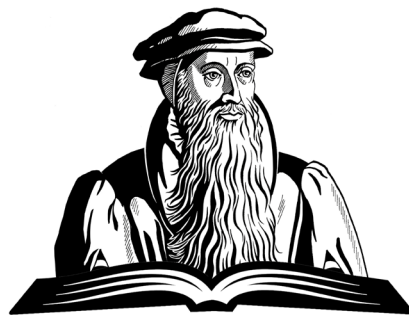


# The Tabernacle of Moses

Video Lecture Series  
by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

*Lecture 10 ~*  
**THE LAMPSTAND**



**The John Knox Institute**  
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## Video Lecture Series

by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

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### Lecture 10 ~

## THE LAMPSTAND

Welcome to the tenth session of the study of the Old Testament Tabernacle. The Scriptures that will be considered in this study are found in Exodus 25:31–40; Exodus 37:17–24; and Leviticus 24:1–4.

Shema, our Jewish lad, could only imagine how beautiful and wonderful it was what the priest described to him one day. “Shema, after I have cleansed myself carefully at the laver, I would gather some of the utensils I need to take care of the lampstand. However, before I may do that work with the lights, I first need to offer some of the incense upon the altar of incense.



“Each time when I enter in the that sanctuary of the holy place, I feel the solemnity of God’s presence. Walking from the bright outside into this warmly lit up holy place is truly something soothing, as well as inspiring. It is something, Shema, you need to experience to know.” And this really is true what the priest said. It’s like Psalm 25, verse 14, where we read: “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.” Grace, friends, teaches us to value and to experience the sweet communion with God, when he draws us away from all that is earthly and sinful, into his presence.

So let’s take a closer look at the lampstand, which is at the left side of the room. The Hebrew word for the lampstand is not what we often translate as “candlestick,” but “light-bearer.” That’s because the light comes from the finest prepared olive oil, instead of wax candles. The lampstand was made of nearly one talent of pure gold. In weight, that would be around ninety pounds of gold, and so it made it one of the most costly objects in the Tabernacle.

What is even more remarkable, is how the artist made this lampstand. He did not solder it together. He did not pour the gold into a mold. But it says it was beaten out of one solid piece of gold. That would have taken very special gifts, and amazing patience and perseverance to craft this lampstand out of one solid piece of gold. The whole thing was one astonishing feat.

There were three arms that grew





out, as it were, out of the main center shaft, like branches from a tree. Each of the six arms were decorated with three groups of almond blossoms, knops, and flowers. The main shaft had four groups of the almond decorations. And then, on the top of each of the arms was an almond-shaped bowl.



It was obviously made to resemble the almond tree. And we wonder why God did command it to resemble the almond tree. Well, this may be to do with the fact that the almond tree is the very first to blossom in the springtime. It was therefore a symbol of life and hope after the very long winters. Among the Jews, it spoke about resurrection of life.

How tall was this lampstand? The Bible doesn't have a measurement. Jewish tradition has it was about five feet tall, or about a meter and a half, and about three and a half feet, or a little over one meter wide. But what we do know is the olive oil that the priests were to burn in this was the best of the best. In Leviticus 24, we are told the olive oil was not prepared in the very usual way—it was to be beaten out. Normally, the ripe olives are squeezed or pressed. But unripe olives, they need to be beaten to get the oil out. And the reason for using unripe olives is that the oil would be pure, burn brighter, and above all, would never smoke. So to safeguard the Tabernacle's beauty from an accumulation of soot, God ordered the best of the oils to be used.

The lamps were always to burn—in other words, day and night. And to maintain this, the wick needed to be trimmed twice a day, as well as the oil in every one of the cups replenished. From Exodus 30, verses 7 and 8, we learn that the care of the lamps always happened in combination with the offering of incense on the altar. Moses wrote these words: “And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.”

Now let's draw out of the teaching that God gives us in this spectacular lampstand. First, we'll consider again the key of the Tabernacle, the glory of Christ, as pictured in the lampstand. And then we will view the lampstand as the symbol of Christ in relationship to his own people. And then thirdly, we will ponder how the Spirit of God is pictured in the lampstand. And lastly, we'll view how the lampstand resembles our task as believers in this world.



