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Revelation  
Chapter 1  
Revealing the Mystery of Light  
To Those He Loves  
vs. 4-6

**Revelation 1:4-6:** John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Well, we come to this wonderful book of the unveiling, of laying bare not only what is in this world, but clearly the plans that God has for us. I think it's one of the reasons why it's such an endearing book, and as we talked last week, I hope that you began to understand that this is a love letter. If you don't, then we need to go back and review some of the things we talked about because the person that God is going to have pen this and ultimately convey this message to the seven churches is none other than John; John the beloved. John, the one that leaned his head against the chest of our Lord and Savior. John, the one that continued to proclaim the love of God in the Gospel of John, and as you read, 1, 2, and 3 John repeats over and over again that God loves you. Why John? Because it's a love letter. He's the best one.

If you look at the very beginning of Revelation, Revelation 1:2, he is described as the one who bore witness to the word of God and the testimony of Christ Jesus. In other words, everything that he saw as he goes on and says. So, why was he the one chosen? Because he begins to reveal in the Gospel of John just how much God loves you, and

that the relationship with God is what belief is all about. It's impossible really to believe in somebody that you don't trust or somebody that you don't love. So, as he ultimately ends in the Gospel of John, as Jesus is dialoguing with Peter, the question that is asked is not "Do you believe," but what? "Do you love Me?" Because if you in fact have a relationship with somebody, you trust them implicitly. It is this John that conveys this message, and it is a message of love, because as we reviewed last week, God reveals things to those that are close to Him. Specifically, as we talked about in John 15:15,

"... I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

I think of Daniel in the Old Testament, and it says while Daniel was praying and confessing his sins, the angel declared, "Oh, Daniel, I have come to give you insight and understanding."

Of course, Amos 3:7 is a famous quote,

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing  
Unless He reveals His secret counsel  
To His servants...”

The fact that you are His friends is going to really convey this wonderful message, and He is telling you these things because He loves you. He is unveiling these secrets, these hidden things and in some way what we're going to do as we go through the study of Revelation is demystify Revelation because in many circles, it has become either just some kind of textbook about end times, eschatology or it has become something that is kind of weird and spooky. So, we're going to take all of that out and really see it for what it is and that is God really unveiling to those that He loves those wonderful things that give you insight so that you might be separate from the world. In many respects, what He literally is doing is He's calling the church out from the world. “Come out from among them. Be separate” as Paul writes. Now, we know clearly that the words of this book cannot be understood unless the Spirit of God is within you and is one of the reasons why it once again, that this, among other books of Scripture, are

closed to people because that they are not walking in the Spirit, or more specifically, they don't even have the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 2 is very clear that the things of God cannot be known except by and through the Spirit of God. So, He is the One that reveals these things to us.

It's a wonderful thing as he goes on and says we have the mind of Christ, and you realize that if you picture what the mind of Christ is like, probably there's no better text than Philippians 2, that says, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Now, as you begin to read that, you begin to read obviously the mind of somebody that loves. He literally holds others in higher esteem than Himself and takes on the form of a bond servant. This is the person writing this book. This is the heart of Christ writing this book. This is not a scary book. This is a wonderful book; a wonderful book that is telling you of God's love and His plans for you. So, as we begin to read this, we understand that God is working these things that we might see His wondrous love, and He is revealing

things to us that we might be protected and really understand why He is calling us out.

So, as we pick up in Revelation 1:4, we now read that John is declaring this message to the church. Now, what's interesting is, sort of halfway in the verses that we're looking at, he's going to amalgamate Christ as being the One that is proclaiming this message as much as John. So, it's like they're teaming up to proclaim this message. It's like they are together and that's one of the wonderful things about this message. We see John, and he's not just simply proclaiming to you a message. It's like he's with God in the Spirit.

Let me show you something. If you look with me in Revelation 1:10, John says,

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...”

So, he's telling us that it's almost like our hearts are in heaven with God. If I could put it that way. There's a union that we have that though in fact we are on this earth and our Father is in heaven, yet there is a sense that somehow, we're in His presence and it's an interesting picture that you're going to see being presented over and

over again. It's probably one of the reasons why people are oftentimes so confused about this because they're going, "Why is he saying it this way?" He's conveying that there's this tie between him and Christ, and it's the same tie that he has, and this is very important that you understand this, with the church. It's the same tie that He has with the church.

So, we'll pick up, if you look with me in verse 4,

(Revelation 1:4) "John to the seven churches that are in Asia..."

