



MT. ROSE REFORMED
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Light of the World

Reverend Scott Johnson | May 10, 2026 | Exodus 25:31-40

Old Testament Reading

Our Old Testament reading, and this is our sermon text as well, so you might wanna keep your place there in your Bibles. The Old Testament reading is Exodus chapter 25, verses 31 through 40, and this is the inerrant, the infallible word of God.

Let's hear God's word. You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be made of hammered work. Its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. And there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it. Three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower on the other branch. So for the six branches going out of the lampstand. And on the lampstand itself there shall be four cups made like almond blossoms with their calyxes and flowers. And a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand. Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. You shall make seven lamps for it, and the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. Its tongs and their trays shall be of pure gold. It shall be made with all these utensils out of a talent of pure gold, and see that you make them after the pattern for them which is being shown you on the mountain.

New Testament Reading

And now let's turn to Revelation chapter 21, Revelation chapter 1, for our New Testament reading, Revelation 1, verse 12 through 20. Revelation 1, verses 12 through 20. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead, but he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last and the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades. Write, therefore, the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

The Context and Construction of the Golden Lampstand

You can turn back to Exodus 25 if you haven't already. This is our sermon text. And as I said, we are working our way through the book of Exodus and we are in the section of Exodus now where the Lord is giving instructions to Moses on how the tabernacle and all of its furniture, all the items in it are to be constructed. Of course, the tabernacle was the place where God would dwell among his people in the wilderness. And also when they came into the promised land, God would be in the midst of his people in the tabernacle.

And as we've gone through these instructions, you probably noticed that God is working from the inside out. The first thing that he told Moses how to build was the Ark of the Covenant. And the Ark of the Covenant was located in that innermost part of the tabernacle, the room that is called the Most Holy Place. And then after that, the Lord gave instructions, which we saw last week, on how to make the table that would hold the bread of the presence or the showbread. And that table was located in the room adjacent to the Most Holy Place, a larger room, and that larger room is called the Holy Place.

And this morning we are still in the holy place. And the next item that the Lord will tell Moses how to build is the golden lamp stand. And so the golden lamp stand would also be set up in the holy place. It would be situated across from the table that held the bread of the presence. And so our subject today is this golden lamp stand.

If you know what a menorah is, then you already know the Hebrew word that's translated golden lampstand - it is "menorah". And since we often see menorahs at the end of the year during the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, we can have a rough image in our minds of what this golden lampstand and the tabernacle more or less look like. Of course, we don't know exactly what it looked like. All we have are the instructions here, but at least we have a rough idea of what its appearance was.

Like the Ark of the Covenant, like the table for the showbread, the Holy Lampstand was to be constructed of pure gold. This is fitting. This is right. This was God's dwelling place. Only gold is fit for the majesty of the Great King.

The central stem or trunk of the lampstand had three branches shooting off from one side of it, and it had three branches going off the other side of it. And at the top of each branch, and at the top of the central stem as well, a lamp would be placed there. And so there would be a total of seven lamps on top of the lampstand that would give light to the most holy place, or to the holy place rather. The lamps, by the way, were not attached to the lamp stand, but they were placed on top of it. They were removable. And the main trunk and the six branches, the lamps would have been set on top of those.

The lamps would have been bowl shaped. There would have been, the bowls would have held the olive oil, which was used to burn the candles. And there would have been a wick that was placed in each of the lamps. And of course, that's how they lit the, that's how the golden lamp stand was lit. And that's what gave light to the tabernacle. It was decorated, both the trunk and the branches were decorated with almond flowers. Each branch had three flowers and the trunk had four flowers on it. And we'll talk in a little bit about the significance that this looked like a tree.

After describing how the lampstand was to be built, the Lord also told Moses to make the various utensils that would be necessary for maintaining the lamps, the tongs and the trays. And so everything together, the lampstand, its utensils, it was to be made out of one talent of pure

gold. One talent of gold would be about 75 pounds. And so this is a very sturdy, very stable lampstand.

