

The foundation of a lampstand

The lampstand represents those believers who are growing up to be a local church with Christ as the foundation or base. A local lampstand church grows because messengers proclaim Christ as the foundation (base) and plant new believers in Him, by baptism. They declare the message of the cross of Christ. And they declare that when One died, we all died. Christ died our death to reconcile us, in the body of flesh, through death. He was the first seed to go into the ground and then come back from the dead as a sheaf of firstfruits. Then, He brought us back with Him as a sheaf of firstfruits containing a multitude of seeds.

We must believe and be baptised into Christ to avail ourselves of salvation. We are not automatically saved by His atonement, or by believing. We are to join the fellowship of His sufferings. We bring forth fruit by *abiding* in Him. Accepting Christ, in itself, does not save us. We are to bear fruit or we will be cast away. This fruit we bring forth is the power to lay down our lives, just as Christ laid down His life for us. We become those with the same capacity that is in the Seed, in Christ. This is the capacity to sow, to be sown, to bear fruit, and to grow up as ‘certain firstfruits’.

We are to grow up in sonship as firstfruit believers. As we bring forth the fruit of Christ’s life, we become part of a lampstand church. Consider what occurred in Jerusalem with the five thousand who joined Christ as a result of Pentecost, the ‘feast of firstfruits’. When persecution arose against the church because of the stoning of Stephen, the believers were scattered, like seed, into surrounding regions.

References:

2Co 5:14 Joh 15:1-6
 Col 1:22 1Jn 3:16
 1Co 15:23 Jas 1:18
 Php 3:10 Act 4:4
 Mar 16:16 Act 8:1, 12
 Act 7:54-60

Further Study

Eph 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 2

Scattered seed

Because of the stoning of Stephen, the believers were scattered, like seed, into surrounding regions. Clearly, this was the hand of the Lord. He was now separating the many seeds out of the 'Sheaf', who is Christ, so that the believers could now lay down their lives and come forth as firstfruits in the various places to which they were scattered and sown. Lampstand assemblies would now be multiplied.

Having put on Christ who is the Firstfruits, our life in Christ is symbolised by the cup, bud and flower of the lampstand. Christ is the Firstfruits and we are part of Him. However, this is only the beginning of the gospel. We are not yet firstfruit believers *ourselves*, showing the fruit of our own sonship. The lampstand is a local fellowship of believers who are growing to firstfruits from the foundation, Christ the Firstfruits. We are planted in *His* death so that we too can spring forth in righteousness, as sons of God, by the seven-fold *wisdom* and *power* of God. Only then can we lay hold of that for which we were laid hold. By baptism into Christ, we are planted in Christ who is the base of the lampstand. This is how we 'put on Christ'. This is the purpose of baptism: to be clothed with Christ's sonship. Each believer is called into the fellowship of the Son. In Him, it is possible to find our own sonship. This is not possible apart from Him, apart from the fellowship of the His name. In His name, many sons can inherit and grow up in their own name. We are to grow up in Him, and from Him. In His name, we can inherit our name. Once we are 'rooted and grounded' in His love, we can grow up to apprehend the fullness of Christ.

References:

Act 7:54-60 Act 8:1
 1Co 1:24 Eph 3:17-19
 Php 3:12 Isa 43:1
 Isa 45:3 Rom 6:3-5
 Rom 13:14

Further Study

Act 11

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 3

The power of the seven Spirits of God

'But you shall receive power [seven-fold] when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me ... to the end of the earth.'

These words of Jesus, just before He ascended, proclaim the key to the lampstand. The Holy Spirit, given to us as a gift, brings the power of the seven Spirits of God. This is what it means to live and walk 'in the Spirit'. We walk in the capacity of the seven Spirits of God – the Spirit of the Lord. Christ was the weak shoot with the power of the Spirit upon Him. We too are 'weak in Him', and then spring forth from Christ with the power of the seven Spirits of God upon us. The power by which He grew from a tender plant to full fruit is resting upon us also. This is why Paul learned to rejoice in weakness, because the 'power of Christ' was magnified. The tender plant becomes a golden lampstand.

This was the message by which Paul sought to establish the New Testament churches. To those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the *power* of God and the *wisdom* of God. The seven-fold wisdom of God is found in the base of the lampstand, and the seven-fold power of God rests upon us as we grow up in Him. This is the message of the cross. The wisdom and power of God are available to all men who will believe. Messengers with this message, going into all the earth, are represented as the seven horns (power) and seven eyes (wisdom) in the book of Revelation.

