

Numbers 8:1-26

The light of Christ is the center and direction of the church.

[Light candle] As mentioned last week the leader who lights a candle as a reminder of God's presence. It is a good reminder for us as well as we continue through this pivotal day for Reservoir.

This is a visual representation of a spiritual, invisible reality. God is present. He is with us. He is for us. He is gentle with us.

Life is full of such things, symbols, patterns, made to image something grander, something bigger than themselves.

This is how God revealed himself among his people - images - pointing to something more brilliant, something lasting.

It is kind of the Lord to give us this image - the ordination of priests, on the same day that we have laid hands on new elders - stewards of the light in the church.

From the pattern here we want to see the real light, think about those that lead from the light, and the invitation to live in the light ourselves.

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Pattern:

More order to worship - Moses heard the voice of God over the ark and this is what he says - light seven lamps, to light the table.

The lampstand, or menorah, also mentioned in 3:31 and 4:9, was a symbol of God's presence and glory. Instructions for its construction were provided in Ex 25:31-40 and carried out in Ex 37:17-24. The lamps are included here as part of the celebration and dedication of the tabernacle and its implements for worship.

These lamps of the lampstand are positioned so as to shine the divine light upon the 12 loaves of bread, symbolic of Israel's 12 tribes. Seven lamps all together. On a stand of gold.

“What did the lampstand symbolize? It symbolized God himself. That is why this piece of furniture was made out of pure gold, hammered into shape (8:4), unlike all the other objects in the Outer Sanctuary, which were made of wood and merely plated with gold. It had seven lamps on it, symbolizing the completeness and perfection of God's presence. This symbolism is confirmed by the description of the function of the lampstand. It was to “give light,” exactly the same Hebrew word that the priestly blessing used of God's face shining upon his people (6:25). The light of the lampstand thus represented God's favor or blessing shining out into the darkness.” ID

This is meaningful. The “perfect light” shines on Israel. God is present with them, guiding their way with light. Keeping, protecting, providing for them.

Levites worship from the light in response to this reality, the presence of God.

Men. humble, sacrificial, made clean. Given as an offering from the people for the service of the Lord. Launched into ministry from an atoning sacrifice.

“Wholly given to the Lord from among the people,” as a gift, to do service for the people of Israel.

Levites themselves were part of the offerings given for the tabernacle service (8:21) that were first provided by God (vv. 15–19). Their ministry directs the camp's gaze upon God's provision and the coming provision of a better worship leader...

All of this is a picture pointing forward, to a light for more than these twelve tribes alone.

Jesus as light:

Why light?

Think of light versus darkness. Light is known, revealing. It is purifying. Warming... in the natural world it is what gives life. Darkness on the other hand represents uncertainty. There is no comfort. What lurks is evil. We live needing light to overcome darkness.

So it's important that God rightly orders the light in the tabernacle, and all the more poignant that Jesus is called the light of the world.

The lampstand shines the divine light upon the 12 loaves of bread This blessed reality is fully realized in the church's relationship to Christ...

John 8:12 "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." (ESV)

Jesus Christ is himself the one in whom the light of God's blessing shines upon all. He embodies in himself the visual depiction of God's favor resting upon his people. It was the plan and point from the beginning, it is the reality Numbers 8 points to, and it is the truth we anchor our lives upon. That's the point that John makes in the opening words of his Gospel:

John 1:1–5 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4] In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (ESV)

Made light for the world through his suffering. By becoming sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Jesus the God-man living in perfect obedience as the truer Israel. Presenting himself as an atoning sacrifice once and for all.

Where Moses and Levites fulfilled the temporary role of speaking for God and carrying out worship, Jesus exists as a better mediator for us as our Creator... as the worship leader of the church who, out of the plunder of his victorious exodus from the grave, provides all the gifts for holy life and ministry.

Welcoming in all who respond to his light. And now the light that guides, illuminates and directs his people.

A torch that has changed everything of human history. Nothing is the same because this light has shown. All of humanity's sense of morality, of justice, of what is true and good comes from him.

Salvation, freedom from sin, purpose in his kingdom, come from him.

Heading toward an eternity when he is the only light!

Revelation 21:22–25 “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. [23] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. [24] By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, [25] and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.” (ESV)

Darkness forever cast out.

Even so, in the meantime, not all choose the light.