And again, at the end of the passage, the Lord tells Moses what he tells him over and over again, as he is giving him instructions on how to build the tabernacle, he says, see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain. Everything about the tabernacle, everything in it had to be made exactly according to that heavenly pattern that the Lord showed to Moses on top of Mount Sinai.

The Maintenance and Purpose of the Lamps

How this lampstand was to be used and maintained. And so I'm gonna read a passage from Leviticus, Leviticus chapter 24, verses one through four. This also shows us or tells us a little bit more about the lampstand. In that passage, we read this, the Lord spoke to Moses saying, command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp that a light may be kept burning regularly. So it was olive oil that was burning. Outside the veil of the testimony and the tent of meeting, Aaron shall arrange it from evening to morning before the Lord regularly. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. He shall arrange the lamps on the lampstand of pure gold before the Lord regularly.

And so it was the responsibility of Aaron at first, and then his sons after him, it was the priest's responsibility to keep the lampstand burning. And the lampstand was to burn regularly, which I take to mean that it was to be constantly burning. The lamps were to be always, day and night, to be lit. It was a kind of eternal flame that never stopped giving lights within the tabernacle.

Now, one purpose of having a lamp stand and candles in the tabernacle was very practical, and that is to light up what otherwise would have been a very dark place. As we'll see later as we go on to read about this tabernacle. It was covered with all kinds of different coverings, and there were so many coverings on top of the tabernacle, there was no way that any light would have been able to penetrate into the rooms inside. And so, because there were no windows, there was no sunroof on the tabernacle, there had to be a way to light up the interior, and so that was one practical reason for this lampstand.

However, as with everything in the tabernacle, the real significance of it, the important meaning of it was symbolic. And what the light signified was the light of God. The scriptures tell us that

God is light. 1 John 1:5, God is light and in him is no darkness at all. 1 Timothy 6:16 says that God dwells in unapproachable light. And so the light that was burning or shining from this lampstand day and night represented the truth that God is light, that he is light. And the lampstand symbolically showed the light of God in different ways.

Point 1: God's Light is Truth

First of all, the light from the lampstand would have reminded the Israelites that God's light is truth. God's light is truth. And that'll be our first point this morning.

The scriptures associate the truth of God with light. The psalmist says in Psalm 43:3, send out your light and your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. The word of God, the scriptures, which we know are true, perfectly true, inherently true. They are also called light. Psalm 119:105, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

So God's truth is light, the word of God is light, but the world in which we live is one that is enshrouded in great darkness. When Adam and Eve, when they believed the lie of Satan, when they rebelled against the Lord in the Garden of Eden, they plunged themselves and the entire human race to come after them into the depths of darkness. And so for that reason, by nature, we do not have light. We are not born with light within us, but we are born spiritually blind. Apart from the grace of God spiritually, we live and we walk in total blackness. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.

That was certainly true in the days of the Israelites. The false gods, the false worship of all the nations that surrounded the people of Israel. This showed forth their innate spiritual blindness and all the evil practices that they did and all the ways in which they worshiped idols and sought to manipulate and to placate their false gods in their worship. They showed that they were a people living and walking in darkness. It was only to his people Israel, to his beloved redeemed people that the Lord showed his light to them. He made himself known to them as the true and the living God. And so that the light that emanated from that lampstand and the tabernacle was a light that was shining in the midst of a dark world, a world enshrouded in darkness, a world full of idolatry and sin.

And that is as ever true today as it was then. Man in his natural condition is blind. Man born in nature, he is born to live, to walk in darkness. And this is why every religion, and this is not a popular thing to say today, this goes against the spirit of the age, but every religion that does not confess and worship Jesus Christ as the incarnate son of God, that religion is a product of deception. It is a product of spiritual blindness. There is no light in it. Every philosophy that is based upon human reason, every philosophy that is not grounded upon the truths revealed in the scriptures is nothing but an expression of man's spiritual blindness. Every worldview that does not have Christ at its center is also devoid of light, it is darkness. And in some, we can say that every way in which man expresses his unbelief, whether it is through the evil deeds that he does or whether the false worship that he engages in, his rebellion against God, his sin, these are all ways in which humanity shows itself to be enveloped in a great spiritual darkness.

