our war with darkness, our job isn't to complain about the darkness. Rather, it is to shine brighter and dispel it. I find it easier to complain and harder to shine. Yet, the Bible reminds me in **Philippians 2:14-16** (ESV):

**<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing, <sup>15</sup>that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast to the word of life, . . .**

It is easier said than done. I wonder if one of the reasons that the majority of Americans do not claim to be Christians is because we have not been bringing light to them. Instead in our complaining, our fears, and our bickering, we have only added to the darkness. God speaks to the world through His people. What message is the world hearing from us?

When Aaron offered sacrifices to the LORD, fire came down from the LORD and consumed the offering in **Leviticus 19:24**. The people were moved to awe and worshiped. Yet Aaron is charged with physically taking fire to light the Menorah. Couldn't God have sent the fire? Obviously He could have, but didn't.

Maybe one reason is that He wants us to participate in holy things. While Jesus is the epitome of service (**Mark 10:45**, et al), He also wants us to serve as we follow. He doesn't expect us to sit back and be spoon-fed with spiritual blessings. He wants us to engage in the process.

I think it was true with the Maccabees who freed the Jews from the Seleucid tyranny. It appears God helped them, but they had to participate. The conquest of the Promised Land is another example. God would lead the way, but the people had to participate in the conquest. If I may be so bold, I believe in my heart that America won her independence from Great Britain in a similar way. People participated in standing against tyranny and for our God-given liberties. Then God worked His providence.

Aaron did as God commanded and lit the wicks of the Menorah in the tabernacle. In a way, the wicks are symbolic of who we are. We have received the spark of the holy flame of God as the wick did from Aaron, the High Priest. Fueled by the Holy Spirit, symbolized in the oil, we express God's light to a dark world. Ultimately by displaying the light of God we bring light to people and bring glory to Him, just as Jesus said.

Keep The Light of God's Lampstand Burning!