

“Over Against the Candlestick”

“The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.”
—Numbers 8:1,2

HOW OFTEN CHRISTIANS

find, as they study the Bible, that some apparently unimportant statement has attached to it a great depth of meaning. Such is the case with the words of our text. These instructions, given to Moses and Aaron concerning the Tabernacle arrangement, have a much deeper significance to us than they had to the people of Israel. “These things happened unto them for ensamples [Greek: *tupos*, or type]: and they are written for our admonition,” says the apostle. They are a great help as we endeavor to walk even as Jesus walked.—I Cor. 10:11

In Exodus 25:31-37, the candlestick, or lampstand, is described. It was a beautiful piece of work. The lamps were so arranged that each one would shed its light “over against”—that is, in front of—the candlestick shaft to show its beauty, and to provide

light for the activities taking place within the Holy compartment of the Tabernacle. The branches that held the lamps depended upon the central shaft of the lampstand for their support, and the light called attention to that importance.

Students of the Bible appreciate that the Tabernacle and its services were “a shadow of good things to come.” (Heb. 10:1) If the office of lighting the lamps is but a “shadow,” let us see if we can understand the larger lesson—the reality, as it were. We are informed by the Apostle Peter in I Peter 2:9, that we are to show forth God’s “marvelous light” of Truth. In Romans 14:8, the Apostle Paul further states, “Whether we live, we live unto the Lord.”

In Revelation 1:12,13,16,20, we read of a vision seen by John the Revelator: “I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot. ... And he had in his right hand seven stars.” The following explanation was given to John: “The seven stars are the angels [messengers] of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

This is a beautiful picture of Christ and his church. Every true Christian is a “light bearer.” “Ye are the light of the world,” said Jesus. (Matt. 5:14) Only those who truly belong to Christ, and who are engaged as servants for the divine cause, are shown in the picture of the candlestick. The lamps were arranged that they were not to glorify themselves, but the shaft; so the Christian is not to live to

glorify himself but Christ. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves ... servants for Jesus' sake."—II Cor. 4:5

We see this illustrated in the life of the apostles. In Acts 3:1-17, we read of Peter and John healing the man born lame. "All the people" were inclined to worship Peter and John because of this miracle performed by Peter, but he denied that the healing was by their own power or holiness, saying it was on account of "the faith which is by" Christ, who had been crucified "through ignorance," on the part of the people.—vss. 12,16,17

Later, in Acts 14:8-18, after healing a man crippled in his feet, the people attempted to offer sacrifices to the Apostle Paul and Barnabas his companion, whom they thought to be gods come among them. However, Paul and Barnabas would accept none of their devotions. Instead they told the people of the great God who could do much greater things. Further on, in Acts 16:16-18, we read that Paul would not accept praise even from the devils. The apostles desired that their light should shine over against the candlestick only. They wanted Christ to be glorified.

Wherever the light of the true Christian shines it will give a testimonial to Christ. It never seeks to draw attention to itself, but always to their Lord and Savior. One of the finest evidences of followers of the Master is that always, in all that they are and do, they seek to glorify Christ. Like those lamps, they are ever showing forth the glory of the lampstand. They are careful to disclose that the light they are revealing is founded only on Christ, and is maintained by him.

What a picture those lamps reveal to us. The shaft—Christ—sustains and supports the lamps. The priest, also representing Christ, supplies the oil, figurative of the Holy Spirit. The priest lights the lamps and removes the dross from the wicks that would hinder them from burning brightly. This is what Paul meant when he said, “For to me to live is Christ.” (Phil. 1:21) It is all of Christ, by the authority given him of the Heavenly Father, Jehovah.

The Christian’s life is one of service, but all service must be done to the glory of God and his Son. It is important to realize that some service claimed to be done in Christ’s name is not acceptable to him. Matthew 7:22 warns us: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Those addressed with such words were claiming to do work in Christ’s name, and yet he says they were workers of unrighteousness. If our service is not done wholly to glorify Christ and our Heavenly Father, we may be sure that either it is our fallen flesh or the influence of the world asserting itself.

There may be much so-called service done, and seemingly great results accomplished, yet the motive may be to attract attention and the honor of others. There may be great accomplishments in the eyes of men and yet no light shining “over against” the candlestick. Why is this? It is because attention is called to the work or to those engaged in the work, and not to Christ. Personalities and

human teachings are stressed instead of Christ. The light is not produced by the oil which the hand of the great High Priest supplies, hence the lamp-stand is not illuminated.

This points out an important lesson. There can be no light if there is no oil. Therefore, there can be no true teaching or service for the Lord without the aid of the Holy Spirit. Any light that shines towards human glorification is not glorifying Christ and, hence, will not be considered as emanating from the candlestick. The seven lamps which shone forth were not lit to show how beautiful they were, but rather that they might illuminate the shaft and the Holy of the Tabernacle.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

Does being a Christian mean how much gain we can get for ourselves out of following Christ? That might be commendable to the extent that it is the spiritual blessings we seek. If, therefore, we are following Christ, many spiritual blessings should be our portion. Hence we should expect to enjoy these fruits of our Christian experience—love, joy, hope, peace, and other pleasant consequences. However, the Christian life means more than being recipients of divine blessings.

