

THE MINISTRY OF PAUL IN EPHESUS

David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 26 July 2026

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

We were looking at the call and ordination of Jeremiah and considering the way the Lord stretched out His hand and then touched Jeremiah's mouth. He then put His words into the mouth of Jeremiah and ordained him to be a prophet to the nations. One of the points that I was making is that the Lord stretches His hand (His right hand) out to us through the word that is proclaimed to us. It is the word of God being proclaimed from Christ through the messengers in His right hand and by the Holy Spirit. That is how He stretches out His right hand to us.

In our last Bible school, we were looking at the admonition of Christ to the presbytery in Ephesus. The Lord was saying to them, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love.' We know that first love is the fellowship of Yahweh; but then He was saying to them, 'Remember from where you have fallen.' That was a *word* that was being proclaimed to them. It is not possible to remember without a word being proclaimed to us. Then the Holy Spirit brings illumination and conviction in relation to that *word* so that we can then turn in response to that conviction and see. The Ephesian presbytery had fallen from two things, and this is an important distinction. They would have fallen from the heights of Zion which is the fellowship of first love; but they had also fallen from the right hand of Christ. They would have lost their connection to the apostolic administration of Christ and particularly their connection to the ministry of the apostle Paul. We know this happened before Paul had passed away, because he wrote to Timothy and said, 'All Asia has turned away from me.' They had graduated beyond the need for that connection, and when they lost that connection to the apostolic administration of Christ, they fell from the right hand of Christ.

The first point of recovery to the heights of Zion.... Picture Jesus Christ: He is seated at

the right hand of God. He is in the heights. He is seated on the top of Mount Zion. How are we recovered to the heights? In the first case, Jesus Christ Himself stretches out His right hand. It is a long arm. It reaches right from the heights all the way to the depths; and 'the Lord's arm is not shortened, that it cannot save'. It can reach right down. He is reaching right down to lay hold of us, and He is doing that through the proclamation of His word by the messengers of Christ. I do reflect often on our COVID season when the beginning of restoration for us was the proclamation of the word to every household, and to every man, woman and child in every house. It is like Christ Himself was reaching out His hand and knocking on the door of every house. That is the beginning. We are recovered firstly to the right hand of Christ by receiving and responding to that word. That is absolutely essential before we can be recovered to the fellowship of first love, because without the word and the illumination and the conviction that comes in relation to the word, we would not even know that we have fallen from first love.

This is where I want to begin today - highlighting the importance of the right hand of Christ. We need to be recovered to the fellowship that belongs to the right hand first. This is the fellowship of the word. When the word is proclaimed to us, and the Scriptures are being proclaimed to us as a word of present truth, we do need to hear them proclaimed. The book of Revelation is the final book in the Bible. It is the sum of the Scriptures in that sense. The apostle John explains to us how we are blessed and how we interface with the Scriptures. He says, 'Blessed are those who *read* and those who *hear* the words of this prophecy.' It is not enough to read the Scriptures alone. We need to hear them proclaimed and they are proclaimed as a word of present truth. Then we need to be careful how we hear. We have been considering that. Are we just receiving the word with our mind or is our spirit being

illuminated and convicted by the Holy Spirit? Then, of course we have to respond to that conviction, and join a fellowship, and take heed to the things that are written. We are recovered to the fellowship of the right hand. This is the fellowship of the word.

When the word is proclaimed to us and the Holy Spirit brings illumination and conviction to us in relation to the word, it enables us to make a good confession. It enables a new conversation. It enables us to speak. Jesus said again to the Ephesian presbytery, 'Remember from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works'. [Revelation 2 verse 5]. The first of the first works is to speak. It is to join a fellowship. The word is enabling us to do that. We speak by the faith of the Son of God that we have received. This is the first point of offering. It is enabling the conversation. There is an application for this as an individual son of God; there is an application for us in our marriages; in our families; from house to house, and of course, also in the presbytery.

Individually, in response to the word, the Holy Spirit helps our weakness by joining us to the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we pray in the Spirit, it is our spirit that is praying. That is a wonderful point. It is not the Holy Spirit praying instead of you and you are disengaged, as a bystander or a spectator. The Holy Spirit is enabling your spirit to pray so that you are joined to a fellowship. You are speaking by the Holy Spirit. Remember the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of fellowship. The first thing He wants to do is join you to a fellowship. Once you are joined to the fellowship, you are receiving grace from that fellowship to then go and do the works of your sonship for that day. These are the works that Jesus Christ has already accomplished for you.

