

MYSTERY OF FELLOWSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 22 November 2020

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

This is our second session looking at the content drawn from Victor Hall's letter, which is both to the presbytery, and then from the presbytery, to us all.

That letter is available on the Lampstand website, both under the Communion Word tab and by following the link on the front page of the Lampstand website, so that everyone has access to it. I encourage you to read it all, and we will progressively make our way through that letter in these Bible study sessions.

Christ comes to us with eyes like a flame of fire

You may remember that in our last session we understood that Christ is coming among us with 'eyes as a flame of fire'.

He first comes in judgement, and yet, if we will not draw back in unbelief from His gaze, He illuminates our sin so that we can confess our sins, and continue to be established in fellowship with Him, and with our brethren in the body of Christ.

This is great mercy, isn't it? We understand that this is the love of God toward us.

Christ comes to us with 'eyes as a flame of fire' through the ministry of the presbytery; their word in every congregation is *the light of a lamp* that is to be placed on a lampstand.

It is interesting to think about the relationship between the light of a lamp, and His eyes which are coming as 'a flame of fire'.

The light of the lamp

We need to understand the lamp light - where it is coming from, how it is coming to us, as a whole lampstand church.

We will take some time today to talk about both the church as a fellowship and the lamp light, and the angel, or *angelos*, of the church.

And we'll talk more about our practical participation in this fellowship in the coming sessions.

We must be illuminated to participate in the fellowship of the presbytery

Now, understanding and participating in the fellowship of the presbytery, as part of a church, requires *illumination*.

Our *beginning point* - and it's an important point to understand - is that we cannot understand or participate in the fellowship of the presbytery, and in the fellowship of the church, without *illumination*.

This is because it is a *spiritual reality*! We can only *see* the things of the Spirit *by the Spirit*!

It cannot be understood or seen through a person's natural perspective, nor by comparing it to a way that a worldly administration works.

Many people have made this error, thinking that the church is like an organisation, or an institution, or a business, which has a certain, characteristic way of operating.

If we look at the church and seek to understand it that way, not only will we be *disconnected* from it, but we will have *no ability to receive* what the Lord is saying to us and the way that He says it.

So, it's an understanding that requires illumination, and Jesus Himself described it as 'a mystery'. Natural eyes and natural ears can't understand or comprehend it, because it is a spiritual mystery. That's amazing, isn't it?

We are very *familiar* with church, and what we think should be its structure, but many of the ways that our churches have been structured *have not* been on the basis of this illumination. They have been *religious replications* of worldly institutions.

That's what we have to repent from. That's what His eyes as a flame of fire are coming to reveal.

So let us *all* receive that and understand that He is coming with these 'eyes as a flame of fire' to *illuminate* us to this mystery, so that we can participate in it.

The mystery of His administration

This is 'an administration suitable for the fullness of the times', isn't it?

So we'll consider a passage regarding the mystery.

Jesus said, '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* which you saw *are* the seven *churches*.' Rev 1:20.

Now, that sounds straightforward, doesn't it?

We could look at that and ask, 'What's so mysterious about that, that it requires spiritual understanding?' But, as we will see, this is a highly concentrated and profound statement with keys that *unlock* the Scriptures for us.

It's actually a most amazing passage that John penned, having received this understanding from Christ.

Churches are symbolised by seven golden lampstands

So, from the words of Jesus, we see that Christian churches are symbolised in the book of Revelation by seven golden *lampstands*. That is the first obvious point to receive.

The lampstand in the tabernacle of Moses was crafted in the form of an almond tree, with seven branches and twenty-two blossoms.

Reading back over these passages, I realised that many of the images of what that lampstand looked like are probably not what it *actually* looked like.

I suspect that, in fact, probably the best picture in the light of what the Scriptures teach us, is the one that has been prepared for the lampstand website.

When we look at the candlestick, or the lampstand, we see that it looks like a bush. I suspect that that's probably more what it looked like, rather than the sort of symmetrical picture we often see, where the lamps are all even at the top of the candlestick. I suspect that it actually looked like a bush.