Now, you often wonder why in the world would it be these seven churches in as what we know to be Asia Minor, more specifically, probably Turkey in this day and age? Why is it this place? Why is he focusing on this place? Well, the best way I can tell you is it literally is a place where east and west met. It was like the center hub of information so that it was where mysticism and philosophy came together. It was where Judaism kind of came up from the south and all kinds of occult came into the mix, and it was one of the reasons why this place was chosen because it was truly an amalgamation of all the

things of the world. And it was a hub in which these things went out into all the world. It's the perfect picture of God using this place where mankind meets and proclaiming His word throughout all of the world. The best picture that I can give you is kind of like Asia was kind of like the Internet and TV all in one, and it was the information hub of the world. So, God writes to these; John addresses these seven churches. Seven, obviously is a number that whether it be in Greek or whether it be in the Hebrew, makes reference to a kind of completion. If you go back all the way, at its very inception, it has the connotation, in fact, they actually use the number seven to seven oneself. It would be like you're making a promise, and you said, "I seven myself." Well, that's like you devoting yourself or completely saying the truth. So, you would use that particular number or that particular word. What the Scripture seems to be conveying is that these are wholly devoted to God, and they're representative of His church, which He has devoted unto Himself. So, it's an interesting picture of the seven churches in a place in which God has ordained to proclaim



the message to the world. It's a great introduction, isn't it? So, John writes this.

Now, once again, just a reminder, John himself, his name means, what? Jehovah's gracious gift. So, Jehovah's gracious gift is proclaiming this to the churches that God has ordained to do something.

If you look with me in verse 4,

“John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace...”

Now, the reason why he interjects this, and of course, when you read many of Paul's letters, you see this interjected at the very beginning or sometimes even towards the end, is that this is what distinguishes us as a body. When he writes to the church, if you think about it, “*ekklēsia*” is making reference to those that are called out. It actually has two kinds of connotations. One is, we're called out, that is to be separate from the world, and then we're also gathered together. It says Paul writes to the Church of Corinth, “When you come together, do this” and it's a coming together. So, “*ekklēsia*” or gathering together is a calling out of and a distinction that

begins to come clear. What is the distinction? The distinction is that we have the favor of God upon us, and it creates a completion. The word “peace,” “*shalom*” or “*eirēnē*” in the Greek makes reference to the fact that we feel completed, or we feel whole. We don't feel like there's any need for anything else. We're completely fulfilled. The world looks at us and they go, “Ok. Why are you content?” And we go, “Christ. The favor of God is upon us.” And when you consider the favor of God is upon you, I mean, if God is for you who can be against you, right? What a wonderful picture that is. So, the church is established to really be distinguished in a very unique way as those that have been favored by God and as a result have a great peace and a great joy and a great contentment that obviously the world could never give. It's the one thing that actually causes us, according to Matthew 5, to be lights set on a hill. We should be living in such a way that not only as Peter writes that the world is wondering why we don't run in the same dissipation as they do, but we should be living in such a way that there's a peace that passes all understanding. In a world that is very upset and full of anxiety, can you imagine if

somebody actually lived that way? Can you imagine if a body of believers actually live that way? This is perhaps the greatest light that we can proclaim. A peace that passes all understanding. So, the grace of God and peace is very much an introduction about the light that the church really proclaims.

I like the passage in Ephesians 5, he says, "You once were darkness, but now you are light." What an amazing transition that is. I'm actually light and as Matthew 5 says to the churches, "You are the light to the world." So, God has so ordained us to be that.

So, as you look at the passage, it is this grace and peace that has been given to us. Now, the description of the One who has given this to us is in a very unique way being proclaimed. If you look at the passage, it says,

(Revelation 1:4) "... from Him who is..."

The best way to describe that particular phrase is "from Him who is being" because the picture of it is in the present continuous. That means that he's letting us know that His presence is never interrupted, that His control is never interrupted. This is very important for you and me

to know that God doesn't sleep, or slumber and He doesn't take a vacation, and then He doesn't have a respite. The things that God is doing, it's consistent and constant and He is ever being in your lives. He is ever being your God; He is ever being your Savior. So, as he describes it, "Him who is being," if you look at the next phrase,

"...who was..."

Which is telling us once again that there is no interruption in the continuousness of His existence and His influence and His control over all mankind. If you think how wonderful that is, but in the context of him declaring this, why is he declaring this? And this is the reason why, because he's declaring that the church was not an afterthought, that the church was a forever idea. People go, "Well, maybe that didn't work out, so He went with the church." It was ordained from the beginning and God was controlling all these so that what is established with the seven churches he is conveying to them has been an eternal thing throughout ages past.

