

COMMENTARY: The people of ancient Israel claimed wisdom because they had “the word of the LORD” just as many do today. However, Jeremiah tells them that they have twisted the word by writing lies in interpretation of the word of the LORD, to such a degree that they have, in fact, rejected the word of the LORD. Jeremiah wonders, “How wise is that?”

- (Jeremiah 8:8-9 NLT) **How can you say, “We are wise because we have the word of the LORD,” when your teachers have twisted it by writing lies?** These wise teachers will fall into the trap of their own foolishness, **for they have rejected the word of the LORD.** Are they so wise after all?”

COMMENTARY: Jeremiah continues by pronouncing judgment on their greed. Their prophets and priests are frauds, offering superficial answers instead of addressing the true needs of the people, giving assurances of peace when there is no peace.

- (Jeremiah 8:10-11 NLT) I will give their wives to others and their farms to strangers. From the least to the greatest, their lives are ruled by greed. Yes, even my prophets and priests are like that. **They are all frauds.** They offer **superficial treatments** for my people's mortal wound. They give **assurances of peace when there is no peace.**

COMMENTARY: These assurances will yield devastating consequences when they stand in judgment before the same LORD whose words they have twisted into lies. But possibly the greater irony is that the people love it.

- (Jeremiah 5:30–31 NIV84) **A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land:** **The prophets prophesy lies,** the priests rule by their own authority, **and my people love it this way.** But what will you do in the end?
- (John 3:19 ESV) 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.

The Purpose & Privilege of a Lampstand of Jesus Christ ...

The lampstand is not the lamp or the light, but the light holder. The seven churches were to be light holders, lampstands where God would place his light, his fire, his glory. God would set his glorious light on the lampstand to illuminate the world around, to bring clarity, to pierce the darkness.

That is what light does. It clarifies, pierces the darkness, pushes away the shadows, allows us to see more clearly, removes ambiguity and gives us certainty about the truth of God and his word.

Let me give an example from the same author, the same John of the Revelation writes in 1 John:

- (1 John 5:13 ESV) I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

He wrote those things “that you may know.” Clarity. The word of God is perspicuous, referring to clearness of style or exposition, freedom from obscurity; something clearly expressed or presented; lucid, acute perception.

If the glory of God is absent, then the light of God is absent. So then if our purpose as a church is to be a lampstand from which God sheds his light onto the world, and if the purpose of the light is to clarify who he is and his creation of this world and the rebellion of humankind and the need for the forgiveness of sins and his eternal plan of salvation only through Jesus Christ and his divine purpose and everything else from Genesis to Revelation, then I hope that we can see that whether or not the pastors and teachers of a church are teaching or preaching from the Bible, that if they are not pursuing the glory of God, that if they are not clarifying the truth of God as to who he is and his eternal plan and purpose for the ages, then the light of God is not on their lampstand. He has removed himself from them, and they are merely casting their own light.

Make no mistake. The spiritual dynamic, false or otherwise, in a church of thousands and ten thousands is powerful and soul stirring. The combined voices of thousands in worship and praise and testimony, the camaraderie of the human soul, the good intentions of good, moral people. Top it off with a polished, eloquent preacher sharing from the Bible. A very powerful witness. God must be here. But, no, this may be a brightly shining light in the natural world, in the realm of mere men, but this is not the light of the glory of God.