The lampstand in Moses' tabernacle

So, it was crafted in the form of an almond tree with seven branches and twenty-two blossoms. The blossoms of the lampstands were receptacles for seven lamps.

So, while there were twenty-two blossoms, there were only seven lamps for this lampstand. And the petals of these flowers were designed and

fashioned to reflect and focus the light of the lamp, in much the same way as the mirror or lens of a torch shines light in front of itself.

So, each flower on the lampstand has petals, and those petals are shaped in such a way that when there is a light in front of them, the light bounces off the petal and focuses it as a torch does.

So, children, if you've ever taken your torch apart, you will have seen that there is silver, concave, reflective material around a light bulb, and when that light bulb goes on, the mirrors in the torch reflect, or project, that light forward.

That's exactly what the lampstand was fashioned to do. It was to shine the light in front of it.

And, interestingly, the adjustment of the light of the lampstand wasn't the adjustment of the petals to focus the light. It was actually the adjustment of the lamp in relation to the petals.

So each petal was crafted in a particular way, and the light was set inside that receptacle so that it could project the light forward in front of it.

The lampstand in the church age

Now, today, each blossom on a lampstand represents a *local* church congregation.

So, every one of those flowers is representative of a local church congregation, and the petals of the blossom symbolise the individuals who are part of that congregation.

In this regard, the lampstand church comprises *many* local congregations.

This means that a single congregation such as Brisbane or Melbourne or Djakarta or Seattle or any of the other churches is *not*, of themselves, a lampstand.

They are *one* flower that is part of a *fellowship* of flowers called 'a lampstand'.

So, no one congregation is a lampstand. Each congregation is a flower, and that flower is made up of people who are represented by petals.

So, everyone is a little petal in a church congregation that is part of a fellowship of congregations called 'a lampstand church'.

Every congregation should be part of a fellowship of churches.

One lampstand has multiple congregations, and each congregation is a flower; and every flower is made up of people who are represented by petals.

A lamp is to be set in that flower, and those petals are to reflect the light of the lamp. This is body ministry.

Understanding the stars in Christ's right hand

So we have looked at what a lampstand is.

And Jesus explained that the seven 'stars' in His right hand were the seven 'angels' of the seven churches. Before we consider what an angel is, it's helpful for us to understand the activity of a *star*.

He said, 'There are seven stars in My right hand and those seven stars are the angels of each lampstand church.'

This means that, when they are functioning from His hand in those churches, they are as an angel.

Now we are looking at the 'mystery', if you like, of the seven stars in His hand, which become the angels of those seven churches.

Each star is a fellowship of illuminators

So, each star in Christ's hand is a *fellowship* of messengers who minister illumination to those who hear and receive their word. So, a star is a *light-bearing entity*.

When we look up in the sky at night, we see the stars because they are *emanating light*.

So, the stars in Christ's hand consist of *illuminators*, but they are not *individual illuminators*; they are *individuals* who are part of a fellowship. And each star is the *fellowship of illuminators*.

So, one star is not one person. One star is a *fellowship of messengers* who are bringing illumination, communicating light.

The prophet Daniel described these messengers as 'those of the people' - so they are not separate from the congregation - 'who *understand* and who *instruct many*'.

I love this because, yes, they do comprehend the word, but their 'understanding' is that it is their *culture*.

A person is part of a star not because they are well-educated; a person is of a star because they exemplify the *light* that they are to communicate.

Remember, understanding means that the word from above has become the *culture* of your life.

So, an *illuminator* is a person who has received the word. It has become the culture of their life and, because of that, they instruct many through their conversation and conduct. So, this is what a star is.

Stars exemplify the culture of the word

They are not separate from the congregation, as Daniel said; they are 'those of the people who understand' and who 'instruct many'.

Their capacity to illuminate others is because of their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

That's what our culture is, isn't it?

Our culture is not just 'goodness'; our culture is found in the fellowship, or the *walking*, or the conduct, of Christ's offering and sufferings.