References:

Act 1:8 Rev 4:5
Gal 5:16, 25 Isa 53:2
2Co 13:4 1Co 1:18, 24
2Co 12:9-10 Rev 5:6

Further Study

1Th 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 4

Messengers of Christ

Messengers establish local lampstand churches as they bring the wisdom and power of God, manifested in the cross. They preach the cross as the work of God, apprehending all men, for all time, in one offering. All men can be brought back from the dead and grow up to mature fruit.

A 'messenger' is never just one voice. Jesus sent His disciples two by two. He said He would be in their midst when 'two or three' were gathered in His name. In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word of God would be established. The power to bind and loose would be found in the fellowship of two or three.

Messengers in the New Testament were messengers of this fellowship. Paul went out by the 'right hand of fellowship'. Paul and Barnabas were separated to their work when five prophets and teachers laid hands on them in Antioch. The apostles demonstrated this fellowship and called others to fellowship 'with us'. They brought the fellowship of the Father and His Son to the hearers.

Christ is seated on the throne, but He walks the earth, to and fro, in the midst of 'two of three' who maintain fellowship in His name. This is how the lampstand grows. When individuals receive the message of fellowship, they are ignited. Their lamps are lit when the fire of the Holy Spirit is applied. The light of the word illuminates them and, immediately, this light is 'for a fire'. Their hearts burn with the light of life. Their eyes are alight to the truth of sonship. They offer themselves to the fellowship of the Son. This is the context where they begin to lay their lives down in offering.

References:

1Co 1:18
1Jn 1:3
2Co 13:1
Gal 2:9
Rev 5:6

Luk 10:1
Mat 18:16-20
Act 13:1-3
Zec 4:10

Further Study

Act 13

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 5

A weak shoot – with the power of God

Messengers bring the fundamental truth of the lampstand. The weak shoot has the power of God resting upon it. Christ lived and was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. Paul then says that ‘we too are weak in Him’ but ‘we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you’. Messengers identify fully with the weakness of Christ and the death of offering. This is where the growth of the lampstand begins. As believers stand up in resurrection life, albeit in weakness, the power of God rests upon them. They are the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified. If we have ‘*died* with Him, we shall also *live* with Him’. If we *suffer* with Him, we shall *reign* with Him. We are called not to be ‘ashamed, but to partake of the sufferings ... by the power of God’. The lampstand picture of a weak shoot, with the full capacity of God upon it, is central to the Scriptures. Christ was able to taste death for every man by the grace of God.

Christ did not endure by His own innate capacity as God the Son. He endured the full course of obedience through prayer and supplication. He grew up, and was perfected, from a tender shoot to a mature sheaf of firstfruits. He was strengthened in Gethsemane for His calling as a High Priest in the Melchizedek Order. This calling required Him to participate in infirmity. He did so by the capacity of His priestly anointing, and not from His own strength. He was the absolute demonstration of a weak shoot, strengthened by the glory of God. He suffered the full course, and authored our obedience, by the power of God.

References:

2Co 13:4 Heb 5:7-8
 Isa 61:3 Luk 22:43
 Rom 8:17 2Ti 2:10-14
 2Ti 1:8 Isa 53:2
 1Co 15:20,23 Heb 2:9

Further Study

2Ti 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 6

Every word established

The word and will of God are to be established on earth, just as they are in heaven. The word was 'with God' when He made a covenant before the ages. This covenant was a finished work; a complete statement of God's will for every one of us. The word from this fellowship of the Father and His Son is to be established. How is it established?

The word is established, fulfilled, at each point where two or three are agreeing on earth. 'If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by *My Father* in heaven ... For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.' Notice that Christ speaks of His Father, for this is the fellowship of the Father and His Son, just as John said.

Messengers don't just bring a message. They are not peddling the word of God as mere instructors. Messengers who are living in fellowship are bringing the fellowship of the Father and His Son. This is the fellowship of the covenant from before the ages. The oil flows from this fellowship. The Spirit of God is the light of this fellowship. We are to walk in this light, just as God Himself is in the light and, when we do, we have fellowship with the Father and His Son. The word spoken within this fellowship of 'two or three' communicates *spirit and life*. 'The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.'

The word that was 'with God' proceeds *forward* 'out of His mouth', into history, to be fulfilled. It is established in the mouth of *two or three witnesses*. Then, when the word is received, it connects believers *back into the fellowship* of the covenant.

References:

Mat 6:10 1Jn 1:4-7
 Joh 1:1 Joh 6:63
 Mat 18:19-20 1Jn 1:3
 Isa 51:16 1Co 4:15
 2Co 2:17

Further Study

1Ch 17

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 9

Fellowship in His name

We find fellowship in His name when we understand what is meant by 'the name'. We join the fellowship of the covenant in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have fully expressed themselves *by name*.