The same principle is true in a marriage. As the word is coming and we are receiving illumination and conviction by the Holy Spirit in relation to the word, it is enabling a new conversation between husband and wife. We are all rejoicing that we are finding a grace as the word is coming for a new

conversation that we were not able to have before. There is a new conversation then that is happening in our houses. This is the blessing of peace resting on a house, remembering that peace is fellowship.

We are finding a new conversation as a congregation - from house to house and the fellowship of the *agape* meal. This is 'public' and 'house to house'. The first works for a congregation look like devotion to the apostles' doctrine, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Again, that is the same principle in the presbytery. The first work for a presbyter is to present themselves for fellowship in the presbytery. This is what the faith of the Son of God looks like for all of us. It is, 'Here I am. I am presenting myself for fellowship.' The first work for a presbyter is to present themselves for fellowship in the presbytery so they can then be sent by the presbytery in relation to their ministry work. The fellowship always precedes the work. We were saying (in relation to Jeremiah) that the lips of a messenger need to be cleansed so that they can participate in the fellowship of the right hand of Christ. The outcome of having our lips cleansed is a good confession. That is where it begins. Then the Lord can put His words in their mouth and send them as a messenger from His right hand to proclaim His word and invite their hearers to join the same fellowship.

In relation to Jeremiah, he was ordained by God to be a prophet to the nations. The Lord said to him in Jeremiah 1 verse 10, 'See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.' Jeremiah was the forerunner to the apostle Paul, who was also sent to be the apostle to the Gentiles. We considered the comparison between Jeremiah and Paul. The mandate that Jeremiah received to build and to plant was really fulfilled in the first case by the ministry of the apostle Paul. He was the one who went to the Gentiles and planted lampstand churches.

That is what I want to look at today - the ministry of the apostle Paul particularly. We are going to look at how he established the lampstand church in Ephesus, and then from Ephesus, he established seven lampstand churches in Asia.

In relation to planting and growing lampstand churches among the Gentiles, Jesus Christ first reached out His right hand to lay hold of the apostle Paul. The beginning of a lampstand church is Jesus Christ Himself reaching out His right hand to lay hold of a messenger. This is what he did with Paul.

Paul had witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen. Stephen's fellowship in Christ's sufferings opened the door for the conversion of Paul. Paul is witnessing all this, and the people who were actually stoning Stephen were all laying their garments at the feet of Paul. Paul was consenting to everything that was happening. There would have been a fair bit of inner turmoil for Paul at this time. He is breathing threats and murders. He had gone to the priests in Jerusalem, and he received letters from them. He was taking those letters to Damascus so that he could deliver the letters to the rulers of the synagogue and take anyone who confessed to be a Christian back to Jerusalem in chains. He is on his way there, and we all know the account. A bright light shines from heaven. (We often add, 'He gets knocked off his donkey.' That is just poetic license.) He is on his way and a bright light shines. Paul later reflects this was far brighter than the sun. This is the light of the seven Spirits of God. It would have been a pretty bright light. He is interfacing with Jesus Christ in His incorruptible, immortal, spiritual, resurrection body as the One who possesses the seven Spirits of God. This bright light shines from heaven and it blinds Paul and he hears Jesus saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And Saul responds, 'Who are You, Lord?' He does not know the Lord yet, but he knows he is interfacing with the Lord. Jesus says to him, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.' [Acts 9:1-5].

Let us pause there for a moment, because that is a very big point. Right at the beginning of the conversion of the apostle Paul, Jesus is making the point to him that the way we interface with the members of Christ's body is the way we interface with Christ Himself. This is the major point that Jesus was making in relation to the final judgement and the separation of sheep and goats. He is saying, 'What you have done to the least of My brethren, you have done to Me.' The way you relate in the fellowship of the body of Christ is the way you relate to Christ Himself. That is a very big point. How does Jesus Christ reveal Himself or how does Jesus Christ speak to us? He speaks to us through His messengers. As those messengers proclaim the word of Christ and we are illuminated and convicted by the Holy Spirit in relation to that word, that is how we see the face of Christ, and then we know Christ in the fellowship of the corporate body of Christ. That is just a point along the way.