'And those of the people who understand shall instruct many.' Dan 11:33-35. This is stars giving illumination.

'Yet for many days' - so how do they get their understanding?

'For many days they shall fall by sword by flame, by captivity and by plundering. Now when they fall they shall be aided with a little help.'

That 'little help' is *amazing help*; it's called *exanastasis*, isn't it?

What are these things - sword, flame, captivity, plundering? They are the very things which Christ suffered in His offering journey.

Stars are purified by suffering and sustained by resurrection life

As they are falling, with Christ, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, they are being sustained with the same help by which He was, sustained; that is, *resurrection life*.

This is where they receive understanding.

'But many shall join with them by intrigue.' These are people who try to join themselves to the illuminators *by deception*. Their mouths are full of deceit.

'And some of those with understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.'

Daniel was referring to the stars that are in Christ's hand. They give illumination as messengers. And their capacity to understand is because the culture of Christ's offering and sufferings has become *their* culture as they have walked with Christ, receiving their sufferings as fellowship in Christ's sufferings, which are sword, flame, captivity and plundering.

As they suffer these things, they are being refined, purified and made white.

The important thing is that the word that they are proclaiming is establishing us all, if we receive it *in the very same fellowship*, because we are all to walk this path.

So, those who are stars should exemplify this culture; that is the basis for their instruction.

The light that proceeds from the star is the word of the Father

Now, star messengers proclaim the word of God the Father. Their message is the gospel of God, which declares the sonship of every believer.

God the Father is the *source* of this word; it proceeds from Him as light that shines out of darkness.

We don't have time today to expand that statement as it is reasonably concentrated. For your reference, in Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we've taken some time to explain what it means to be 'a messenger of God'.

These ones have been set apart by God the Father for this work and, as Paul said, their message is the gospel of God. This is the *word* of God the Father.

Where we read 'God' in the New Testament, it almost invariably refers to God the Father, as opposed to the Son and the Holy Spirit.

So, they are proclaiming the gospel of God which declares the sonship of every believer, and that word shines like a light out of darkness.

Remember that they are stars who are *illuminating* through instruction.

Paul said, regarding this ministry of light, 'For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness.'

These are messengers of God proclaiming the gospel of God, and Paul was saying that it is God

the Father who *commanded* the light to shine out of darkness. That means He is the source of it, and the *initiator* of this command.

'Who has shone into our hearts to give [what?] *the light* of the knowledge of the glory of God.' 2Co 4:6.

Note that it is the *light of the knowledge of the glory of God*.

Remember, these ones *instruct* - so their instruction is 'giving knowledge'.

These are messengers, stars, light-bearers, instructing. They give 'the light of the knowledge' - and what is that knowledge? It is 'the glory of God'.

The glory of God is His sons revealing their Father

So, how is God's glory revealed? What is His glory?

His glory is *His sons who are revealing a Father*.

So, 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God' is the proclamation of every person's sonship. That's what a star proclaims.

Now, where does it *come from*?

They are the ones who are proclaiming it, but it says, 'in the face of Jesus Christ'. So, it is being shone from Christ's face.

Stars proclaim this, but the word that they proclaim as light does not come from themselves; it comes from the Father, and *shines* from Christ's face, through them, as they proclaim the gospel

There are two sources of light. There is the Father, who is the *source* of the light, and it's shining in the face of Christ. But it is being ministered through stars who are in His hand. And it's amazing that the Scriptures bear this out so easily.

Reiterating the point, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, which is the knowledge of our sonship, shines from Christ's face and into the hearts of hearers when it is proclaimed by star messengers in His hand.

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God from Moses

Now, the relationship between the light shining from the face of Christ, and the ministry of light-

bearing stars in His hand, was first revealed by Moses.

Moses said, 'Now this is the blessing with which Moses ...'. He started with 'this is the blessing'. When we read 'blessing', that is *the ministry of God's life*; it is part of a person's inheritance.

'Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.'

And he said, 'The Lord ...'. Now, 'Lord' refers to Yahweh - but it is actually a description of the Lord Jesus Christ when He came.