This is what we are by nature. And one implication of our natural spiritual blindness is that we are not only blind to the truth about God, but in our spiritual blindness, we are kept from seeing the true significance of all things. We cannot see the true meaning, the true significance of anything if we do not understand the truth about God. In other words, when we fell with Adam in our sin, the capacity even to reason, to think properly and rightly was corrupted and damaged. To know anything at all with true understanding, we must begin with the truth of God. We must begin with the truth that God is the creator of all things. He is the Lord of all things. If we are blind to the truth about God, we are blind to the truth about everything. Psalm 36:9 says, in your light, in your light do we see light.

And so an unbeliever, one who has not come into the light, one who still walks and lives in darkness, he lives in the same world that we do to be sure, but he is blind to the true meaning of things. He does not see the truth to which all creation testifies. He does not see the truth that all creation reveals about God, that he is good, that he is wise, that he is the creator. And for this reason, the simplest child who knows by faith that God is the sovereign creator and Lord of all, that child, because he knows the truth about God, he possesses infinitely more light and knowledge and truth than even the most learned, brilliant philosopher and scientist who denies the truth about God.

And that's because by faith, the believer sees the world as it truly is. The believer sees the world and all that is in it for what it truly is. It is the creation of God. It is the creation that is ruled over by God. The believer sees himself as he truly is. He is an image bearer of God. The believer sees his life as it truly is. It is a gift of God to be spent giving glory to him. And this is true

knowledge. This is true light. And this knowledge, this understanding is a gift of God's grace. Again, the psalmist says, in your light do we see light.

When God brings us to himself, when he sheds abroad in our hearts the truth concerning him and his son, Jesus Christ, then our eyes are opened and we can see things not only about God ourselves, but the whole world in its true significance, in its true context. And until then though, we remain in darkness. And one thing that means for us is this, is that if you today, if you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ is Lord, if you truly have embraced the truth that He is the incarnate Son of God, that He died upon the cross to take away your sin and your guilt, if you believe in your heart that He was raised from the dead on the third day, if you believe that the Bible, the scriptures, that this is the very Word of God, then if that's the case, then rejoice, give thanks to God, praise Him, because He has brought you from darkness to light. You have been shown grace and mercy in order to see these things, to believe these things. By nature, we cannot see these things, but by the grace of God, we do.

And so the light of the lampstand would have reminded the Israelites that the Lord, their God, was light. He was their light in a dark world. And of course, like everything in the tabernacle, the truths that are expressed there find their greatest fulfillment, their greatest expression in the Son of God, the one who came into the world as God in the flesh. Jesus said in John 8:12, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And so there's no longer a lampstand in a tabernacle in the wilderness somewhere giving off a little bit of light, but there is something far more brilliant than that. And that is the son of God who came into the world, who is light, whose light continues to lighten this dark world and his light is truth. So the lampstand would have shown that God's light is truth.

Point 2: God's Light is Righteousness

Secondly, the light of the lampstand would have taught the Israelites that God's light is righteousness. Just as the scriptures associate God's light with truth, so the Bible also identifies God's light with his righteousness, his purity, his holiness. The prophet Malachi says this, but for you who fear my name, the son of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. The son of righteousness, that's S-U-N, not S-O-N. His Son of Righteousness. And so, God, when He visits His people, according to this prophecy, both His light and His righteousness will shine forth like the sun. And so, in the Scriptures, God's light is equated with His goodness, His righteousness, His purity.

And the light shining forth from the lampstand would have testified to the Israelites of the holiness of God simply because of where it was located. It was located in the tabernacle and the tabernacle was sacred. It was holy because God is holy. And so the light of God, the holiness of God, these things could not be separated. They cannot be separated.