Saul said to Christ then, 'What do You want me to do?' The Lord said to him, 'Go into the city and you will be told what you must do.' Christ is immediately connecting Paul to a fellowship. There is a certain disciple in Damascus. [We do not know much about this man - just a 'certain disciple'.] Lo and behold, he is praying and the Lord begins to speak to him. He gives him very specific instructions. He says in Acts 9 verse 11, 'Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.' These are very specific instructions: 'Go to this street; I want you to go to that house, and you will find Saul there and he is praying.' As you can imagine, Ananias is a little bit concerned about doing that because he has heard all about Saul. He knows who Saul is. He knows why he has come to Damascus. He says that to the Lord and the Lord says, 'You do not need to worry about that.' Verses 12 to 16: '“In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight.” But the Lord said to him, “Ananias go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and

the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things He must suffer for My name's sake.” ’

Ananias goes and he does speak to him, and Saul does recover his sight, and he is baptised. Then he is filled with the Holy Spirit, and he is immersed into the name of the Holy Spirit. We refer to that whole package as his conversion. Jesus Christ then personally disciplined the apostle Paul. I am picking up on this statement. ‘I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.’ Jesus Christ personally disciplined the apostle Paul so that he could be sent as a disciple-messenger to the Gentiles - as a messenger in the right hand of Christ.

We could liken the ministry of the apostle Paul as a disciple-messenger to the first bud on the central branch of the lampstand. We will not look at our diagram today, but it begins with a messenger in the right hand of Christ. That messenger is being disciplined by Christ. That means that whenever you are seeing the calyx, you are looking at a disciple or discipleship under the right hand or in the right hand of Christ. Then the bud that emerges from the calyx is a messenger. The messenger is revealing the seven Spirits of God. You have Paul here as the first bud on the central branch of the lampstand - a messenger in the right hand of Christ. The Lord anointed him with the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. He revealed the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh as a light to the Gentiles wherever he travelled and proclaimed the gospel of God.

Let us go to Isaiah chapter 49 verses 5 to 6. The prophet Isaiah is speaking here prophetically on behalf of the servant of the Lord. ‘Now the Lord says, who formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring back Jacob to Him, so that Israel is gathered to Him (for I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength) [So that is talking about gathering the remnant of the 10 tribes of the nation of Israel that have been scattered among the nations and that is a glorious work in the eyes of the Lord] Indeed He says... [that is

glorious; but then He says, ‘That is not good enough. You have an even better work to do than that’.] ...Indeed, He says, ‘It is too small a thing that you should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will give you as a light to the Gentiles [to every nation], that you should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ’

This prophetic statement applied first to Jesus Christ. He calls Himself the light of the world. However, it is also applied to the ministry of the apostle Paul. We know that it is applicable to his ministry because, on his first missionary journey, as he travels through the region of Galatia, he quoted this passage, and he applied it directly to his own ministry. He is travelling with Barnabas, and they arrive at Pisidian Antioch. (This is all the region of Galatia on Paul's first missionary journey.) They went into the synagogue because he always started in the synagogue. After the readings, he was invited to speak. ‘Do you men have any word of exhortation for us?’ Paul springs to his feet, because he certainly did. He preaches a wonderful sermon when you read it [Acts 13]. In one sense, the climax is where he says [verse 32], ‘We declare to you glad tidings - that promise which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled this for us, their children, in that He raised up Jesus.’ He is really focusing on the resurrection of Christ.

It is an interesting dynamic at the end of his sermon. It would appear that the Jews who were there, do not respond. ‘Everybody, it is time to go home. All right, yeah, that is the time.’ They all disperse. The Gentiles that are there, they are not in as much of a hurry to get home (or something), and they are really enthusiastic about what they have heard. They beg Paul to come back the next week and preach again. Many of the Jews had heard, because it says that many of the Jews... (even though they do not appear to respond in the synagogue itself) ...many of them do [respond] and begin to follow Paul and by the next week, the whole city has gathered together to hear Paul preach. When

the Jews saw the multitudes... (obviously these are the Jews who are not responding to Paul's word) ... saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and began to oppose and contradict Paul.

In Acts 13 verse 46 we read, "Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first [Now that is to the Jew]; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life... [Pick up the terminology here: Paul evidently understood that he was ministering in the mode of the 72, and he was looking for worthy houses. He was looking for households who would receive his message so that the blessing of peace could rest on their house. He is picking up Jesus' instruction in terms of what you do if the message is not received] ... you judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles [Then he quotes from Isaiah, verse 47]. For so the Lord has commanded us, "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth." ' We know this applies to Paul. We were making the point that Jeremiah was the forerunner to the apostle Paul, but he is also the type of the ministry of a lampstand church, because it is the mandate of a lampstand church to reveal the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh to the world. This prophecy also applies to the ministry of lampstand churches during the entire church age, and most particularly to the ministry of the lampstand administration before the Father's throne in the time of the end. We have looked at all that.

