

# Shining as Lights for Christ

By Doug Hamilton

With the holiday season upon us, there are many traditional symbols on display in our culture. Christmas trees, wreaths, Yule logs, mistletoe, angels, nativity arrangements, reindeer, snowmen and snowflakes just to name a few. These are part of the heritage of not only Americans, but also many other countries throughout the world. Every culture since the beginning of time has their special times and with its special emblems. It is part of being human to have meaningful events and meaningful symbols in our lives.

Many of the holidays celebrated by Christians were not originally started by people of the faith, but taken over from pagans and reinvented to glorify God. As odd as it is, there is nothing wrong with that as long as it is not being imposed and substituted for the covenant of Christianity. Paul writes concerning this in *Romans 15:5* "*One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.*" It is with that attitude that those in the church are not obliged as a group to have or have not a holiday. As long as we are not imposing it upon another brother and not glorifying evil, then it is okay for us to celebrate these "holydays".

That brings us back to the symbols of the winter holidays, particularly the menorah. It is the lamp stand that symbolizes the holy Hanukkah of modern day Jews. This holiday symbol has quite a history attached to it. It is that history which is the basis for this morning's sermon, "Shining as Lights of Christ".

## The History of the Menorah

The Menorah was first revealed to us in the construction of the tabernacle.

- Exodus 25:31–32 "Then you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand *and* its base and its shaft are to be made of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be *of one piece* with it. <sup>32</sup> "Six branches shall go out from its sides; three branches of the lampstand from its one side and three branches of the lampstand from its other side.

The Lampstand was to be the light source of the people of God.

- Exodus 26:35 "You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand opposite the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.

The original lampstand which was in the tabernacle had only seven lights upon it, being symbolic of the light of God among His people. It was during the Inter-Testament period (the era between the Old and New Testament), that the Jews held off the Seleucid monarchy that defiled the altar and caused a Jewish revolt. In the end, the Jews found only enough ritually pure olive oil to light the lamp stand of the tabernacle for one day. Miraculously the supply of oil lasted for eight days until more could be obtained. This was a glorious day for Israel.

In celebration of this miracle, the Jews celebrate Hanukkah, The menorah that symbolizes this has eight branches for eight candles, one for each of the eight days that the oil burned. In the middle of them is a taller holder called the *shamash*, which is to be used to light the other eight. For each day of the Hanukkah celebration a candle was lit from left to right until all on the stand were complete. It was in recognition of one of the darkest times in Israel's history



## Shining as Lights for Christ

By Doug Hamilton

that the light of God continued to shine forth. Each day that the world appeared darker to the Jew of this time, the light of God shined forth brighter and brighter. That is the spirit of Hanukkah.

### Hanukkah for the Christian

- The apostle John writes in *1 John 1:5–7 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.*
  - He is all pure, lacking any sin at all.
- Jesus said in John 8:12 “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”
  - If you have seen the Son then you have seen the Father (John 14:9), for He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of nature (Heb 1:3).
- Jesus knew no sin, yet became sin on our behalf (2 Cor 5:21). It is for this reason we are to “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father”.

Let this be a reminder to the Christian that the world is growing darker and darker by the day, becoming more and more corrupt before the eyes of our God. It is time that we shine forth for Jesus. For the next eight days and in the spirit of Hanukkah, SHINE FORTH for the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ! The problem is that we know that command in word only and not deed. Over the next eight days seek to shine forth in the following areas.

### Eight Days of Enlightenment

#### Day One –Today: Shine the light of an Eager Learner.

Ephesians 5:7–10 Therefore do not be partakers with them;<sup>8</sup> for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light<sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth),<sup>10</sup> trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

- Our walk as the children of God is emphasized in a continual learning process through God’s word.
- The Bible is not meant to be mastered, but to master the life that we live for Jesus.
- Today let people know that you are a student of the word of God.
- Let them see that worn Bible in your hand. It is not hard to do on a Sunday. Take it in the store with you; read it on the treadmill at the gym; have it on your dash as you drive today.
  - Go out and tell the world what you learned in your personal study!
  - Tell the world what you learned in your small groups!
  - Tell the world what you learned in the Bible classes this morning!
  - Tell the world what you are learning in the sermon!
  - Tell them that the word of God is active in your life and that you are seeking to be pleasing to God!
- Let them see that you love the word and that it draws you closer to your Father in heaven. Shine the light of and Eager Learner that wants to know more about God to love Him more.

#### Day Two –Monday: Shine the light of Pure Living.

Romans 13:12–14 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.<sup>13</sup> Let us behave properly as in the day, not in

## Shining as Lights for Christ

By Doug Hamilton

carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.<sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.

- Tomorrow make it a point to make the very best decisions to not demonstrate impurity in your life.
  - No matter how strong the world is calling us into darkness, fight it!
  - No matter how much temptation you have, resist the devil and watch him flee!
  - No matter what evil comes before you at your work, during your lunch, on the way home, in your home or anywhere else, live the most pure life this day.
- Shine the light of Pure Living unto God and let the world know that He is light and that we are the children of light.