"... Him who is and who was and..."

Who actually is in the present continuous, “who presently is coming,” is actually the phrase there. What it's revealing is He is presently unveiling Himself and manifesting Himself to mankind until that day, when that is finally complete, and we see Him face to face. But the point is that He is not sedentary. The picture oftentimes that people see is that God's kind of twiddling His thumbs until He's going to come, and the text wants you to see, no, He is working things in the world right now that is really demonstrating His coming and His presence, and He is revealing His appearance. God is moving and acting in our lives and for our lives, and so He is the One presently coming, and he adds in the text,

“... from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.”

That's an interesting picture, before His throne. Can you imagine being before the throne of God? Can you imagine the seven Spirits? Let me just say this, there are passages that we can parallel to this. One of them obviously is the one that is many times used in Isaiah 11. Let's go ahead and look at it because you have to deal with the elephant in the room first, right?

So, let's look at Isaiah 11, and in Isaiah 11, the Jews actually make reference to the fact that there are seven Spirits of God, and they take it from this particular text. I'm not going to do a dissertation of this particular passage, but I just want to let you know that it's here and it is making reference specifically to, of course, obviously the Messiah, or Jesus Christ, which I would say yields tremendous amount of credence in what they're saying and in the fact that it may even have something to do with what we're reading there in Revelation. But if you look with me in Isaiah 11, it says,

(Isaiah 11:1) “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,

And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

(Isaiah 11:2) The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,

The spirit of wisdom and understanding,

The spirit of counsel and strength,

The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

(Isaiah 11:3) And He will delight...”

In fact, he goes through that interesting list, and the best way I can describe the list, and the Jews have different

ways of numbering it, but it is describing a spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence for God and discernment and those seem to be as he's describing the seven Spirits of God. In many respects, I would say, you could probably put it in this particular text, but I don't think that would do it justice.

So, I want you to go back to with me to Revelation 1 and I want you to look specifically at that particular phrase, (Revelation 1:4) “... and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.”

And I want you to turn with me in Chapter 3, which is a wonderful promise to the church at Laodicea and that wonderful promise of the church at Laodicea is “If you'll overcome, you could sit on the throne with Me.” Isn't that a great promise?

So, it says,

(Revelation 3:21) ““He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.””

That's an interesting picture of the church reigning with Him.

As you drop on down to Chapter 4, things get a little clearer. In fact, if you look with me in verse 2, what does John say?

(Revelation 4:2) “Immediately I was in the Spirit...”

Now remember, we're talking about seven Spirits around the throne.

“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold...”

What was there? A throne.

So, John's spirit was actually up there.

“... a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.”

He begins to describe the marvelous throne.

Then he says this,

(Revelation 4:4) “Around the throne were twenty-four thrones...”

We'll stop there. 24 Thrones would be 24 people ruling with him.



“... and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders...”

That’s an interesting word to describe oftentimes the leaders of the Old Testament as well as the leaders of the New Testament.

Scripture makes an interesting reference in Daniel 12, as you come to the end that the patriarchs of old were like lights, stars in the night, and Scripture tells us that God created the lesser lights for the nighttime and of course, the brighter for the day. So, as we understand in creation, when God created the earth, it starts off, “And there was evening.” So, it was night first, “and then there was morning, one day.” Just go through Genesis. It always starts off that way. Jews will to this day declare the day begins with sunset. That's when it begins. So, it was evening and then there was morning, one day.” How does this earth walk through time? Well, if you think about it, the Old Testament was a picture of evening, nighttime, and God used His Old Testament saints, and specifically we'll talk about the patriarchs of old, the 12 tribes, and they were a picture of the nighttime. Jesus will say when He's talking to disciples, “Do you not have 12 hours in the

day?" So, He himself divided into 2, 12 and 12. So, you have the patriarchs, who are the lights shining in the night, proclaiming the message, but then you have Christ, and He comes on the earth. Now, we have daytime, and Christ comes on the earth, and He reveals light.

In fact, John 1 is all about that, isn't it? And the Light came into the world and the darkness couldn't comprehend it. Christ Himself will say, "I am the Light of the world." So, He then turns to His disciples and He says, "And you are sons of the day." So, now we have 12 of the day. So, we have 12 hours of the night, 12 hours of the day. What do you have? 24 elders that are before the throne.

"...twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

(Revelation 4:5) Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder."

