

Articles and Sermons :: The Primary Function of the Church is to Give Light - Zac Poonen

The Primary Function of the Church is to Give Light - Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2012/12/14 18:42

In Revelation 1:11-20, it is written, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades.’ Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things. As for the mystery of the seven stars which 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.”

God gives us messages not only for ourselves but also for others. When God speaks to us, it is a good habit to write down what we hear, as John was commanded to do here (v.11). He might otherwise have forgotten what God had spoken to him.

The message in this case was for the seven churches in Asia. What was known as Asia then, is today a small part of Turkey. All these 7 churches were located within a radius of 75 miles of each other. But notice that even though they were so close to each other, they were still NOT collectively called “The CHURCH in Asia”. They were called “The CHURCHES in Asia”.

This is a small point but a very important one, nevertheless. “The church in Asia” would have meant that these churches had become a denomination with a central headquarters. But “the churches in Asia” indicate that each church was a local church directly under the headship of the Lord.

The church is a work of God, built by Christ. But denominations are the work of men. All the teachings and the writings of the apostles make it clear that the will of God is for each church to be directly under the headship of Christ, and not part of a denomination.

There was no bishop or superintendent in charge of these seven churches, to whom John could send these letters for distribution to the churches. Each letter had to be sent individually to the messenger of that church - for each church was an independent unit. The Lord had given apostles to the church. John himself was one of them. But the Lord had not appointed any bishops or superintendents.

There is no such thing, for example, as “The church in India”. There are churches in India, and these are built by the Lord in different localities, each one directly under His headship.

Satan’s final aim is to build his counterfeit world “church”, Babylon. And his first step towards that goal was to group churches into denominations, many centuries ago. He knew that the task of building Babylon would have been impossible otherwise. We should not be ignorant of Satan’s schemes.

The seven golden lampstands symbolise the seven churches (see v.20). Under the old covenant, the temple had ONE seven-branched lampstand. This was because all the tribes of Israel were branches of one “denomination” with its central headquarters and leaders at Jerusalem.

But it is different under the new covenant. There are seven different lampstands, each completely separate from the other. The reason, as we saw above, was because each church was independently under the headship of Christ, although in fellowship with the other churches, through the Head.

The church being called a lampstand indicates that, in God’s eyes, its primary function is to give light. The lampstands being golden indicate the Divine origin of a true church. It is built by the Lord and not by men.

A lampstand is not meant to be a mere decoration. Neither is a church! The light that every church should hold forth is God's Word, which alone is a light for our path in this dark world (Psa.119:105). Instead of holding forth that light, when so-called "churches" begin to major on running schools and hospitals and on doing social work, we can be sure that they have strayed from God's primary purpose.

When John turned around to see who was speaking, he saw Jesus (v.12,13). But he saw Him in the midst of the churches. It is through the local church that the Lord seeks to reveal Himself and to speak to others.

The first dwelling-place of God mentioned in the Bible is the burning bush that Moses saw in the wilderness (Deut.33:16). Like John at Patmos, Moses also turned aside at that time to see that marvellous sight. And that's when God spoke to him (Exod.3:3).

Today the church is God's dwelling place. God desires every church to be aflame with His Spirit like that burning bush was. When people look at a local church, they should be able to see the life of Christ revealed through the members of that church. Then God can speak to people through the church.

Re: The Primary Function of the Church is to Give Light - Zac Poonen - posted by Sree (), on: 2012/12/15 11:51

Quote:
-----When people look at a local church, they should be able to see the life of Christ revealed through the members of that church. Then God can speak to people through the church.

amen. this should be the focus of every church. also this article clearly explains us why the local groups encouraged by mega churches are not equivalent of a home fellowship because you still have the mega church as the parent and these groups as children, which is unbiblical.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/12/15 13:35

Quote:
-----see the life of Christ

It is my conclusion today that the exigency of our modern competitive market mentality prevents even most professing Christians from being able to settle down and discover what the Life of Christ actually is.

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Jn 1:4

As a local church struggles with their own spiritual hollowness before a watching world, they feel more urgency to produce something, anything, that outwardly looks like "life". Usually this substitution is more activity.

So our vision to be a relevant or influential to the world, becomes the very focus that prevents us from being first honest about our own darkness.

"And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." Jn 1:5

"Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light." Lk11:33-36

There are a lot of images that can pass through the eye that are not "light". We are only able to give light as we are looking at The light. How can such sincere energetic people get so off track? I believe it must be what we focus on...even me

ditate on inwardly.

How many churches, and Christians actually spend time looking at Christ?

"Look to me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Is 45:22

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith," Hb 22:2

I think if we could picture the various "Christian" things we focus on into a pie chart, the part of time focused on Christ would be very slight indeed. Perhaps other parts of the pie, such as religious activism, public policy, organizational politics and accomplishments, and fixing societal ills, would be much larger. Yet, the time spent on comprehending the life and character of Christ...that sliver of attention would be very slight indeed.

Quote:
----- Instead of holding forth that light, when so-called "churches" begin to major on running schools and hospitals and on doing social work, we can be sure that they have strayed from God's primary purpose.

When John turned around to see who was speaking, he saw Jesus (v.12,13). But he saw Him in the midst of the churches. It is through the local church that the Lord seeks to reveal Himself and to speak to others.

So, Christ is in the midst of our churches, even among us in this forum, but clearly does not make the promotional noise of our own activities and agendas. Judging from my own attention deficit experience, fixing our eyes on Christ, even within a group of quiet people, requires us to focus our eyes through a kind of intentionally small pinhole... something like the eye of a needle.

And we can expect little understanding or support from people in our market driven society. Even many Christians, clamouring with competing advertisements for their sacred products and agendas, find it hard to support such a limited focus as Christ alone.

Blessings,

MC