### Day Three –Tuesday: Shine the light of Good Attitudes.

Philippians 2:14–16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;<sup>15</sup> so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,<sup>16</sup> holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

- Tuesday is the day that we are going shine forth as followers of Jesus by watching what we say. When that tendency arises to be negative with grumbling or disputing, bite the tongue.
  - Talk about how wonderful of a life we have in Christ!
  - Share with others in and out of the church how blessed you feel to be a child of God.
  - Be positive in everything even if the conversations around you are filled with malice, anger and gossip.
  - If someone yells at you, bless them back.
  - If they talk bad about you, talk good about them.
  - If they say they hate you, let them know that God loves them back.
- Have the greatest attitude that you can have, more than any other day in recent history. Shine forth with the light of a Good Attitude on this day.

### Day Four –Wednesday: Shine the light of Brotherly Love

1 John 2:9–11 The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now.<sup>10</sup> The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.<sup>11</sup> But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

- Since it is Wednesday and you have been shining all week long thus far, what better place to be than with your fellow saints in the mid-week services?
  - Tell them how much you appreciate them being a part of your church family.
  - Make them a card saying that they are in your prayers. Make a plan with them today to have a meal with them following the Sunday worship.
  - Tell your friends at work that you are meeting with your church family for the mid-week because once a week on Sunday isn't enough. Let the world know that you have the greatest family that could ever be imagined.
- Shine the light of Brotherly Love for all to see!

## Shining as Lights for Christ

By Doug Hamilton

### Day Five -Thursday: Shine the light of Good Works.

Matthew 5:14–16 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup> nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- Jesus said to let your light shine for all to see, not to hide it under a bushel. It is with our good works that the context is calling for. Good works are exactly that, GOOD WORKS that we do for others. Today is the day that we will reach out to others with our good works so that the world can have an opportunity to glorify God.
  - Open the door for the people that are arriving at the same time, showing courtesy and care for their being.
  - If your budget permits, buy the meal for the person in front of you at the fast food restaurant. Put some gas in the car of the poor person at the gas station.
  - This is the day to visit someone in the nursing home or the hospital.
  - If you know that someone is hurting, go to them and assist. Let them know you are doing it because of what Jesus did for you.
  - Do something in the name of Jesus for someone else made in the likeness and image of God.
- This is the day that you shine the light of Good Works for the cause of Christ!

### Day Six –Friday: Shine the light of an Exalted Status.

1 Peter 2:9–10 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

- Whether you think or not, if you are a child of God, then exalted by the blood of Christ you are. We are a special people unto God.
  - Today is the day that we remind each other of our status with God. We are chosen, royalty, holy and possessed by God in every way! We are in God’s china hutch!
  - Today is the day that we call up other saved souls on the phone to reinforce them in their faith and how special they really are in Christ!
  - This is the day that we remind the world of where we were, what God did and how special God’s love is for them that He wants them in the family.
- This is the day that we shine forth the light of an Exalted Status that God has in our life.

### Day Seven –Saturday: -Shine the light of the Gospel of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:3–6 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

## Shining as Lights for Christ

By Doug Hamilton

- Paul was referring to the obligation he had to share the gospel with others, even if it led to trials. Like light shined out of darkness during the first day of creation, the gospel shined on our darkened hearts and led us to the hope in Christ.
  - Today is the day that you are going to try and share the gospel of Christ with another that yet has not the hope.
  - In your conversations with others, try to somehow and in some way work the story of Jesus, His church and His people into the chat.
  - If they talk about their problems at home, let them know about what Jesus can and will do for the family.
  - If they talk about their money problems, let them know about the riches of heaven.
  - If they are talking about their marriage problems, let them know what Jesus can do for them to have a happy marriage.
- Do all things for the sake of the gospel on this day and shine forth the light of the Gospel of Christ!

### Day Eight –Sunday (Christmas) :Shine the light of Great Anticipation.

1 Thessalonians 5:4–6 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; <sup>5</sup> for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; <sup>6</sup> so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

- We are to patiently wait for the return of the Lord, for He is not slack concerning His promise. He said He was going to prepare a place for us and He did! He is not going to forget that He wants to spend eternity with us.
  - Today is the day that we look at the clouds differently than yesterday, knowing that Jesus is coming back for that great day of resurrection. The saints will meet in the air and be forever with the Lord!
  - Walk across the aisle in the auditorium and visit about how great it is going to be on that resurrection day when all things will be made new. Fill your conversation with the joy in being at the greatest family reunion that ever existed.
  - Go home to your holiday gathering with your holiday meals and your holiday gifts. Talk about the Great Holy Day of resurrection and the Great Meal in heaven and the Gift of Eternal Life!
  - This is the day that we focus on the future that we have in Christ, reminding one another of all the joy, peace and happiness we have in our future. Just pick up that phone one time and call a member of the church and let them know that you look forward to going to heaven with them.
  - This is the day that we respond to the world with their trials that we are not going to be affected, infected or defected anymore, for we have a sure event to occur in the future.
  - This is the day that we sing the hymns like “When we all get to heaven” and the like!
- This is the day that we make the effort to shine forth the light of Great Anticipation!

There you have it, a new Hanukkah for the Christian. Enjoy your week as you light the spiritual candles of your Christian-themed Menorah.