'The Lord came from Sinai, and *dawned* on them from Seir.' What is dawning? 'Dawning' is the emergence of the sun in the morning. Deu 33:1-3.

Jesus came from Sinai and 'dawned' on them from Seir. That means He was *seen* like the sun rising in the morning.

Now, what was Jesus' face like in John's description in the book of Revelation? John saw His face 'shining like the sun in its strength'.

So Christ came with His face shining like the sun. Why was His face shining like the sun? It was because the knowledge of the glory of God was shining from His face. He was coming with the covenant.

'The Lord came from Sinai, He dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of His saints; from His right hand came a fiery law for them.' That is wonderful!

So, Jesus came, His face shining like the sun in its strength because He reflected the light from the Father. And the ministry of that light as the *knowledge* of the glory of God came in His right hand as a fiery law.

Now, what is a star? It is a great ball of fire, isn't it?

Habakkuk said that when He came like this, His radiance was like 'flashes of lightning' in His hand.

That is beautiful, isn't it? The word doesn't come to us as the *full revelation* of that sun.

His eyes of fire revealing His love

Every time that the word is spoken, it is as though it flashes like lightning into our heart, and we are affected by this light.

This is the relationship between His face, which is the full revelation of the glory of God, and its ministry to us as a word, a fiery law.

This is *the law of love* being ministered through a messenger as flashings of lightning from His hand. 'Yes, He loves the people'. Deu 33:3.

He is coming, not just with a face that is shining like the sun, but He is coming with eyes like a flame of fire revealing the jealous love of God.

Joined to His fellowship, we are in His hand

'Yes, He loves the people; all His saints *are in Your hand*; they sit down at Your feet.' What are His feet? They are like burnished brass. 'Sitting down at His feet' means being joined to the fellowship of His offering.

'Everyone receives Your words.' This is *exactly* what John the apostle said when he opened his first letter to the church. 1Jn 1:1-3. 'We are a star in Christ's hand, and the word that we are proclaiming to you joins you to the very same fellowship of which we are part.'

The word comes from Christ's hand like a great, fiery law, and the effect of receiving it is that all those who receive it, His saints, are *in His hand as well*. If you want to be in the hand of the Lord, *receive* the flashes of lightning that are coming as *illumination* from His hand through His star messengers.

And then we read, 'All those who are in Your hand sit down at Your feet and *everyone receives Your word*'. His word becomes the ongoing fellowship of our life together.

Illuminating stars

Let's return to Jesus' explanation of this ministry.

So, these 'stars' are *illuminators*. They are able to do that because they have understanding, which they've found in fellowship with Christ in His offering and sufferings.

'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God' is shining in the face of Jesus, and is being communicated as the gospel of sonship, as flashes of illumination, through star messengers in His hand.

One star – many congregations

Now, Jesus did not stop there. He didn't show the star to be separate from the church. He said that each of those seven stars was to be *an angel of the church*. Remember, the church is made up of many congregations, but there is *one star*, which becomes *one angel* for all those congregations.

The Greek word for 'angel' is pronounced *angelos*, but it is spelt *aggelos*. It is also the word for 'messenger'. So, the Greek word for 'angel' is *aggelos*.

A star, an angel, is a corporate messenger

An angel of a church is not one person. That's clear, because we've already made the point that a star is not one person.

So, the angel is not one person; nor is it an angel, such as Michael or Gabriel. We know this because of the way that Jesus addressed the angel of the church. Remember that He wrote, first, to 'the angel of the church of Ephesus', and so on.

For example, writing to the angel of the church in Pergamos, Jesus said, 'And you hold fast to My name and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed *among you* – where Satan dwells [unfortunately!]. This is 'a synagogue of Satan'.

The point is that it is not an angel or an individual person, because He referred to *people*. 'My faithful martyr, who was killed *among you*'. There had to be more than one person for it to be '*among*' *them*.

Hopefully, it is clear that the star, which is an angel, is a *corporate messenger*.

And there is only *one angel for a whole lampstand church*.