And so imagine yourself as an ordinary Israelite. You're living in the wilderness with this tabernacle that has been set up in the midst of all the camps of the Israelites. And you walk by it and the veil happens to be open a little bit. And so you can see coming from that tabernacle, you can see the faint light of the golden lampstand shining from within it. And that light would remind you that a good, a righteous, a holy God dwells in that tabernacle. That that is his home.

And with the coming of Christ into the world, the light that once shone only among one people has now shed abroad throughout the entire world. John says of Jesus in his gospel, the true light, this is John 1:9, the true light, which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. There is not just a lampstand for the people of Israel, but the true light, Christ has come into the world to bring light to all the nations of the world.

Later in John, we read these words of Jesus about his coming into the world. You know this verse very well, John 3:16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. But then three verses later in verse 19, Jesus adds this, he says, and this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

Now, what Jesus says here contains a very important truth. Very important biblical truth, and that is that faith and unbelief, these are not fundamentally matters of mere head knowledge or lack of it, but faith and unbelief are matters of morality, of right and wrong. Because the light of Christ is righteousness, because it is righteousness, those who reject that light do not do so because they lack the intellectual capacity to understand it, but they reject the light because, Jesus says, their deeds were evil, and they do not want to come into the light. In other words, to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, to come into the light of His righteousness, this means more than just agreeing in your mind or in your head that He is the Savior of sinners, but it means to turn from sin, to repent of sin, to forsake it, and to embrace that which is holy and righteous and good. That is what it means to come into the light. It's far more than just apprehending with the mind the truths about the gospel. But it is forsaking sin and coming into the light and embracing Christ and all of his righteousness.

And so we cannot separate faith and repentance. To believe in Christ is not merely to believe in your mind, but it is at the same time to turn away from sin, to turn towards God in obedience. A person who only believes in Christ with his head, a person who only professes with his lips that Jesus is Lord and yet has not truly submitted to him in faith as Lord. A person who confesses to be a Christian and yet there has been no true change of heart. There is no fruit from his confession of faith. This person is still in darkness. He has not yet come into the light.

John puts it this way in 1 John 1:5-7, this is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. And so if we walk in the lights, if we are truly children of the lights, we embrace Christ in all of his righteousness. We forsake our sin. We come to him for that new life that we might live lives pleasing to him.

And that's the good news of the gospel, that for every single person who does, by the grace of God, turn to Christ and repent of his sin, that person is cleansed from all unrighteousness and brought into the light of God, that light which is eternal life. And so the light of the lampstand would have reminded the Israelites of God's righteousness.

Point 3: God's Light is Salvation

Thirdly, the light of the lampstand would have reminded the Israelites that God's light is salvation. Even apart from the light that the lamps gave off, the figure of this lampstand just by itself was a symbol of salvation. And that's because it resembled a tree. It had a trunk, it had branches going out from it, the almond flowers on it were like the flowers of an almond tree. And of course, as a tree, it would have reminded the Israelites of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

After Adam and Eve sinned against the Lord in the garden, the Lord banished them from that paradise. And he did so lest they would eat of the tree of life and live forever. Naturally, the Israelites, like all people who came from Adam and Eve, they were sinners. They were sinners who were barred from the tree of life. They were barred from taking that fruit that would lead to eternal life. But by putting this figure of a tree in the tabernacle, God was in this way, he was holding out to the Israelites the hope that one day they might eat of that tree of life and live

forever. And so in that way, the lampstand was a figure or a symbol of the salvation that God was preparing for his people.

But even more than that, the light of the lampstand would have signified to the Israelites that their salvation is with the Lord. In the minds of the people of God, the light of God was already associated with his salvation. When the Lord led his people out of Egypt, he did so. And when he brought them into the wilderness, he did so with a pillar of fire by night. So God was light to them as he delivered them from Egypt. In Psalm 27, David says, which we read, which we sang, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? He is light and salvation.

When the prophet Isaiah spoke the words of the Lord concerning the coming Messiah, he described the salvation that the Messiah would bring as light to the world. He says in Isaiah 49:6, I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. And Jesus proclaimed, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And so for those who come to Christ, the light of God, the light of Christ is salvation. It is eternal life.