I want to look at how Paul started the church in Ephesus. Let us go to Acts chapter 19 verse 1. I am highlighting the growth of a lampstand church here. Acts 19 verse 1 says, 'And it happened while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples...' This was on his third missionary journey now. It is reasonable to assume that these disciples were men who had received the word of

Apollos. They are disciples of Apollos. Paul has not been to Ephesus yet. Apollos has already been there. He preached there and he was an eloquent man. He was mighty in the Scriptures. I like to compare Apollos in terms of his initial ministry to a really good evangelical preacher who is proclaiming the lordship of Christ. But Apollos was not yet proclaiming the gospel of sonship. Priscilla and Aquila heard him preach and afterwards (they probably invited him for a meal or something), they explain to him the way of God more accurately. To Apollos' credit, he received that from them. He gets a major upgrade in his ministry. He moves beyond the Old Covenant mode of preaching faith *in* Jesus, and he begins to preach the faith *of* Jesus. 'We have received the faith *of* the Son of God. We are living by *His* faith.'

Paul finds these disciples. They are disciples of Apollos. When Apollos is pulled aside by Priscilla and Aquila, he does not stay in Ephesus; he goes off to Corinth. Paul then arrives. Acts 19 verse 2: 'And he said to them [so these are disciples of Apollos], "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." '

Paul is asking a specific question here. He is really asking about their understanding and appropriation of the gospel of sonship. He is not saying, 'Did you confess Jesus as Lord?' He is saying, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' The Scripture does not record the entire conversation, but we can assume that Paul took the time to explain the steps of salvation to them. I have a very specific reason why I am saying that. Paul took the time to explain the steps of salvation to them. He probably started right with the Godhead model. They would have never even heard of the Holy Spirit. I am sure he started right back there with the fellowship of Yahweh and the community of *Elohim* - the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and how They live together in a fellowship of offering. Then he is preaching the gospel of sonship to them. This would have included the significance of Christ sending the Holy Spirit into our spirit.

When Christ first comes into the heart of a believer, He then asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit into the heart of that believer. The Holy Spirit is then bringing conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement. The summary of that conviction in the heart of a believer is, 'Do you want to be a son of God?' That is the question and there is freedom to choose that.

When the believer responds, 'Yes', then Christ writes the name of the Father and the name of the heavenly Jerusalem upon the fleshly tablet of that person's heart. He does that by the Spirit of God. Then He sends the Holy Spirit into their spirit. The Holy Spirit seals what has been written by Christ, verifying that it is true. That is the Holy Spirit as the seal - sealing what Christ has written. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption, enabling then the believer to cry out, 'Abba! Father!' In response to that cry, 'Abba! Father!' the Father then sends the incorruptible seed of that person's sonship... (that contains the life of Christ, but also the unique and individual name of that son of God which was made substantial by Christ on His offering journey) ... He sends that incorruptible seed into their spirit, and the Holy Spirit enables that seed to germinate. You see a little plant; you see a newly born son of God; 'Behold new creation!' - something altogether new. This is what Paul is talking about when he is asking, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' He is talking about that package of being born as a son of God. He is really focusing on God abiding in us. I think he takes the time to explain all that to them.

The reason I am saying that is, if we go to the book of Ephesians, we remember he is writing to the same group. I do not know how long he was talking about all this with them, but when he is reflecting on it later as he writes to the Ephesians, he says in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13, 'In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.' He is reflecting

back to say, 'When I first arrived, I preached to you the gospel of your salvation, and you, having believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise... [They could confidently answer that question now. 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' This is not yet talking about immersion into the name of the Holy Spirit - just 'Did you receive the whole Person of the Holy Spirit when you believed?'], ...who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory.'

Paul's first question to the Ephesians regarding the Holy Spirit focused on the need for God to abide in us. His second question to the Ephesians focused on the need for us to abide in God.