To be 'in the name' is to be a partaker of everything that the Three have expressed, by name. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit invested Themselves fully in the covenant name, the new name, the Lord Jesus Christ. This name was given to the Son to reveal. The Father was pleased that the fullness of the Godhead would dwell bodily in Him. God the Son emptied Himself to receive this fullness and reveal it in history. This is what is meant by the fellowship of the Father and *His Son*. The focus is 'His Son', who is the heir of all things. The love of God in Christ Jesus has named who we are, and we are inseparable from that love.

This is what the apostles preached. They brought the revelation of the name of the Lord. They brought the 'fellowship with us', and gathered others into it. They baptised them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the covenant name. It is the name invested with the giving of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It was not possible to baptise in this name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit until the Son was glorified. Then, Peter proclaimed the covenant name, invested with the fullness of all Three, by name. He said, 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter ... "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"'

References:

Joh 17:6 Act 19:5
Col 2:9 Act 2:36-37
Php 2:7 Heb 1:2
Rom 8:38-39

Further Study

Act 17

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 10

Christ – the Branch

Christ is the Almond Rod. He is the Branch. He stooped to become the lowly Seed, Bud and Firstfruits of a new creation. He is the covenant Seed who includes all of us in that one Seed – just as many seeds are brought forth from one. We are the branch of [His] planting. We are to grow from Him, with the same eternal life in ourselves. Christ has become the Seed, the Branch, of a *new* humanity, a new creation, and we ‘spring forth’ from Him.

When He comes into our hearts, He and His life are inseparable. However, these two things are not identical. He can give us His life, His precious blood, without sharing His identity. We can become sons without becoming Him. We are *in* Him, without being *part* of Him, or *apart* from Him. This is how we branch out from Christ. This is the meaning of the cup, bud and flower. In the almond symbol, each cup, bud and flower swells out of the side of the rod. This fulfils the image of almond blossoms swelling out of the almond rod. We are one with Him and with the Father. We have life that branches out from God’s servant, the Branch.

He has become the Rod, the Branch, the base for the lampstand, because He has become flesh. The *base*, or foundation, is Christ Himself. This doctrine of Christ in the flesh is the foundation of all truth. When we have the doctrine of Christ, we have both the Father and the Son. Christ is the foundation, in flesh, because of the obedience He learned in the days of His flesh. *His experience in the flesh is the foundation*, or base, from which we grow. He learned this knowledge so that He could be the Author of salvation.

References:

Isa 60:21 Isa 11:1
Isa 61:11 2Co 5:17
Joh 1:14 Joh 5:21
Heb 5:8 Heb 12:2

Further Study

Jer 33

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 11

The doctrine of Christ

We are 'in the name' that They have given us - the name, Lord Jesus Christ. We have been gathered into the fellowship of the covenant. We could think of nothing greater, and we must not think of anything less. This is what the lampstand teaches us. We *can* grow up from Him, with the *same* life but with *identity* of our own. This is the meaning of being in the name. We are sons because we have received a name that is given by all three Persons. We are now called 'sons of the living God'. This is the joy of the gospel. As Jesus said, now our joy can be full, because we can ask the Father ourselves, as *true sons*. We can ask in the Son's name, because we are sons within the fellowship of the Father and *His* Son.

This is the doctrine of Christ. He is the Rod, in the flesh. He is the shoot, the Branch, from which we can all branch out. If He had not gained experience and learned obedience in the flesh, there would be no base from which to grow. When believers are planted in Christ by baptism, and are rooted in His obedience, then the divine nature can grow in flesh, all the way to maturity.

We can say that a lampstand church has a base when a number of believers are planted in Christ through baptism in His name. They have put on Christ. They are bringing forth the fruit of sonship as an assembly of sons, and are growing to firstfruits. As Hebrews explains, these are believers who are established in the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ. They are partaking of 'solid food', and not just milk, and they are going on to perfection.

References:

Rom 9:26 Heb 5:12-14
 Joh 16:24 Luk 22:20
 Rom 6:4-5 2Pe 1:3-4
 Gal 3:27 Eze 20:37
 Heb 6:1

Further Study

Heb 8

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 12

The elementary principles

Hebrews deals with the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ in two parts. We read of the ‘elements of the beginning’. There are seven of these. And then we read of seven foundations that are to be laid (and not laid again). The admonition, as it unfolds, urges us to make this distinction between the *elementary principles* and the *personal foundations* by which we go on to perfection. Note the emphases in the following passage from Hebrews.

‘And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” of whom we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain*, since you have become dull of hearing.’

‘For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the *first principles of the oracles of God*; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.’