So first, as expected, Jesus Christ is again the key point in the lampstand. We saw already that this piece of art was astounding. It was not poured into a mold, it was not soldered together, but it has been beaten out of one solid block of gold. And the mystery of how this art is produced, this candlestick, or this lampstand, is, however, exceeded by the mystery of the Son of God made flesh. Who can understand how the Son of God stepped, as it were, across the galaxies of the universe, and appeared upon planet earth in human form. You know, friends, Jesus' incarnation was nothing short of the infinite work of God. When Gabriel announced its event in the simple words, who can fathom them, when Gabriel said, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the

Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Now this mysterious work of forming the body of Jesus, in union with his divine nature as the Son of God, is symbolically pictured in the lampstand. We notice that there were no exact dimensions given of this lampstand, and how fitting that is, as it is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who can measure the glory and the greatness of the Son of God in the flesh, in this world?

John testified of his Master, “And the Word was made 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.” In him is the fulness of God, and experiencing him, in his teaching, in his love, in his power, in his gentleness, in his warmth, that is to experience the light of life. And Jesus brings this very clearly out, in John 8, verse 12. He said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” He is the light of the world.

Now we all know how cheering light is, especially when it is dark and dismal. As we grapple with this darkness of sin, as we grapple with the depressing cloud of guilt, only the light of the gospel, the free and pardoning love and grace brings hope. And this is how the knowledge of God’s gospel will be experienced in our own heart—a light. What a revival of hope, when I may hear that he has come as the Son of righteousness with healing in his wings. The light in Jesus can also be seen as the love of God, and who can measure this love of God? Paul prayed that we may be able to comprehend, with all of the saints, what is the breadth, what is the length, what is the depth, what is the height of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.

So the more we peer on the love of God, especially as it reflects itself in the face of our loveless and hostile world, the more it shines. Is it therefore any wonder that Jesus needed to warn, in John 3, verse 19, about the evil of rejecting his love that shines in darkness? He says, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light,”—why?—“because their deeds were evil.”

Well, secondly, consider the lampstand as the symbol of the church, in close unity with Jesus Christ. God’s own word provides this commentary that the lampstand pictures the Lord’s people. We turn to Revelation 1, verses 12 and 13. John described how he saw Jesus among the seven lampstands. In verse 20, he identified these lamps as the seven churches. So what a fitting symbol, and also what a rich revelation this lampstand gives us of the union between Christ and his people.

It’s clear that its main shaft, that pictures Christ himself. But intimately united to him, as branches to a tree, are his people. It is only through this mystical and spiritual union between Christ and his people, that the root of all spiritual fruitfulness is found. Notice how Jesus emphasized this, in John 15, verse 5, using the analogy of the vine and the branches. “Abide in me, and I in you.” And, “as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” And then in verse 5, he repeated this with an absolute: “For without me”—or apart from me—“ye can do nothing.” So this truth is that we cannot shine the loveliness of godliness or Christ-likeness without being in Christ.

So, did you know that this truth of the union of Christ with his people is emphasized well over an hundred times in the New Testament. God doesn’t want us to miss this gospel fact. And each look at



the lampstand should remind each believer of Jesus and us. We cannot shine without him. Without him, we all will walk in darkness. But also, in him, we are the light—the light of the world.

You know, there's another beautiful truth in this lampstand. Though the branches cannot exist without the vine, it is also true that the vine cannot exist without the branches. From all eternity, Christ has been united to his people, as the Head to the body. They belong together in the mind of God. God's people are no afterthought in God's plan. They are together in his thoughts. Think of Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

Well, thirdly, let's explore the Spirit's importance, as pictured in the lampstand. The Spirit's ministry, friends, is pictured in the oil in the cups on each of the arms. As that flaming wick was fed with this pure oil, it caused a glowing light to fill the holy place. And thinking about the oil, and the light, and the seven arms of the lampstand, makes Revelation 1, verse 4 very clear, where John writes, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and"—he says—"from the seven Spirits which are before his throne." And in Revelation 4, verse 5, we read another reference about the "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which," John writes, "are the seven Spirits of God." Now the number seven is the number of fulness, and so the seven Spirits symbolized in the seven-armed lampstand declares the fulness of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is the Person in the Godhead who administers the plans or the purposes of God in and through his church, in this world in which we are.