In Acts 19 verse 3: 'Paul then said to them, "Into what then were you baptised? [He is shifting his focus now.]" So they said, "Into John's baptism."' They had been baptised in water as an outward sign of their repentance from sin in response to the gospel that had been proclaimed to them by Apollos. That is what I am saying. But Apollos in the early phase of his ministry is a good evangelical preacher, and he is preaching an evangelical baptism. Again, the Scripture does not record the entire conversation, but it does record that Paul proceeded to upgrade their understanding of baptism in verse 4. 'Then Paul said, "John indeed baptised with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who should come after him [that is on Christ Jesus]" ' Having been born as sons of God then, they were baptised as an expression of their faith to become disciples of Christ and join the fellowship of His offering and to be led by the Holy Spirit each and every day on that pathway that Christ had already pioneered for them.

Furthermore, a disciple of Jesus Christ is learning. A disciple is a learner - learning by receiving the word that is proclaimed from Christ through His messengers by the Holy Spirit in terms of what it means to abide in the name of the Father, the name of the Son,

and the name of the Holy Spirit. Paul is talking to them here about becoming a disciple of Christ who is learning what it means to abide in the fellowship of the kingdom of God - what it means to abide in the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 5 to 6: 'When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.' They are immersed into the name of the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit and they are praying in tongues and able to minister the gifts of the Holy Spirit here.

Verse 7: 'Now the men were about 12 in all.' This is a big revival, but there are only 12 of them. I think this is 12 families. This is where it began. 12 families in the city of Ephesus. We could liken this congregation to the first flower in the central branch of the lampstand. You can see we are growing from the base, which is the community of *Elohim*. There is a messenger in the right hand of Christ proclaiming the gospel of God. We have calyx, bud, and now Paul has found 12 families. We have a flower; a congregation of worthy houses; the first flower in the central branch. The fellowship of Yahweh is growing here, and he is teaching them about what it means to abide in that fellowship.

Paul then lived among this congregation in Ephesus. In this regard, Paul was no longer the messenger just coming to Ephesus - he was the messenger living in Ephesus. We could liken Paul to the bud. The bud is always the messenger. The bud jumps from down below the first flower to above the first flower. He is still Paul - same person; still a bud - but now it is above the flower because he is now not just coming to Ephesus. He has found 12 families and now he is living among them. He jumps up above the flower, and he is continuing to proclaim the gospel of God among them, but he is living with them now. This is the key point. Paul was no longer the messenger coming to Ephesus; he was a messenger living in Ephesus. We could liken

Paul's ministry in Ephesus to the bud above the first flower on the central branch of the lampstand.

Verse 8: 'And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.' You note the big upgrade here from Apollos to Paul. Apollos was reasoning from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ and that was absolutely essential and necessary to do that. But Paul's focus was not only that, but it was also proclaiming the kingdom of God. He is proclaiming the gospel of sonship, remembering that the kingdom of God is composed of sons of God. Paul proclaimed the gospel of sonship.

Paul's ministry had a polarising impact upon those who belonged to the synagogue. Verse 9: 'But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples [This is 'upgraded disciples' now. They are disciples of Christ, and they are being disciplined by Paul], reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.' It is likely that a believer named Tyrannus... (he may have been one of the 12 and probably was) ... it is likely that a believer named Tyrannus allowed Paul to use his school building. In the first case, the school building replaced the Jewish synagogue as the context for Paul's public ministry. Paul taught daily then in the school of Tyrannus in the same way that the apostles had taught daily in Solomon's Portico. He is proclaiming a word of present truth, and he is proclaiming it publicly. He just happens to be doing it now with a school building as the venue.

We know that Paul also taught from house to house because he reflects on that in terms of describing his ministry in Ephesus. This is Acts 20 verse 18 in speaking to all the Ephesian elders here and reflecting on his time among them: 'And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia [He is right back to the first day. 'I came and I found these

disciples there and I spoke to them about the gospel of sonship and I spoke to them about baptism right from that very first day'], you know in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.' He is preaching publicly, but he is also teaching from house to house. Now he may have still been doing that in the school. He may have had a bigger venue in the school where he did his public ministry. He might have had other classrooms where he is running marriage reformation classes and worthy house training. He is running a discipleship program that is not open to the public. His public ministry was in a private venue, but it was open to the public. It is like our Sunday morning; it is a private venue, but it is open to the public. Anyone can attend, unless they are causing trouble. It is 'all who will, may come' to hear the gospel of God proclaimed.