‘Therefore, leaving the discussion of the *elementary principles of Christ*, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the *foundation* of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.

References:

Heb 5:9-6:2
Act 28:27
1Pe 2:2

1Co 14:20
Eph 4:4
2Ti 3:16

Further Study

1Co 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 13

Elementary teachings about 'the Christ'

The book of Hebrews reminds us that God has spoken to us in the person of His Son. It is important to consider the capacity with which 'the Christ' was invested, in the covenant before the ages. These are the 'first principles of the oracles of God' which we ought to know, according to Hebrews. These are the 'word of righteousness' in which we are to be skilled. These are the 'seven pillars of wisdom'. These are the aspects of Christ which form the base of the lampstand: Son, Slave, Pioneer, King, Priest, Prophet, Firstborn. These are the elementary teachings upon which we can build individual foundations: going on, repentance, faith, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection life, and eternal judgement. First of all, there are *seven teachings* about the Christ. Then there are *seven foundations* by which we build on Christ. Both of these are part of the broad subject of first principles.

We are not to be 'babes' who are 'hard of hearing'. Rather, there is a 'solid food', or meat, that belongs to those who are becoming mature. The elementary teachings of Christ are the start of this solid food. These are also called the elementary principles of the 'oracles of God', referring to the oracles (sayings) spoken in the covenant before the ages. These '*elements of the beginning*' (best translation of the verse) are the starting point for every Christian. These are the base of the lampstand. As the writer continues, he urges us to grow up and 'go on' to mature sonship; to perfection. Then, he refers to the *foundations* that we need if we are to grow up.

References:

Heb 1:2 Heb 2:3
 Heb 5:12-6:3 Pro 9:1
 Php 2:7 1Co 3:2
 Col 1:15 Jer 23:5
 Mar 1:11

Further Study

Heb 7

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 16

The seven elementary teachings

The book of Hebrews makes a distinction between the *elements of the beginning* and the *foundations* that we need to grow in. The emphasis here is that we cannot grow up in these foundations if we are blind to the elementary teachings about Christ. Practically, from day to day, we are illuminated to see who ‘the Christ’ is, as the *base* and foundation for our lives. Then, we bear fruit as we live in the seven foundations.

The first ‘seven’ tell us who Christ is. The second ‘seven’ tell us how to branch and grow up. We note here the seven elementary teachings about ‘the Christ’, which we may call the seven pillars of wisdom, or indeed, the seven treasures of grace. Together with these, we note the seven actions of Yahweh Son, in emptying Himself, that enable us to participate in all that He has received.

Yahweh (as One), within the fellowship of *Elohiym* (as Three), established the Everlasting Covenant. Within that covenant, *Yahweh* the Son emptied the prerogative to proceed from His *intrinsic* capacity. He loved righteousness – meaning that His love motivated Him to become a willing Slave who would lay His life down to reveal the counsel and will of all Three. For this loving attitude, He was anointed with the oil of gladness alongside His companions (that is, in His relationship with God and with us as well). This anointing would enable Him to be the Pioneer: the Author, the Trail-blazer. He would proceed to learn obedience and gain a knowledge by which He would become the Author of the salvation of every companion.

References:

Pro 9:1 Mat 13:23
Php 2:7 Heb 8:6
Joh 10:17-18 Heb 1:9
Heb 12:2

Further Study

Heb 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 17

Anointed with the seven Spirits of God

Jesus Christ was anointed with the seven Spirits of God. He was anointed with the full capacity of Yahweh *Elohiym*, resident in the seven Spirits of God. This enabled Him to be the full expression of wisdom and power, as the Christ of God. The righteousness of God would now branch out, like a fruitful sceptre, and become an everlasting kingdom.

Yahweh the Son offered and laid down all His innate and intrinsic glory, in trust, to the Father and the Holy Spirit in Their covenant. In response, He was enabled, through Eternal Spirit, to complete His offering, right to its end-point. Therefore, He was anointed with the oil of the seven Spirits of God to function again in His own capacity. But this was because of the anointing, through the power of Eternal Spirit. He was to be revealed as Son, Slave, Pioneer, King, Priest, Prophet and Firstborn-Head. However, His enabling would be by the Spirit, not His own capacity. In this way, He would retain His identity as Yahweh the Son, but become the Pioneer of the way of salvation.

By seven *anointings* He was *enabled* with seven aspects of capacity, and by His emptying, these have become an *inheritance* given to us. His anointing as Messiah is defined by the seven anointings, the seven enablings, and the seven treasures. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me.' In each of these aspects, the oil flows upon His head and down to the skirts of His garments. The oil on the head of Yahweh Son preserves His identity as the *Son* who proceeds as *Slave* to become *Pioneer*.