John 3:16–21 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. [18] Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. [19] And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. [20] For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. [21] But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” (ESV)

God's blessing is not automatic: it has not only to be given, it also has to be received.

So it is light to be stewarded, shown on his people that others may come.

This is where the church finds its purpose, and elders their service.

Leading from the Light:

Jesus is the center and direction of the church. And he has equipped the church to shine his light.

Ephesians 4:7–16 “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. [8] Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men.”

[9] (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? [10] He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) [11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (ESV)

Like Levites ministering under the light of God’s presence, leaders in the church make the light known and live to shine it in the lives of those that they shepherd.

Elders live as gardeners making sure the souls of the saints has clear access to the light they need to grow and flourish.

Alexander Strauch in his book *Biblical Eldership*: “Elders lead the church [1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1–2], teach and preach the Word [1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9], protect the church from false teachers [Acts 20:17,

28–31], exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine [1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:13–17; Titus 1:9], visit the sick and pray [James 5:14; Acts 6:4], and judge doctrinal issues [Acts 15:6]. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church”
Guarding and exposing the light.

Numbers 8 is not an elder-text per se, but a ministry text, so we take the opportunity to implore these men to lead from the light.

To be settled on whose they are. Like Levites set apart for God, elders set apart for ministry because of what Jesus has done and called us to as undershepherds in the church.

Tethered to the light. Keeping others tethered to Jesus. Not running after fads but keeping the church anchored in the word, protected, cared for, and encouraged.

There are opportunities for business decisions, intervening in rough situations, executing the mundane ministry of the church. Always pointing back to the center, the direction of the church - to Jesus.

This is not only for elders, but all who lead and serve. In Children’s Ministry we shine the light, in disability ministry, we give equal access to the light. In our music ministry, we declare the brightness of the light. In hospitality, we shine the light of the welcome of the church.

All of us working/serving, inviting others into the light.

Youth Group... *Charge of the Light Brigade* by DeGarmo and Key

“Sat down to rest last night, slipped into a dream,
Shadows fell across the world; the darkness was extreme,
We all sat there mindlessly, staring at the storm,
Just when all seemed lost and hopeless, there came a mighty roar.

It was the charge of the light brigade,
The charge of the light brigade,
With a spiritual serenade came the charge of the light brigade.

The poor and afflicted all had enough to eat,
The message of the age-old gospel echoed in the street,
I saw the angels dancing on the wind,
The Son of God was shining brightly,
Death came to an end.”

The church charging onward, shining the light of Christ.

1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (ESV)

Come into the Light:

The image of Numbers 8, the illuminating of the tabernacle, draws us toward the light.

To believe in Christ, to pursue his illumination, his purpose.

It is God’s transforming grace alone that enables you to delight in the light by dealing with the sin that makes you want to hide.”

So come with repentance. Owning your sin and need for forgiveness. Be washed by the light, the covering of Christ’s blood for your forgiveness and life.

Hear his claim over you. That he has a plan and purpose for you, that you are his brother or sister and he is not ashamed of you. Know you were made to reflect him.

That is why in addition to saying, “I am the light of the world,” Jesus also said, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)

Live in the light. Shine bright like him, as the Spirit changes you, applying Christ’s justifying, purifying work for you.

“Purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord” (Is 52:11) is an injunction that is still binding on believers. We need to have both the water and the blood applied to us to prepare us for our life of service as the consecrated

Levites of God. All who believe in Jesus, all the twice-born, all who are washed in his precious blood, all who are set apart by the Holy Spirit, are dedicated to his service even as the Levites were of old.” Spurgeon

“God calls all of us to give our best in service to him. In Jesus Christ he has made atonement at the cross for our community. He doesn’t call us to re-create that foundational act. Yet he calls us, like the Levites, to bring that atonement to bear on our society. This is one task that we cannot delegate to others. Pastors and elders have their place in the church, but their calling is to equip the saints for the works of ministry, not to do those works of ministry for them (Ephesians 4:12). The calling to purify ourselves and to serve our community in Christ’s name and in the power of his Spirit rests on all of us. May it be said of us, just as it was of Israel in Numbers 8:20, “According to all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, the people of Israel did to them.”

**The light of Christ is the center and direction of the church.
Stewarded by elders, all of us living from this light.**

Shall we shine together?