That is a completely different emphasis from our discipleship training initiative, where it is not a public ministry. It is a ministry to those who have chosen to be disciples. Paul is doing both of these things. He may have had some classrooms for that - different classes. He might have been travelling, going around having meals in various houses at night. He has finished his preaching for the day, and he is having dinner with a certain family, and he is teaching them and they are sharing with him. There is a whole house-to-house fellowship happening as well. He would have also visited and stayed in many of the houses in the Ephesian region.

Whether the actual teaching happened in the houses or in the school, Paul had a discipleship initiative toward worthy houses. That is the point I am trying to make. It is not just a public ministry. There was also a discipleship initiative to worthy houses. We could liken Paul's discipleship initiative toward the worthy houses in Ephesus as the calyx at the beginning of a new branch of the

lampstand. We are coming to understand how essential the calyx is in terms of the growth of a lampstand church. That is the process of discipleship connected to the hand of Christ and that is where the bud is maturing before it then emerges to produce another flower.

When you are looking at a lampstand, you see the first calyx, bud, flower, and then the bud jumps up into the flower (as we have said). Then what you see at the beginning of the branches are calyxes. There is a discipleship initiative, which is then producing more buds as the beginning of a branch.

Paul was looking for disciples from worthy houses who were able to join the fellowship of the presbytery in the region. When a disciple-messenger was sent from the fellowship of the presbytery into a new region to look for worthy houses, it was like a new bud had emerged from the calyx. It was not a long period of time. We do not know how long. Jesus was discipling the 12 for quite a period of time before He sent them out, and He was discipling the 72 also for quite a period of time before He sent them out. There is a period of discipleship, and then there is a sending. Once you get the 'sending', you have a bud. Paul is running a discipleship initiative, and then he is sending messengers into the various parts of the city and ultimately beyond that to look for worthy houses. You see calyx, bud, flower. When the disciple-messenger established a new group of worthy houses, it was like the bud had produced a new flower on the branch. In this manner, the branches of the lampstand church in Ephesus grew from calyx to bud to flower. This is exactly the same pattern that Jesus Himself established when He sent His disciples out to look for worthy houses.

It is likely that the one lampstand church in Ephesus contained many branches. Each branch would have included multiple congregations within a particular region or geographical area in terms of the ease of travel and distances and all those things.

Ephesus was like a city-state. It was the equivalent for us... (It is a lot easier for us to travel) ...it was the equivalent of a nation in real terms. A lampstand belongs to a nation. The branches of a lampstand are regions or provinces within that nation.

The leaders from each branch of the lampstand who belonged to the one presbytery in Ephesus would have travelled regularly to have fellowship with Paul. He is sending them out, but they would have also been coming back. There is a fellowship of the presbytery emerging in Ephesus. The leaders from each branch of the lampstand who belong to the one presbytery in Ephesus would have travelled regularly to have fellowship with Paul. This is the group that he does call down to Miletus at the end of his third missionary journey. In Acts 20 verse 28, he says to them, 'Take heed to yourselves and to the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers... [There was an emerging presbytery during this time] ... made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.' A presbytery is among the flock. It is growing from worthy houses. That is the massive point that we have been making in this season. The foundation of a presbytery is worthy houses, and the basic or fundamental building block of a lampstand church is worthy houses. It is all coming from worthy houses.

Stephanus is a good example of a leader who is emerging from a worthy house. Paul could say to the Corinthians about Stephanus, 'You know his household. You know how he is devoted (or addicted) to the ministry of the saints. [1 Corinthians 16 verse 15] So submit yourself to men like that.' The presbyters would have had regular fellowship with Paul. Furthermore, they would have travelled from congregation to congregation within their branch for the purpose of publicly proclaiming the word of God and discipling the worthy houses in each place.

During his public and house-to-house ministry in Ephesus, Paul evidently identified some men from worthy houses who

had received ascension gift grace from Christ. Paul was able to send those men as disciple-messengers into the regions beyond Ephesus to establish new lampstand churches. You have disciples from worthy houses emerging as messengers, but not every messenger is the same. Everyone will be a messenger according to their own name and sanctification.

Paul is evidently finding some men who had ascension gift grace. The fellowship of the right hand of Christ is what connects us to the right hand of Christ. Ascension gift ministry grace (the fellowship of the right hand of Christ) could then extend to a new region. A messenger travels up to Smyrna or up to Pergamum. That is the extension of the right hand of Christ to that region, and you have a new calyx-bud revealing the seven Spirits of God in that region and finding another congregation up there as the beginning of a new lampstand.