References:

Rev 5:6 Zec 6:12
 Heb 1:8 Mat 12:28
 Heb 9:14 Act 10:38
 Luk 4:18 Php 2:7
 Psa 133:2 Heb 2:10

Further Study

Luk 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 18

Seven aspects of anointing

The first three of these aspects of His anointing declare the identity of Yahweh Son. Despite His emptying to become the Pioneer, His identity is preserved, by the anointing, to be revealed in all seven dimensions. When 'lifted up' in weakness, as the Pioneer, He would be seen as 'I AM'; that is, I Am He. I Am Yahweh. This would be the sign of the power of obedience, enabled by the Spirit. In this way, the light of salvation would stream out to every captive of sin and death. The Shepherd-King would bring believers all the way back from the dead with Him, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.

Then, the oil of the seven Spirits of God anointed Him in the four faces of His administration of zoe-life. We could say that He has one face, in four aspects. The anointing oil causes His 'face' to shine in four aspects. These are the four faces of administration by which new creation zoe-life is ministered to the nations. Ezekiel describes these 'faces' and wheels of administration. When one face moves, the others all cooperate in that particular direction. He is anointed for His administration – for His Kingship, Priesthood, Prophetic ministry, and His ministry as the Firstborn Head of families and nations.

The book of Revelation opens with this exact picture. The face of the lion (Christ in His kingship) is delivering the word of the covenant to the face of the man, the prophet. This message is to be proclaimed to peoples, nations and tongues, so that every tribe will mourn. Like eagles to a dead body, a whole multitude will gather to participate in the body and blood of Christ's offering as a kingdom of priests. 'Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.' The body of Christ will be organised as an expression of all four orders - Prophetic ministry, Firstborn-Headship, Kingship and Priesthood.

References:

Joh 8:24, 28 Rev 1:1-2, 7
 Eze 1:17, 20 Eze 10:11
 Mat 24:30 Luk 17:37
 2Co 4:6 Heb 13:20

Further Study

Psa 45

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 19

Persecution – suffering for His name

According to the Hebrews admonition, we are babes, and we are not growing up until we understand these seven elementary teachings. These are the summary of the ‘word of righteousness’ in which we are to be skilled. The ‘word of righteousness’ is the summary of everything that Christ has given us through His complete obedience. This is why we are urged to ‘seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness’.

To ‘seek the kingdom’ is to understand what Christ has brought to us. He is the Son with the new name, the Slave revealing the righteousness of God, the Pioneer of obedience, the King with resurrection power, the Priest of new creation life, the Prophet with the word, and the Firstborn with the inheritance of all things.

Indeed, Christ is the Author of our salvation. This is the amazing result of His Melchizedek priesthood. Once again, note what Hebrews says. ‘Concerning Him we have much to say, and *it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you*’.

The seven principles of Christ are the summary of who He is as the foundation, the base of the lampstand. By these seven, we continually refresh ourselves in the knowledge of Him, and of who He became for our sake. These are the daily structures by which we grow to maturity. These must become a living foundation – a way of life that we never outgrow. When Hebrews speaks of ‘not laying again the foundation’, we are encouraged that if these are properly laid as a functional way of life, they do not need to be laid again.

References:

Mat 6:33 Eph 1:10-11
Heb 2:10, 12 Heb 5:11-13
Heb 6:1 Joh 17:6, 26

Further Study

Isa 45

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 20

A firstfruit assembly

The seven foundations are the way that we grow in *our* sonship. As believers are established in first principles, they grow to become firstfruit assemblies. We grow to firstfruits. Knowing what He became for our sake, we now grow up into Christ in our own sonship. By the knowledge of Christ as the Firstfruits, we too can become a 'certain firstfruits' in Him.

We will relate to the *first* cluster that grows from the base. We know that all others will look the same. In fact, all assemblies grow from Christ in the same way. Of course, in terms of development, some groups will grow before others, and fellowships will grow one from another also. This is the organic reality. Hence, the need to take care how we build.

In Moses' tabernacle, there were twenty-two almond clusters. The first of these was joined to the base. The others were joined along seven branches. The clusters were all identical, following the pattern of the first cluster. The first thing we learn is that growth will occur by following the pattern. Whether an assembly is the first one to grow up, or whether it grows within a branch, the pattern is the same. This corresponds to the almond rod in nature, where all clusters grow from the one shaft.

A local church is not a lampstand. However, each local fellowship of believers is to proceed to become a flower within a branch. This is to be our goal. We are to grow up as firstfruit assemblies from the base, just like the first cluster. Each local fellowship of believers is to be a 'firstfruit assembly'.

