



At Christmas, we celebrate the greatest gift...  
the arrival of God on earth

(even if the date of His birth was probably NOT December 25)

The angel said to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Luke 2:10-11



# Who is this Savior, God who took on human flesh?

Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

John 8:12

Jesus said, “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”

John 12:46



# “Light” is an image of God and His Word

- The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread? Psalm 27:1
- Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105
- Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul observes them. The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:129-130
- 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. 1 John 1:5
- 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;  
1 Peter 2:9

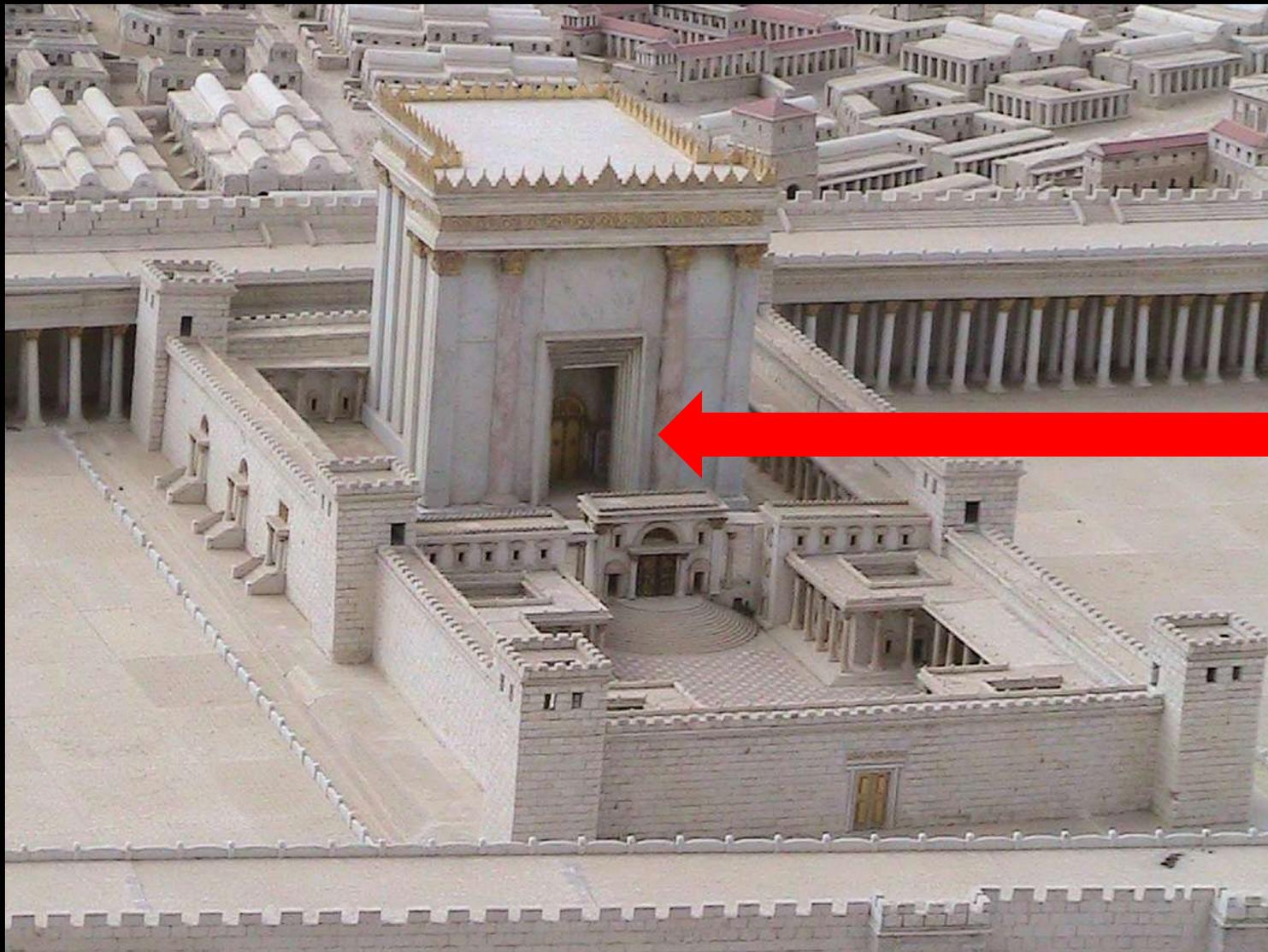


**Light has always been a symbol of God**



**Model of Jewish Temple in Days of Jesus**



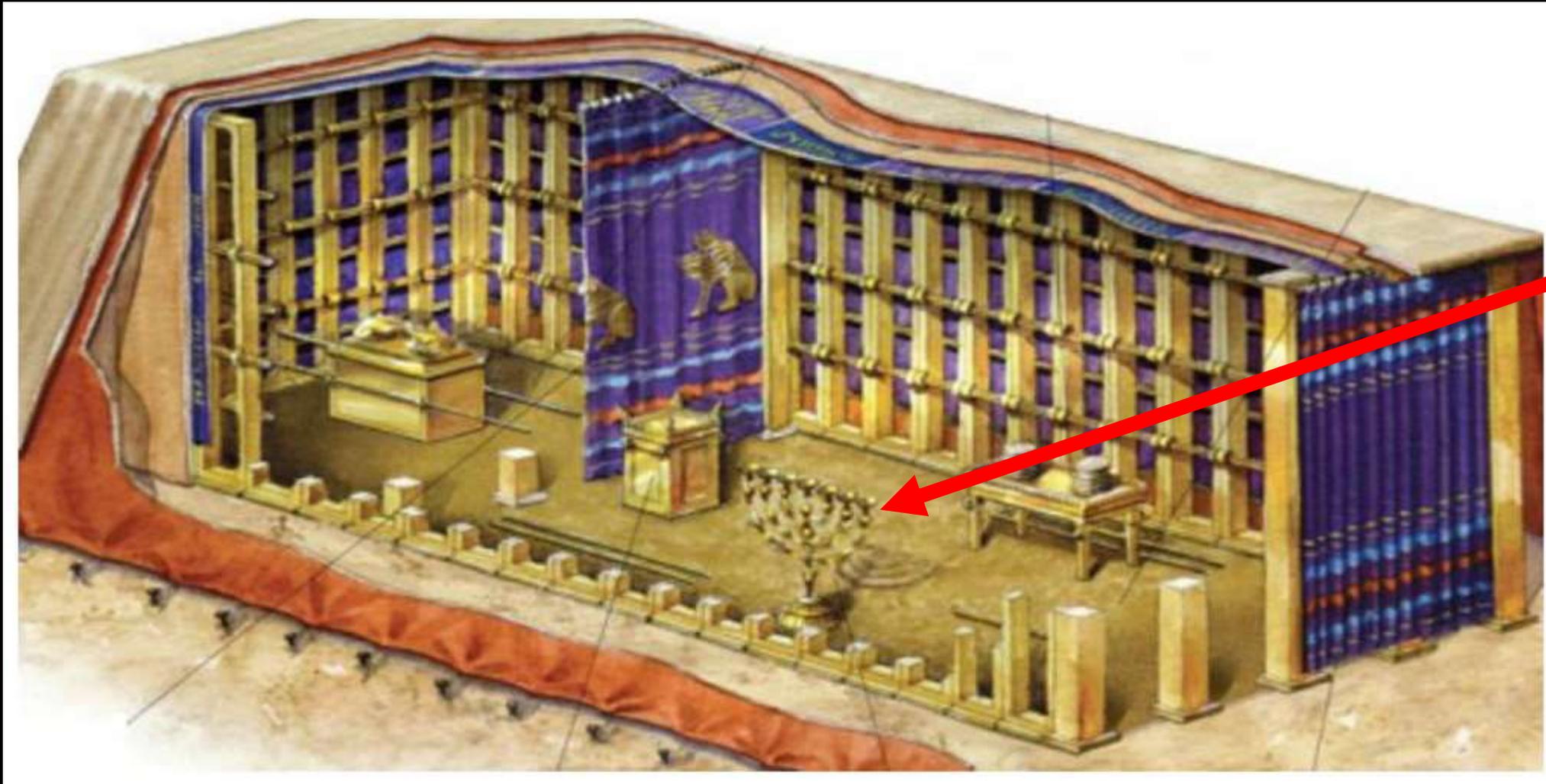


Inside the Temple were two sections, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies

Model of Jewish Temple in Days of Jesus

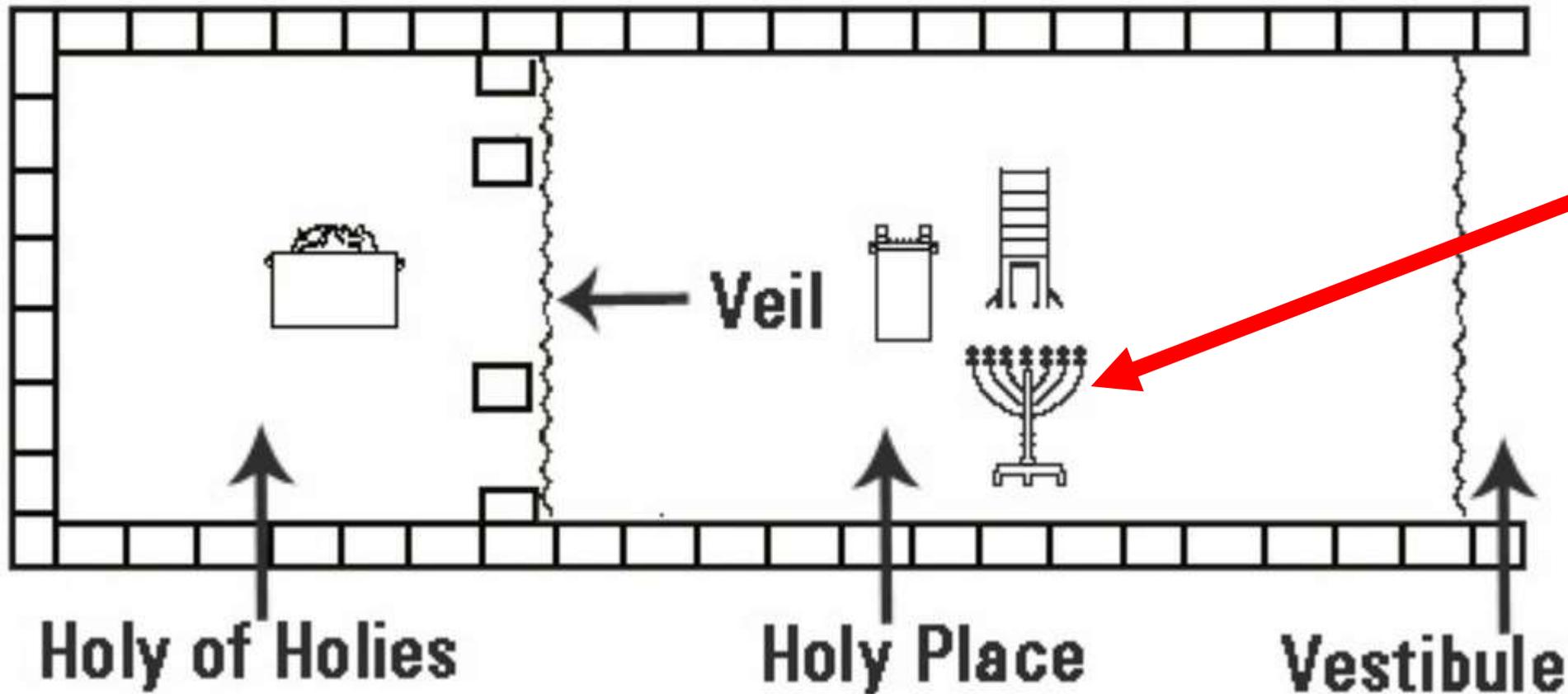


# Inside the Holy Place



# Inside the Holy Place

## Diagram of the Temple



מְנוֹרָה  
Menorah



The menorah, also called the “golden lampstand,” stood at the left side of the Holy Place. It was hammered out of one piece of pure gold. The lampstand had a central branch from which three branches extended from each side, forming a total of seven branches. Seven lamps holding olive oil and wicks stood on top of the branches. Each branch looked like that of an almond tree, containing buds, blossoms and flowers.

The priests were instructed to keep the lamps burning continuously. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. Outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the Lord from evening till morning, continually.’” (Leviticus 24:1-3)

The lampstand was the only source of light in the Holy Place. The light shone upon the table of showbread and the altar of incense, enabling the priests to fellowship with God and intercede on behalf of God’s people. Just as the lampstand was placed in God’s dwelling place so that the priests could approach God, Jesus, the “true light that gives light to every man” (John 1:9) came into the world so that man could see God and not live in spiritual darkness anymore.

Two other significant symbols that can be seen from include the fact that it was made of *pure gold* (not gold plated) and had *seven* branches. Pure gold is a representation of the deity and perfection of Jesus Christ, and seven is the number of completeness in the Bible.

[http://the-tabernacle-place.com/articles/what\\_is\\_the\\_tabernacle/tabernacle\\_menorah](http://the-tabernacle-place.com/articles/what_is_the_tabernacle/tabernacle_menorah)



# Menorah vs. Hanukiah

## Menorah

The Menorah in the Bible is the seven-branched candelabrum made of gold and used in the portable sanctuary (tabernacle) set up by Moses in the wilderness and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. Fresh olive oil of the purest quality was burned daily to light its lamps. The menorah has been a symbol of Judaism since ancient times and is the emblem on the coat of arms of the modern state of Israel.

## Hanukkah Menorah (Hanukiah)

The Hanukkah menorah is a nine-branched candelabrum lit during the eight-day holiday of Hanukkah, as opposed to the seven-branched menorah used in the ancient Temple or as a symbol. The ninth holder, called the *shamash* ("helper" or "servant" in Hebrew), is for a candle used to light all other candles.