Having been sent from the right hand of Christ by Paul, each ascension gift messenger became the first bud on the central branch of a new lampstand. We know that the church in Colosse, for instance, was started by a man named Epaphras. We read in Colossians 1 verse 7 where Paul says, 'As you learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ [or deacon of Christ] on your behalf...' It is likely that Epaphras started the lampstand in Colosse, the lampstand in Laodicea and also whatever congregations were in Hierapolis as well. We know that from Paul's letter to the Colossians. You have this fellowship that is emerging; it is all integrated. But Paul himself is not travelling to every place. In fact, he says to the Colossians, 'I have never been to Colosse; you have never seen my face.' But nonetheless, the whole thing is growing out of his ministry in Ephesus.

The book of Acts summarises the growth of lampstand churches from Paul's ministry in Ephesus by saying in chapter 19 verse 10, 'And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord

Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.’ That is an amazing statement. ‘All who were in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.’ The fruit of his ministry was, in the end, seven presbyteries and seven lampstand churches.

God worked many unusual miracles during this time by the hands of Paul. The power of God was evident. For this reason, there were some leaders and people like the Jewish exorcists who tried to cleave to Paul with deceit for the sake of their own empowerment. Wherever you have a genuine ministry of the word of the Lord, you always have those who want to cleave to the messengers and to the word with deceit for the sake of their own empowerment. We have that in a very stark way here in Ephesus. We have these exorcists, and we particularly read about the seven sons of Sceva. They are thinking, ‘It is pretty good to be able to cast out demons, and we will be able to earn more money if we get this power. People will be paying us to do that for them.’ They start trying to exorcise a demon from a man by saying, ‘We exorcise by the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches.’ You know the story: the evil spirit speaks back to them and says, ‘Look, we know who Jesus is; we know who Paul is; but we have no idea who you are.’ Then the man who has the demon jumps on them, beats them up and they end up fleeing from the house naked. That is where that one finishes. Acts 19 verse 17 says, ‘This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified... [The name of the Lord can still be magnified through all these funny things that happen and all the aberrations that happen too. In the end, we just stick with it] ...and the name of the Lord was magnified. And many who believed came confessing and telling their deeds.’ There was genuine deliverance from sin - genuine deliverance. Where the Spirit of the Lord is [That is talking about Jesus Christ Himself. He possesses the seven Spirits of God and He is ministering the power of the seven Spirits of God through the messengers in His right

hand. When we are receiving that word and when we are joined to that fellowship] there is liberty [there is freedom].’ People here, as they are becoming connected to this, are being delivered from sin and they are being delivered from their infirmity. They are being delivered from their mind chatter. There is freedom. There is also freedom from all the fear of sorcery and witchcraft.

Verse 19: ‘Also, many of those who had practised magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totalled 50 000 pieces of silver.’ This was quite remarkable. There is massive deliverance here. Through the ministry of a lampstand church, there is massive deliverance from the fear of witchcraft. Even here in Ephesus, the witch doctors themselves who practised the magic were being converted. I think that is absolutely remarkable. This is the impact of the gospel wherever it goes.

The big summary is in verse 20: ‘So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.’ The fruit of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus was seven lampstand churches in the region of Asia, as we have said. We know that Jesus addressed those same lampstand churches in the book of Revelation. But during the reign of the seventh world kingdom, Jesus Christ has raised up (and is raising up) an apostolic administration to proclaim what is written in those letters as a word of present truth to the churches. We have the letters in our hands. However, as I said before, it is not enough to read it. We do need to hear it proclaimed. Jesus finishes every letter with, ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ Then it is not enough to hear it. We need to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit with repentance and faith so that we become overcomers.

During the seventh world kingdom, the word that was proclaimed to those seven lampstand churches is now being proclaimed to every lampstand church in every part of the world in the season of a second time because the time for its fulfillment is near.

We come back to how the word of the Lord grows and multiplies and how the name of the Lord is magnified. As soon as the Lord calls Jeremiah, He says, 'What do you see?' He says, 'I see the rod of an almond tree. I see a lampstand administration.' And the Lord says, 'You have seen well.' As I have said, this is the illumination the Lord is wanting all of us to receive in this season. 'You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to accomplish it.' This is the way the Lord proclaims His word, and this is the way the Lord brings His word to pass. The lampstand is the Lord's prophetic instrument that reveals the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh as the light of the world.