An angel of a church – presbyters

So, an angel of a church is a *fellowship of believers* whom God the Father has named and set apart to oversee, lead and care for the church.

It is the *presbytery* of a lampstand church.

We will speak in coming sessions about how a person is set apart for this work as a presbyter to lead, oversee and care for the church.

A lampstand church - one presbytery, many congregations

The point that I want to focus on today is the fact that there is only *one presbytery for an entire lampstand*

church. Jesus identified one angel, or presbytery, for each lampstand.

It is the presbytery – one presbytery – for *all* of the local congregation 'flowers' who comprise a lampstand church.

This means, for example, that there is not a presbytery for Brisbane Christian Fellowship and a separate presbytery for Melbourne Christian Fellowship; or a separate presbytery for Perth Christian Fellowship; a separate presbytery for Seattle; or for Malaysia.

There is *one* presbytery for the fellowship of congregations who are *connected together in relationship* - one presbytery for all of those flower congregations.

This has been a point of confusion for many people in our stream of churches, and it has given rise to presumption, where people in each centre have endeavoured to fill what they believed were presbytery roles.

Corruption happens where there is no understanding that there is just one angel for all of the *lamp congregations* that make up *one lampstand*.

So, without understanding, depending on the size of a congregation, it is believed that there is a presbytery for Brisbane, another presbytery for Melbourne, and then there's a presbytery for Perth, or a presbytery for some other place.

The result is a replication of roles, or jobs, or positions, that people think need to be filled - and that supposedly constitutes a presbytery.

That is looking at the church in the same way as a worldly organisation or assimilating a worldly organisation and imposing it on the church. That is understanding presbytery and church fellowship from an earthly perspective.

When we do that, we are not spiritual. And we see that the Lord is actually dealing with us on this very point.

We have to see how it operates – one presbytery for an entire lampstand church, which is massive. We're talking about thousands of people and hundreds of congregations – with one presbytery.

Collegiality – or spiritual fellowship?

The obvious question, then, is, for example, 'How do I interface with one presbytery if, for example, I live in Perth?

It is actually quite straightforward, and when you see it, or are illuminated to it, you will say, 'Praise the Lord, this is easy.'

This has been a point of presumption because, for example, in Brisbane we have said, 'Well, a presbytery should have "this" sort of function or activity in it', and people then presumed to fulfil those roles.

That mode is called 'collegiality'; the idea that people are fulfilling roles to do a job that is simply an administrative work or to have authority over the church. That is *not* how fellowship operates; that is *not* what a presbytery is.

Then other regions such as Melbourne or Sydney replicate that as best they can, trying to fill those positions with people who actually have no capacity to do that at all. And they become 'burnt out' or they do a poor job.

But the fundamental problem is that no *life* is being transacted, because it is not the ministry of *life by offering*. It is an activity based on the fulfilment of a role perceived through natural perspective.

Rather, we want to be those who are joined and participating in a fellowship that is *spiritual*.

So that is those in various areas who presume to lead as though they are one presbytery for each region.

Congregationalism – or a presbytery in God's hand?

It may also work the other way, where the churches themselves, the congregations, *want* their 'own' presbytery.

They don't like the idea that there is one presbytery for all of these congregations; they want their own presbytery.

They want either a presbytery or at least leaders whose focus and efforts are on servicing their needs.

So has been important for us to address the leavens among us, because that is one of the most virulent and most damaging of all.

That is the heresy of congregationalism! It is the demand from our congregation for our leaders to be focused on *us*, rather than our understanding that they belong to *a presbytery which is in Christ's hand*.

And the irony is that the more that we demand attention, the less we actually get *life*, because life is coming from the word that proceeds from Christ's hand; from His face, through His hand.

Life does not come to us because our needs and our expectations are being serviced. Those expectations are from the basis of our knowledge of good and evil.

The only way that we are able to receive the *truth* is if it is coming from the truth – which is Christ. And it comes in a particular way; it doesn't come in the way that some other organisation would do it.

So, we can be clear that there is one presbytery for the entire lampstand church.