On the other hand, the Bible warns that for those who do not believe, their judgment will be eternal darkness, eternal night. If you ask someone from Alaska how long they've lived in Alaska, he or she may not answer you in terms of years, but in terms of winters. And so sometimes when someone asks me, how long did your family live in Alaska? I'll say we lived there for 12 winters. And after the long, dark days of each winter, or each winter, those long, dark days, they become a little more oppressive, a little more depressing. It's not hard to imagine the unspeakable spiritual agony that it would be to be cast into a place of utter darkness, a place where there is no light ever. And that's how Jesus described hell. That's how Jesus described the eternal abode of the condemned, that it is a place where there is no light. He called it the outer darkness. There is only weeping and gnashing of teeth there.

And so we are born by nature in spiritual darkness. Apart from the grace of God, we are bound for eternal darkness. And that is our condition as sinners. But praise be to God. Thanks be to God that he has given us a son. He sent his son into the world to bring us light, to bring us salvation. John 1:4 says, in him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the golden lampstand, and the tabernacle with its seven candles burning day and night, that would have reminded the Israelites of that ancient promise of God, that promise that belonged to them, that

one day he would raise up a savior for them, and he would bring them eternal life. The light of God was for the light of his people, or for the life of his people.

The Church as the New Lampstand

Now, the golden lampstand, we don't hear too much about it in the scriptures after this passage, here and there, but not a lot. But it does make a different, or another appearance in the Bible, and that is in the book of Revelation. When John is given this vision of heaven, he sees the exalted Lord Jesus and all of his divine glory in heaven. And there's a lampstand, actually there are seven lampstands there. And this was the passage that we read from the New Testament. Let me read verses 12 and 13 from Revelation chapter one. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And on turning, I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

And then later, thankfully, Jesus explains to John the meaning of the seven lampstands. Jesus doesn't explain everything to John and to us in Revelation, but he does explain to us the meaning of the seven lampstands. And what they stand for, these lampstands in Revelation, what they represent is striking, it's remarkable, it's not, strictly speaking, the light of God. But Jesus says this, as for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

And so the lampstands represent the seven churches of Revelation, but by extension, by implication, they represent the church of God, the church of Christ. And so what this means is that the light of God signified by the lampstand in the tabernacle, that God is truth, he is righteousness, he is salvation, this light now emanates from the people who have been redeemed by Christ, who belong to Christ. And so as Christians, you and I, we are God's lampstand. We are the light of the world. That's exactly what Jesus taught us. Matthew 5:14, you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

And so the lampstand in the tabernacle that stood for the light of God, God has now been pleased to make his people that lampstand. His people are that lamp by which his light shines through the world. The light of his truth, the light of his salvation, the light of his righteousness. It shines in this world of spiritual darkness through his people, through the church.

And this brings us to a question that we must ask ourselves, given that this is true, is my life as a believer in Jesus Christ, is it a light that is shining in the spiritual darkness around me?

Ephesians 5:8 says, at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. We need to ask ourselves, do I walk as a child of light? Do those who know me, that know I am a follower of Christ, do they see that I not only profess to be a believer in Christ, that I profess to be a Christian, but do they see in my life a person who is walking with the Lord Jesus and in that way giving true light to the world?

Now, none of us reflect the light of God, the light of Christ, as we should. As long as we have sin, which is to say, as long as we are in this world with our sin, we will in some way always be only dim and faint reflections of the righteousness, the holiness of God. Nevertheless, it is God's will that by our confession of Christ, by our worship of Christ, by our serving and loving our neighbor as Jesus did, that we shine as light in the world, that we reflect the light of God, that people may see in our lives, that reflection of who God is, that he is truth, that he is righteousness.

Philippians 2:14 through 15. Do all things without grumbling or disputing 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. And so, as by the grace of God, as you walk in the light of Christ, you, as a believer in Christ, shine this light of Christ into the world, a world that is covered with darkness, a world that has been plunged into the blackest of nights. As the beloved and saved people of Jesus Christ, you are the new lampstand of God, giving light to the world.

Let's pray.