And yet, the work of the Holy Spirit is not only within the body of the believers in the six branches. No, he also filled without measure the main branch of the church—Jesus Christ himself. This main shaft was administered by the same oil—the Holy Spirit. Now if we turn to Isaiah 11, verses 1 and 2, it's almost as you see the lampstand in the prophecy about Christ. We find there a sevenfold Spirit resting upon him that is born from the roots of Jesse. It says, "And the spirit of" Jehovah "shall rest upon him." Now picture that truth as the

center in the main shaft of the lampstand. And then Isaiah describes the six branches, in a sixfold Spirit—"and the spirit of...wisdom and understanding," and "the spirit of counsel and might," and "the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD"—all rests upon him.

So, coming to the New Testament, we read about the Holy Spirit in Christ's life repeatedly. Joseph was instructed, in Matthew, chapter 1, verse 18, that Mary, his espoused wife, "was found with child of the Holy Ghost." As John the Baptist baptized Jesus, the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon Jesus. And Luke noted, in chapter 4, verse 14, that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," preaching the gospel. And all through his earthly life, Jesus preached filled with the Holy Ghost without measure. We read in John 3, verse 34, "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." The importance of the Spirit's work in Jesus' life even extended to Christ's resurrection from the dead. In Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, then he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."



Let us never minimize the glory of this third Person of the Trinity. How essential he was for the Savior, as he was conceived, as he lived, as he labored, died, and rose from the dead. And likewise, the Holy Spirit is indispensable to us believers. How could any Christian carry out his or her tasks without the constant ministry of the oil of the Holy Ghost? For who teaches us the wisdom to see our foolishness, or to see the need for our salvation in Christ? Who opens our understanding for God and for the glory of God? Who makes known to us the mystery of Christ Jesus? Who provides us with the counsel to return and to direct our lives? Who enables us to stand with might against the power of sin and Satan? Who works within us this reverential awe and love for God? And who enables us to shine as Christ shone in the world? In all these questions, one single answer—it is the Holy Spirit of God.

And that brings me to our last observation on this lampstand. The lampstand pictures our task as believers. Jesus is the light of the world, but so are his people. How vividly did Christ speak that in Matthew 5, verses 14 to 16. And Christ speaks about his people the same as he spoke about himself: “Ye are the light of the world.” Friends, either we are a candlestick in the home, or we may be on the top position in the world, but wherever God has placed his church, we have the task to shine the light. God leaves his purchased people in this world to shine in the light of holiness, and love, and goodness, and graciousness. Listen to Paul, as he exhorted the Philippians, in chapter 2:12–13 that the believers live in care, so not to eclipse themselves through disobedience or neglect: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” And then in verse 15, he adds, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

God expects his people to shine. As we live, and as we love, and as we forgive, or as we forbear, and as we care, and as we serve others; as we sacrifice, as we deny ourselves, as we show the fruit of self control, and meekness, and gentleness. We are to shine when we devote our gifts for the benefit of others, in the body and outside the body. Let’s not forget, dear fellow Christians, light doesn’t speak a word—it shines, it allures without words. And so one of the most powerful ways to be the light of the world, is to simply walk as Jesus walked, going about doing good, going about bearing testimony about his deeds, that were speaking love ahead of his own words. And if you live like him, in our dark societies or surroundings, we will be like a lampstand. And though the world may not comprehend how someone can be so loving, or so gentle, or so self-controlled, or so humble, it may attract them to the light, as they may struggle with various issues of darkness and difficulties.

And so, finally, one more observation. Each day, the priest had to tend the lamps. He had to trim the wick with the scissors, then he had to refill the bowls with the pure oil, and that was necessary to keep the lights burning. Now that’s equally true spiritually. If I live a prayerless life, if I live a Scriptureless life, I will soon be a ragged wick, dry of oil. And in that light, understand Paul’s exhortation that he gives to the Christians, much like the caring of the lamps. Listen to what he says, in 1 Thessalonians: “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not the prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.” You see, Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 5, verse 18 is again reminiscent of the priest’s daily task with the lampstand: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Now however, friends, if it was dependent upon us as believers, we would all be smoldering



wicks. And how precious therefore is then that picture that John describes in his closing the book, Revelation 1, verses 12 and 13, “And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks” or lamp-stands; “and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.”

That is the interceding High Priest, who, through the Spirit, maintains his body—his church. And we have a High Priest who will not quench the smoking wick. Instead, with his divine skillfulness, and his compassionate mercy, he pours the pure oil of his Spirit upon his people, so each may be a light, either on the candlestick in the family home, or like a city on a hill in your community, or in your business, or as the light of the world, like those who have high and public positions in life. Wherever we are, shine. May God comfort us and equip us to shine like that for the King.