Overseers and elders in every local congregation to shepherd the flock as part of the presbytery

Now, while there is *not* a presbytery for each local congregation, the Lord appoints overseers and elders in every local congregation to *shepherd* the flock. This is a beautiful point.

There is one presbytery for the lampstand church, but in each congregation there are overseers and elders who have been appointed by the Father, or sanctified to that role by the Holy Spirit Himself, to shepherd and care for the flock.

The important point to note is that they first *belong to the presbytery*.

The capacity to shepherd through fellowship in a presbytery

And their capacity to shepherd is because of their *connection to that fellowship*; it is not because they fulfil a 'role' in a congregation.

Rather, they exercise *obedience through fellowship* in a presbytery.

So, while there is not a presbytery for each local congregation, the Lord appoints overseers and elders in every local congregation to shepherd the flock.

Fellowship in one Spirit with the presbytery ensures light in every congregation

These men belong, firstly, to the angel of the whole lampstand. *This is a most significant point*.

Their *fellowship in one Spirit as part of the presbytery* ensures that the lamp that is set in each local congregation flower is a *light*.

It is, first, their fellowship in one Spirit with the *presbytery*, even though the Lord has appointed them to care in those congregations. It is not, first, one Spirit in that congregation.

Being, first, part of a presbytery ensures that, in that local congregation, they are ministering and facilitating *the light of life* that comes from Christ.

Actually, to fall from that fellowship as a presbytery is to fall from first love; and when we fall from first love, there is no light to shine in those congregations.

A 'form' of godliness results. It denies true power because it denies the necessity for *fellowship* in that presbytery. That is actually the denial of the power.

There is no recognition that the grace and capacity to properly minister is *not* because of some 'position' or assumed authority.

Rather, it is because of fellowship in first love in the presbytery, by the Spirit.

A lamp in a congregation is not a presbytery

So, in this regard, the 'lamp' that is set in a local congregation is not a presbytery.

Represented by the number twenty-two in a lampstand, each one of those flowers (Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Seattle, Jakarta, Manado, and so on) are to have 'lamp light'.

But the lamp light that is set in those congregations is *not* a presbytery that belongs to each of those congregations. The lamp in a congregation is *not* a presbytery.

There is *one* presbytery, and because all those leaders who are part of the presbytery are one Spirit together - because of that one-Spirit relationship in the presbytery - the light that they minister and facilitate in those congregations is lamp light - because the seven lamps are the seven Spirits of God, and the seven Spirits of God is the *one* Spirit of Yahweh.

One Spirit on the ground of Yahweh Himself

The apostle John said that our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, by the Holy Spirit. So, if members of a presbytery are in one Spirit on the ground of Yahweh Himself - if they are part of that fellowship - they are ministering that same

light in their local congregation. It becomes the lamp light.

So, the lamp is not a presbytery. A presbytery is called 'an angel', and then those who are part of that presbytery minister from one Spirit. This means that they need to be *in one Spirit* in the presbytery, doesn't it?

They minister that light in the congregations, and *that* light is the light that we all *reflect to one another*; into the hearts of one another.

So, in this regard, the lamp that is set in a local congregation is not a presbytery. Rather, it is *the light of the word* ministered as the seven Spirits of God from the presbytery.

The Scriptures define, or describe, the fullness of seven Spirits as being the one Spirit of Yahweh.

The reference to seven lamps being seven Spirits is Revelation Chapter 4 verse 5. And the explanation in Isaiah that those seven Spirits are the one Spirit of Yahweh is Isaiah Chapter 11 verse 2.

Leaders not joined in one Spirit with the presbytery - no light of present truth in the church

Now, if those who are supposed to care for a local congregation are *not* joined in one Spirit with a presbytery, the lamp that belongs to a local congregation *remains in darkness*. This is a most *amazing* point.

That group of elders, those leaders, in a congregation, for example in Brisbane, probably have been *set apart by God for that work*.

However, if they view themselves as being a presbytery or their focus is first on that local congregation, and not on first love as part of a presbytery for the whole lampstand church, the light that is set in that congregation becomes dim.