# Hanukiah at Western Wall (Kotel) last week



# What is Hanukkah?

- Hanukkah (which in Hebrew means 'to dedicate') is also referred to as the Festival of Lights or the Feast of Dedication. It is a holiday, lasting eight days, that celebrates the rededication of Jerusalem's temple in 164 BC after it was defiled by a pagan ruler.
- Although this Jewish festival is not mentioned in the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible), it is referenced in the Talmud: "On the 25th of Kislev are the days of Hanukkah, which are eight... these were appointed a Festival with Hallel [prayers of praise] and thanksgiving" (Shabbat 21b, Babylonian Talmud).
- In 175 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes IV becomes ruler of the Seleucid Empire. His goal is to unite the Greek-related elements of his empire and to force those who do not live based on the Greek culture (e.g. Judea) to do so.
- He began to oppress the Jews severely, placing a Hellenistic priest in the Temple, massacring Jews, prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion, and desecrating the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. In 167 BC, Antiochus commands a pagan altar be placed inside the Temple. Unclean animals like pigs are sacrificed on the altar.
- One of the groups which opposed Antiochus was led by Mattathias the Hasmonean and his son Judah Maccabee ("The Hammer"). Mattathias, Israel's High Priest, begins a revolt that would ultimately lead to the celebration of Hanukkah. Mattathias dies soon after his revolt starts. His son Judas continues the rebellion and leads the Jews to victory over the Seleucids.



# What is Hanukkah?

- This small band of pious Jews led guerrilla warfare against the Syrian army. Antiochus sent thousands of well-armed troops to crush the rebellion, but the Maccabees succeeded in driving the foreigners from their land. According to historical accounts, Jewish fighters entered Jerusalem in December 164 BC. The Holy Temple, the Jewish religious center, was in shambles, defiled and desecrated by foreign soldiers.
- The Maccabees cleansed the Temple and re-dedicated it on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev. When it came time to re-light the Menorah (the multi-branched lampstand), they searched the entire Temple, but only one small jar of oil bearing the pure seal of the High Priest could be found.
- Miraculously, the small jar of oil burned for eight days, until a new supply of oil could be brought. From then on, Jews everywhere have observed a holiday for eight days in honor of this historic victory and the miracle of the oil. The observance of Hanukkah features the lighting of a special Hanukkah menorah with eight branches (plus a helper candle), adding one new candle each night.
- Although only a day's worth of oil was found for the Temple's menorah, it somehow burns for a total of eight days. This miracle is the yearly commemoration of Hanukkah.



# Did you know that Jesus celebrated Hanukkah?

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.” John 10:22-25

In the winter, at the time of Hanukkah, when we are focused on the light, it is the perfect time to ponder if Jesus of Nazareth really is the Messiah.



At that first Christmas, sinful mankind received the amazing gift of the Light of God when Jesus came to earth.

As followers of Jesus, we have received the Christmas gift of Light and we are called to pass along the gift.

We are called to use the talents we have been given to bless others and introduce them to the Light.

God is honored when we maximize the use of our gifts to grow the Light and greatly dishonored when we don't.



# Matthew 25



Jesus told a story...

“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.” Matthew 25:14-15

- The talents (Greek **τάλαντον** *talanton*) were currency made of silver. A talent weighed 58-80 pounds. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- Some interpreters estimate that a talent was worth about fifteen years' wages for a common laborer. (Holman New Testament Commentary)
- The talents in this story represents gifts given to us by God, including skills and money and knowledge, but especially His **light**.



Jesus told a story...

“Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more.” Matthew 25:16-17

When we receive a gift from the Lord, we also receive an assignment... using and growing that gift.

This growth requires obedience, diligence and effort.



Jesus told a story...

“But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.”

Matthew 25:18

What holds us back from using our gift to spread God’s light?

Fear, Doubt, Shame, Guilt, Selfishness, Apathy



Jesus told a story...

“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’” Matthew 25:19-23

**Blessing Follows Obedience**



Jesus told a story...

“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’ For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25:24-30



# Worship is a Gift

Using, growing, expanding our gifts... those are the actions that come out of a God-focused (worshipping) heart.

Ignoring, wasting, hiding our gifts... those are the actions that come out of a self-focused heart.

As believers, the very reason we are on this planet is to be light to a world seeped in darkness. If we're not serving as God's light to a dark world, then we're like MENORAHs without any oil.



# Worship is a Gift

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 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. 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.” Matthew 5:14-16



# Don't Miss The Gift

Have you received the Christmas gift of God's light?

- Are you working to build and grow the light?
- Have you chosen to bury your light?

Have you surrendered your heart to Jesus as Savior?

- If not, are you ready today to follow Jesus?



At First Melissa, our calling is to “reach intentionally.” We are called to be sensitive to the world around us and to look for opportunities to share the story of the Jesus (the Light of God) when people are hurting and searching.

This Christmas, God is calling each of us to know the light, worship the light, demonstrate the light, and share the light.

Do you have God’s light?



Apostle (Rabbi) Paul wrote, “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light”

Ephesians 5:8