We are not to ask for nor should we expect material things in exchange for our service to God. Being a Christian, it is not a question of how much we can get, but how much we can give. Neither is it how much we can do, but how much Christ can do in and through and with us. Our Lord revealed what life meant to him when he said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God;" "I come to do thy will;"

“I do always those things that please him,” the Heavenly Father. (Ps. 40:8; Heb. 10:9; John 8:29) When Jesus had nearly completed his earthly work, he “lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, ... I have glorified thee on the earth.” (John 17:1,4) He so glorified God that he could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”—John 14:9

As we study the life of the Master, we note how it was filled with those rare virtues which characterized him as different from all others. What caused these rare qualities to be so abundant in his life? It was because he had continual access to the great source of all divine virtues. All these merits were filled with the rich fragrance of perfect fellowship with God, from whom the divine character flowed.

We have access to the same source, and because of this, from our lives should flow the same virtues. They will not be in the same abundance of sweetness that they flowed from Christ because of our weak, imperfect vessels, but flow they should. So, as our beloved Master lived to the glory of the Father, we should live to the glory of Christ and the Father. This is the real objective of every true Christian.—Rom. 15:5-7; Phil. 2:11; Rev. 1:5,6

CHRISTIAN JOYS

It has been said of some who have been successful in their ventures, amassed considerable wealth, and attained much fame, that they got all there was out of life. To a certain extent, this may be commendable provided it is merited. However, Christians are not depending on earthly things for joy because their chief joy is in Christ Jesus their

Lord, their partnership and fellowship with him, and with others of like joy. They can truly sing, "What, though created streams run dry, I have the fountain, still."

Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke 12:15) To get "all there is out of life," as the saying goes, we may be robbing someone else; but if we put something worthwhile into life, we not only enrich ourselves, but we bless other lives also, and thus bring honor and glory to God and his Son, Christ Jesus.

In Washington, DC, there is a beautiful memorial to Abraham Lincoln. The lights are so arranged and adjusted that the figure of Lincoln stands out in bold relief. Thus it should be with faithful Christians. Their lives should be so ordered that they will reveal the likeness of Christ very clearly. Let us consider this matter carefully, and see that our lives are devoted wholly to Christ, and being "changed [Greek: transformed] into the same image from glory to glory."—II Cor. 3:18

This truth is illustrated to us in another way. Jesus said that the terms of our discipleship are: first, self-denial; second, cross-bearing; and third, obediently following him. (Matt. 16:24) We cannot be followers of Christ until we come to the place from which he started. When, through faith in the blood of Jesus, demonstrated by full consecration, we have been justified or made righteous in God's sight, then we can truly follow him.—Rom. 5:1,2; 12:1

Let us recall how this is pictured in the Tabernacle. There were two curtains. The first was called the "door" of the Tabernacle, or Tent of meeting.

(Exod. 26:36) This entrance to the Holy compartment is a fitting picture of the death of the human will and the beginning of a new life in Christ. Passing through this door, figuratively speaking, we enter into a new experience. Everything is changed. The Apostle Paul states the matter this way: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—II Cor. 5:17

If we have come into this condition, we cease any longer to trust in the mind of the flesh, but rather submit ourselves to the mind of Christ. (I Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5) From this new standpoint, as we look straight ahead, “looking unto Jesus,” we see the second curtain, or veil, with its beautiful embroidery. (Heb. 12:2; Exod. 26:31-33) Looking steadfastly at the veil, its beauty should influence us to realize it as the entrance to the symbolic divine dwelling place. Such beauty should inspire us to develop the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” in our life—to become more Christlike day by day. (Heb. 12:11) As the passing of the first curtain shows our entrance into this new life in Christ, based on our acceptance of the divine terms of discipleship—the passing of the second curtain will mean the fulfilling of those terms faithfully “unto death.” (Rev. 2:10) Indeed, even while dwelling symbolically in the Holy condition, our hope is “as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”—Heb. 6:19

In the Holy of the Tabernacle, the lampstand was located on the south side of the compartment. North, in the Scriptures, often represents the heavenly perspective, and thus we might think of the south

as the earthly perspective. Because the lampstand is on the south side does not mean that that which it represents is earthly, but it might show it rather as recognized from the earthly viewpoint.

Every one of these lamps has a wick through which oil must flow in order to give light. Though the oil represents the Holy Spirit, which comes from God and is free from all impurities, the wick might well represent the humanity of the Christian which still exists even as they give forth light “over against the candlestick.”

In the process of giving light, carbon is sometimes produced that would interfere with the lamps’ bright shining, so the priest must trim the wicks. Thus we read that Aaron was to trim the lamps of the candlestick both in the morning and in the evening each day so that they would continue to shine brightly. (Exod. 30:7,8, *New American Standard Bible*) As we follow in the footsteps of Christ, there is evidence in our lives oftentimes of certain things that would hinder our being bright lights. Those experiences must be overruled by the High Priest of our profession to remove the carbon—the defects—by symbolically trimming the wicks of our lamps that they may shine in greater brilliance.

The Apostle Paul rejoiced to have such experiences. We, too, should “glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”—Rom. 5:3-5

The Bible will also serve to clear away the dross. It is sometimes likened to water that washes us

clean, the “washing of water by the word.” (Eph. 5:26) Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth.” (John 17:17) Both by God’s Word and by the experiences of life we are made to shine more brightly that we may glorify God in our bodies. (I Cor. 6:20) This, then, is the purpose of our life as Christians, to so live that we may show forth the glory of God and of Christ and to thus shine “over against the candlestick.” ■

*“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light
for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole
body is filled with light. But when it is unhealthy,
your body is filled with darkness.*

*Make sure that the light you think you have
is not actually darkness.*

*If you are filled with light, with no dark corners,
then your whole life will be radiant,
as though a floodlight were filling you with light.”*

Luke 11:34-36, New Living Translation