The light in a congregation does not depend on how functionally brilliant a person is in any centre.

It depends on their fellowship in the presbytery!

So, if those who are supposed to care for a local congregation are not joined in one Spirit with the presbytery, the lamp that belongs to a local congregation remains in darkness.

They have no light, because they are not practically connected in one Spirit to the *aggelos*. Their ministry is not the fruit of first love with their brethren.

It is, instead, based on, or informed by, their religious traditions and historical doctrines.

Everyone who is part of a presbytery is 'among'; they are from among the people, and they have 'understanding'.

Now, we do need to be part of a local congregation setting. But if our ministry is *not* the outcome of first love fellowship as part of an 'angel', or *aggelos*, what we minister in the church (we will be very 'functional') won't be based on the light of present truth.

And, without the light of present truth, all we have to go on is our own doctrinal tendencies. We will minister from our histories, or what is familiar to us. We cannot do anything else.

Can you see why this is a 'mystery'?

And these people *should be* the ones who most often minister. The Lord has appointed it to them.

But if they deny the need for fellowship in the presbytery, they will *not* minister the light of present truth that is coming from the face of Christ, from the Father. It will be their own historical doctrines and traditions. They have nothing else to minister.

Fellowship in the light is key.

Placing a lamp under a basket or a bed

Their ministry will be informed by their religious traditions and historical doctrines. Jesus described this approach to ministry in a church as 'placing a lamp under a basket or a bed'.

Now, remember that the lamp is not the presbytery. There is an 'angel', but there are those who are supposed to minister in every congregation, bringing the lamp light.

If those who are supposed to be facilitating the lamp light in every congregation are not joined to 'the angel' of a church, the *aggelos*, they are taking that lamp light and they are 'putting it under a basket or under a bed'.

In this regard, Jesus said, 'Is the lamp brought to be put under a basket?' Mar 4:21. The word

'basket' there literally means 'a peck measure, or bushel'. It is a classic term – 'a peck measure'.

So, is a lamp to be put under a basket or under a bed? No, of course not! Is it not to be *set on a lampstand*? So, for it to be set on a lampstand means that it is *not* under a basket or under a bed.

If it is operating by a principle *other than* the fellowship that enables that light to be set on a lampstand, that lamp *is* set under a basket or a bed.

'For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to the light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!' Mar 4:22-23.

Jesus declared this to all of 'the angels' of the churches in the book of Revelation. And He said that the reason why this lamp is put under a basket or under a bed is because those who are the custodians of that lamp light are *hidden* from the fellowship to which they are to be a part.

They are *not joined* in first love fellowship with the angel for the whole lampstand church. The lamp light is *hidden*.

And the eyes of Christ, which come as a flame of fire, reveal the *disconnection* of those overseers who should be part of that *aggelos* fellowship.

Every leader to hear and be restored so light can shine to the whole world

Those of you who have been called to be leaders, open your ears to hear what the Spirit is saying so that we can be restored to first love properly; so that the ministry of light in every congregation is not our own religious history.

Rather, it is to be *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*, which causes every individual to be lit up with their sonship so that the lampstand can shine to the whole world!

That is what the Lord is looking for, and that is happening as the night grows darker in the whole world.

This lampstand church should be *shining*! And it will shine as we are restored to this form of fellowship.

A basket – an instrument of measure

Now, let's consider the practical nature of a basket and a bed.

As I said, the basket that Jesus referred to was an instrument for measuring; it was 'a peck measure'. Interestingly, it was actually a measure of dry material, such as grain. So the basket that Jesus referred to was an instrument for *measuring*.

When He explained that we are not to put our lamp under a basket or under a bed, He was saying, 'If you interact with the word in this way or that way, the word is not being set on a lampstand.'

We need, then, to understand what it means to put a lamp under a basket or under a bed.

Putting a lamp under a basket by measuring and judging the word

To 'put a lamp under a basket' is to put it under an instrument of *measurement*.