References:

1Co 3:10 Php 3:17
Exo 25:31-36 Jas 1:18
Rom 8:23 1Co 16:15-16

Further Study

Heb 9

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 23

Achieving firstfruits – the sower parable

In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of four types of soil: wayside ground, stony ground, thorny ground and good ground. In the first three soils, the seed died. However the seed on good ground brought forth fruit. Accordingly, we can think of wayside, stony and thorny ground as tests that we face as we grow up to firstfruits.

The test at the point of the cup is the test of wayside ground. Here, we are born of the Father by the incorruptible seed of the word of God. The parable says that we must understand the word or the birds of the air will destroy the seed. Jesus said this after warning about the hearers from the Old Testament and the judgement imposed through Isaiah. When men's hearts are hard, their judgement is that they are unable to hear, see, turn, or be healed. The first test for lampstand believers is that they must turn in repentance and receive the word with understanding. If they will not, they will receive the judgement of Isaiah's day. Then, the wicked one will snatch the seed away.

The test at the point of bud is the test of stony and thorny ground. Here, we must endure tribulation because of the word, remove stones, and establish deep foundations. We also face the test of thorns, representing all the cares of this world that can choke the seed. In these aspects, we are to be sanctified to our name and work, preparing to bear fruit on good ground.

The flower represents sanctified believers whose lives are good ground. They hear the word, understand it and bear fruit. These are firstfruit believers who have been separated, through a season of trial, to the fruitfulness of their work. Having produced a harvest, they have seed for sowing. Their lives can be sown once again in another season of fruitfulness.

References:

1Pe 1:23 Ecc 11:6
Isa 28:23-29 2Co 9:10
Mat 13:3-9, 14-15, 23

Further Study

Mar 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 24

The firstfruits of sonship

The term 'firstfruits' has a vast scriptural background. Israel was commanded to offer firstfruits. The nation also celebrated a feast of firstfruits. Christ was called 'the Firstfruits'. So too, believers and faithful families in the New Testament were called 'firstfruits'. The application for us is that we are to bring forth the fruit of *our* sonship. When we bear the fruit of Christ's life, we ourselves are a 'kind of firstfruits', as James says.

The subject gains strength when we distinguish between '*Christ* the Firstfruits' and *ourselves* as firstfruits. Firstfruits, for us, is demonstrated when we bring forth the fruit of Christ's offering in our lives. Assemblies that demonstrate this fruit are firstfruit assemblies.

The foundation of Christian faith is that Christ is our life. Our lives are hidden with Christ, in God. He has included us in Himself, in His work of atonement. However, bearing fruit involves more than just believing in Him. We are to be planted, rooted and grounded in Him, so that our own sonship bears fruit. We are to be His offspring. 'All who see them will recognise them because they are the offspring whom the Lord has blessed.'

When we love as He loves, when we live and lay down our lives for others in the same way as He did, then it's clear that we are firstfruit believers. When we can 'die daily' with Christ, and yet live by the power of God, we show that we are firstfruit believers. It is the resurrection life of Christ, coming forth by offering, that identifies firstfruit believers and firstfruit assemblies.

References:

Exo 23:16, 19 Isa 61:9
1Co 16:15 Jas 1:18
Php 3:10-11 Col 3:3-4
1Co 15:20, 23, 31

Further Study

Col 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 25

The sheaf of grain

The symbol of the sheaf of grain helps us understand the principle of firstfruits. A seed that is planted produces a whole head of grain. A seed is one of the greatest miracles of nature. Jesus spoke of the blade, the ear and the corn in the ear – referring to a three-fold growth. We are considering the cup, bud and flower of the almond – also a three-fold growth. A seed sprouts and produces a head of grain containing many seeds.

Christ committed Himself to be a seed that went into the ground to die so that a whole sheaf of grain could come forth. This is how we should understand His resurrection. He died as one seed, having included us in the one body of His flesh, so that we could be reconciled. By burial and resurrection, He raised us with Himself as a multitude of seeds in one sheaf.

The truth of this symbolic picture is confirmed when Paul speaks about baptism. He says that we are planted (Gr. grafted, united) in the *likeness* of His death, and also in His resurrection. When the One died (Christ), we all died. His death was really our death, for we were the ones who were dead in sin. Christ emptied and humbled Himself all the way ‘outside the camp’ to partake of our death and eternal judgement. Then, He brought us back from the dead, in Himself.

God has made us *alive* together with Christ, and *raised* us to sit together in heavenly places. This is proclaimed when we are baptised into Christ. We put on Christ, like a garment, so that He is our righteousness, sanctification and redemption. We are ‘of Him’ and ‘in Him’. The seven-fold anointing that was upon Christ is now upon us to enable us to grow up to maturity.