A group of leaders put the lamp, which they are supposed to be setting in front of the congregation, 'under a basket' when they presume to be the *measure* of the word and of its applicability to the congregation.

They listen to the word of present truth as it has been laid down in the midst of presbytery by those with ascension gift grace. They hear it and say, 'Yes, that will be relevant to us' or 'No, that's not really relevant to us; we probably need to soften that down. They don't really understand our circumstance.'

As soon as they do that, they have *disconnected* themselves from that fellowship, and they have become *the measure of the word*.

The lamp light, which is supposed to be set in the midst of that congregation, is put under a basket because of their measurement and judgement of the word.

The basis for this measurement is their own gospels and traditions, which stifle what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Putting a lamp under a bed; under the bed of our lameness

What about putting a lamp 'under a bed'?

Most of the Scripture references that use this particular Greek word for 'bed' refer to 'a bed of sickness'. For example, people would carry a sick person on a bed, to Jesus.

Now, an elder or leader places the lamp under a bed when the ministry of the word is limited by

their own lameness, which is unable to be addressed because they do not walk in the *light* of fellowship within the presbytery.

Now, in our context, these people should be part of the presbytery, whether they are in Perth, Melbourne, anywhere, as part of our congregation of churches.

However, they are 'lame', and they remain in their lameness because of their disconnection from the fellowship where there is a word that can wash their feet and bring healing to their lameness, so that their legitimate ministry is not undermined by their lameness.

Where those who are supposed to be overseers in the church withdraw from the light of fellowship in the presbytery - from that *aggelos* fellowship - because of some sense of inadequacy or concern that their lameness invalidates them - or whatever is their fear or desire to hide - they continue to 'limp' and to minister from the basis of our lameness.

That is putting the lamp light that we should be ministering under the bed of our lameness.

The light of the gospel of sonship is not being ministered in these congregations. It is a 'form' of religion.

The need for restoration to first-love fellowship

Can you see why the Lord came and addressed Ephesus regarding their falling from first love?

He said, in effect, 'You were doing a whole lot of activity, lots of good works, and I'm still going to take the lampstand away from you, because you have fallen from first love fellowship.'

'The angel' had fallen from first love fellowship.

That's what the Lord is calling us back to so that the light in every congregation will be *blazing!*

Repent and do the first work - fellowship

It begins with *repentance* from that mode. Jesus said, 'Repent and do the first work.'

We all think that 'the first work' is all the activities that we're supposed to be *doing* in the places where we live.

However, the first work is *fellowship*. It is to *present* yourself.

It is to have your families, marriages and lives open for fellowship and for cleansing, so that everything that is making us lame and limping is not imposed on the congregations for whom we are supposed to care.

Restoration to first love; do not draw back

The Lord is serious about this, and we are in a time when He is looking for *restoration to first love*.

The point that we must understand is that the lamp being set on a lampstand requires those who are custodians of the lamp to be in open fellowship with their brethren as part of an *aggelos*, or presbytery.

This will ensure that the impediments to the ministry of the light in a congregation, *in them*, are being removed and cleansed.

That is what we are believing for, and that is what the mercy of God is coming to do among us.

So, we *can* believe for this ministry.

Those who are called by God to be overseers and elders in these congregations, don't draw back; don't rely on your measure of the word; and don't lean on your lameness.

Let us be those who *return to first love*. That is what the Spirit is calling us to.

Everyone joined to this same fellowship

And, when we are in first love relationship, everyone who hears the word that we are proclaiming is joined to *exactly* the same fellowship.

It's not as though there is 'a special *aggelos* fellowship' and then there's 'a church fellowship'.

They *are* the *same* fellowship as long as the word that is coming from Christ's face, through His hand, is being received into our heart.

When it is, we are joined to the very same fellowship.

As John said, 'We declare these things that you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.'

Praise the Lord!

So, in our coming sessions, we will speak more about the composition of a presbytery.

And we will consider how we, in all of the places where we live, invite that fellowship into our

houses so that we have vital, dynamic and life-giving fellowship as part of our culture.