References:

Mar 4:28 1Jn 2:29
 Joh 12:24 Col 1:22
 Heb 13:12, 20 Eph 2:4-6
 Rom 6:5 Gal 3:27
 2Co 5:14 1Co 1:30

Further Study

Rev 7

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 26

The second time

We are to be separated *from* the firstfruits' sheaf to become firstfruit believers *ourselves*. We are to bring forth the fruit of our own sonship from a seed. This is the application of the theme of firstfruits. This is how we grow to be a lampstand church. As it was for Christ, we also are to be seeds that are sown in the ground by losing our lives *with* Him. Then we too bring forth a harvest. As the psalmist said, we sow seed with tears, but we come again rejoicing, bringing the sheaves with us.

We might call this the *second time* of our Christian experience. At first, we are included in *His* offering. Now we are to find the power of offering, ourselves. We are to *lose* our lives, and not *love* our lives, as we follow Christ's example. He was a 'grain of wheat' that went into the ground and died. He brought forth a harvest. Now we are to sow our lives by offering, and bring forth our own harvest of righteousness. We can compare this experience to the cup, bud and flower of the almond cluster.

The *cup* is the first swelling on the almond branch. This first phase applies to us when we are joined to Christ, by baptism, and receive adoption as sons. We are joined to the base, which represents the seven elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ. We receive the lamp-messengers and are illuminated to the truth of our sonship. Our lamps are lit. We begin to grow up in the seven foundations necessary for maturity.

References:

Mat 16:25 Rom 8:15
Psa 126:5-6 Luk 12:35
Joh 12:24-25 Gal 3:27

Further Study

Joh 15

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 27

The cup, the bud and the flower

Maturing believers are connected to the administration of Christ, as illustrated by the cup joined to the lamp. The lamp administration of Christ is enabling the assembly of believers to grow, right from the beginning.

The bud of the almond is the segment that carries all the potential for the flower. In application, this is the phase of being 'in His name'. When we join the fellowship of *His* name, and offer to others according to *our* name in Him, then we are 'in the name'. In 'word or deed', we are doing 'all in the name of the Lord Jesus'. This is what Jesus is referring to when He speaks of 'two or three ... gathered together in My name', where *He* is in the midst.

In the aspect of the bud, we are being sanctified to our name, works and expression within the fellowship of firstfruits. We are preparing to take our place in the 'flower'. The flower represents the corporate expression of the body of Christ. In the aspect of the bud, we are established in first principles (seven elements in the base, seven foundations for growing) and we are able to bring forth fruit. The flower of the almond holds the fruit. In the symbol of the lampstand, the place of the fruit is taken by the lamp. This illustrates that the fruit of the flower is evident in the fact that the lamp, the administration of Christ, shines forth. The fruit is the light. As we have fellowship, we are sanctified, we are established, and are able to bear fruit. We are part of His administration for directing light. The anointing of God in the lamp is integrated with the flower. Accordingly, we can say that the lamp is hidden in the flower. Only the light is seen. The petals of the flower are casting the light in a particular direction or aspect. The power of God is directed 'toward you', as Paul said.

References:

Col 3:17 1Co 6:11
Mat 18:20 2Co 13:4
1Jn 5:13 1Co 5:4

Further Study

Eph 5

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 30

The flower is the fellowship

The flower is the assembly of fruitful believers. The flower is a fellowship of firstfruit individuals and households, who are mature in fellowship, and able to support the lamp. The connection between flower and lamp is the key. The flower represents the fruitful works of the many sons. Equally, the fruitful works are the evidence of the oil of grace that is in the lamp. The two are integrated at the point of light. The fire of the Holy Spirit produces the fusion. The fruit of the whole cluster is the light. The works of the many sons are able to shine the light of the seven Spirits of God. In this way, the command of Jesus is fulfilled: 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'

The light of the seven Spirits of God cannot be manifested without the flower. The flower represents the assembly of sons of God who are capable of bringing firstfruits. The lamp of the seven Spirits of God cannot shine without a context that is *in flesh*. Equally, the assembly of believers, on its own, has no purpose without the light of the seven Spirits of God.

We note, however, that our sonship and the oil of the seven Spirits of God are not the same thing. One is the gold of our *sonship*, while the other is the grace of God that comes by *gift*. These two meet in an assembly that has grown up in the obedience of Christ, by the Spirit, and is able to shine forth the Spirit with firm faith and without presumption.

References:

Mat 5:16 1Th 5:6-8
 Eph 5:8-9 1Pe 2:9
 Luk 3:16 1Jn 1:5-7
 Rev 4:5

Further Study

Rom 13

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 1

The witness of the lampstand

We can never claim to be equal to the measure of the Spirit of God. The oil and light belong to God. However we do grow up by what comes down from above. We grow up as the weak planting of the Lord so that He is glorified. It is a great 'mercy' that we should be called to 'proclaim the excellencies' of God. We are to grow in the obedience of faith to meet this call, without presuming that the glory belongs to us. 'As it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord".'

In all three stages - cup, bud and flower - two things are happening. Sonship is growing up by the ministry that is coming down from above. It requires the messenger administration of Christ to grow a lampstand. At the same time, the lamp-light of God is revealed to the world by the sonship that is growing up. As we grow in faith as sons of God, we are able to meet the administration that is coming to the church from the throne of Christ. The connection, the ignition, is the work of the Holy Spirit who brings the fire. The administration of Christ is brought to us by the stars in His hand. At the same time, the Holy Spirit joins us to the administration as He brings illumination and causes our hearts to burn.

Essentially, our hearts burn because the Scriptures are applied to us, through the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures become *present truth*; truth that is present with us. The truth of our sonship, of our place in Christ, is revealed to us. We feel called by name, and we are alight with the motivation to bring forth the fruit of this calling and predestination.

References:

1Pe 2:9-10 Eph 4:15
 1Co 1:2, 31 Rev 1:20
 Luk 24:32 2Pe 1:12
 2Ti 1:9 Jas 1:17

Further Study

2Th 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 2

Cycles of firstfruits

As believers, we are firstly *ignited* by the star-messengers who bring a lamp. Then we are *sanctified* by the ministry of Christ to us. The messenger administration is active in the 'laying on of hands' that separates us to our name and work. Then, thirdly, we are *integrated* with the lamp administration.

The lampstand clusters represent repeating cycles of fruitfulness, not just one fixed season. Firstfruit believers are those who can sow again and again. This is how new branches grow and form a complete lampstand.

In the feasts of Israel, firstfruits were brought in a repeating cycle of planting and harvesting. This is the meaning behind the symbol of firstfruits. Once we begin a life of offering, based in Christ's offering, we continue in many cycles across our lives. There is a daily application in terms of living as firstfruit believers. There is a seasonal application where, after bearing fruit, our lives are pruned so as to bring forth *more* fruit. In another sense, we can say that the whole of life is one complete development of firstfruits. As Paul says, even at the end of our lives, we still only plant a 'mere grain' of the fruit that will come forth in the resurrection.

As we apply the symbols of cup, bud and flower, it is important to remember the principle of 'first and second time'. This is well-stated in the Scriptures. For us, our 'first time' brings us into the firstfruit assembly in a very short time. When Paul was in Ephesus, the church came to firstfruits in a period of only *three months*. After three months, Paul moved the assembly into a school, where he could teach and outreach for two full years. We know that messengers, overseers, new branches, and even new lampstands, all developed from that school.

References:

Joh 15:2
1Co 15:37
1Co 6:11

1Ki 19:7
Act 19:8-10
Gen 22:15

Further Study

1Co 16

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 3

Losing our lampstand

By the end of the New Testament, the churches were in danger of losing their lampstand. Ephesus was called 'fallen', and Laodicea was told to 'buy gold', which was a symbolic reference to the lampstand. These churches brought firstfruits in one season, but were sorely tested as they moved into further seasons of growth.

A lampstand church is not established by one season of firstfruits. The gold of purified faith is developed once assemblies are thoroughly established the second time, and beyond, as firstfruit assemblies. Then it is clear that the cycles of offering will continue. This was the kind of 'fruit' that Paul desired to find among the churches. He was not just trying to sustain them as faithful believers and warn them against falling away. He was trying to maintain his interface as a lamp-messenger who travelled with, and represented, a large administration of gifted messengers. The churches struggled with this relationship between flower and lamp. Corinth began to choose gifted instructors over against Paul's disposition of weakness. Paul said that some of these were false workers, belonging to Satan's administration. The church in Galatia was very devoted to Paul at first, but treated him as an enemy as he continued to speak the truth. Paul compared their turning back to law with witchcraft. 'Who has bewitched you?' Here too, he spoke of those who had become the *enemies* of the cross of Christ.

These examples are a warning to us. Our first cycle of blessing is just the pattern. We are firstfruit assemblies when we are fully established in the mode of firstfruits. We can sow, and be sown, again and again through various seasons as life proceeds.

References:

Rev 2:5 Rev 3:18
Rom 15:28 1Pe 1:7
2Co 11:13 Gal 3:1
Gal 6:12

Further Study

1Co 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 4