I don't know if you remember, a while back we went through that process of, "what are these peals of thunder?" It's interesting as you're walking through Revelation. He doesn't really let you know. He just says, "There were seven peels of thunder." Finally, you get to

Revelation 19, and he goes, “And the Saints in heaven cried out. It was like there were seven peals of thunder” and you go, “That's what it was.” It was massive declaration of Christ that He is their master and that He's the victor. What a wonderful time that's going to be. That's the seven peals of thunder.

Now, if you look with me, it says,

“...flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

Now, I'm not going to argue with the Isaiah 11 text, but what I am going to say is this, that I'm thoroughly convinced, and you'll see this as we go, that when you begin to see the seven churches in Asia, you're going to see seven different personalities. You're going to see seven different works that are seen to be raised for seven different reasons. God raises His church up to proclaim the same message, Jesus Christ alone, right? But you watch the churches. I've oftentimes thought about the particular works in California and some of the works that are coming out of California, you're going, “I understand

why that works in California, because they really need to hear it that way” and you realize that God raises up a particular work. I would say this, that I feel that some have a sense of greater understanding. Some have a greater sense of wisdom. Some have a greater sense of discernment that God raises up different works for different reasons, and if you want to tie in Isaiah 11 with that, but specifically what He's talking about with the seven Spirits of God is the seven churches. How do we know that?

Well, you come to the end of Revelation 1, and we'll just pick up a verse 19 as we see this interesting picture of seven lampstands and seven stars.

(Revelation 1:19) “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

(Revelation 1:20) “As for 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 are the seven churches.”

So, what is he talking about? Well, obviously he's talking about angels as we talked about last week, the messengers of God, that God has ordained these messengers, these pastors, as it were, to have a heart with God and tied with God. Scripture is wanting you to see is some kind of heavenly connection between the spirit of the leadership in that church and God in heaven, and it's as if He's dwelling among them. They're talking with Him, and He's called them clearly to be, what? Lights in the world. You are called to be lights in the world. So, what an interesting picture that He gives us from the seven spirits; what He's really saying is this is the heart of the leadership of these churches, we have been communing about this so that when some of these things are going to be dealt with as we go through the seven churches, it is God also saying, "I see this, they see this, we all come together, and we want to fix this. We want your home to be a better place." You can sense the hearts are altogether and in unity. Where the Spirit of God is there's unity, right? There is a sense of unity with God's church, with His leadership, and obviously there is a sense of moving of His Spirit in and among and through them.

So, it says,

(Revelation 1:4) “... and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.”

More specifically, who are taking their cues from Him. Remember, we oftentimes quote that passage in Peter, “But sanctify Christ as Lord of your heart, and you'll always be ready to give an answer.” Well, that sanctifying Christ as Lord is putting Him on the throne, and when He's on the throne, you know the right decisions to make, right? And it's one of the reasons why you want the elders making those decisions, because these are men that should be loving God, and they only have one agenda and that is to do what God tells them to do. As we were going through the Book of Timothy, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, we're called to be agents of God, and God has called us to represent Him and to represent His truth, and He is Lord. It is that Lordship that moves and motivates us to make the decisions that we make. So, you can feel the heavens and the connection of the heavens and the earth in this interesting picture.

It goes on and reads this way,

(Revelation 1:5) “and from Jesus Christ...”

Isn't that a wonderful name? Savior, of course, obviously, anointed to be Savior on our behalf.

“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness...”

The true One that you can depend on.

“... the firstborn of the dead...”

I love that phrase, don't you? What is that telling us?

That's telling us that God, that Christ was the only One that could produce life out of death. He's the only One, and when He produced life after death, He was doing that to lead us the same way, firstborn from the dead. Now, He's wanting to convey clearly, not only that He's constantly and has been consistently in control, but He's the only One that can defeat and reign over everything. This is what is to bring the church the greatest comfort, because there are a lot of things that you're going to be seeing. There are a lot of things that are going to be transpiring over the time in which we're on the earth, things that are unsettling, things that are difficult, but you know Who's in control? You know Who has the power?

You know the One according to this particular passage, that seems to be the One that can literally defeat death? Firstborn from the dead, what a great picture; begotten from death, from nonexistence. What a wonderful picture.

“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth...”

Obviously, as you read in Colossians, it says that He declared His power over every ruler. Of course, every name will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

“... and the ruler of the kings of the earth...”

What is He wanting us to know? Well, as Paul writes to Timothy, things are going to proceed from bad to worse, and it's oftentimes going to be in the realm of the government. Things are not going to look good. What does he want you to know? He can defeat death; He's over kings; there's nothing that can separate you from the love of God.

So, the passage reads this way,



“... and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us...”

See, this is why it's so important to understand this is a love letter. It starts off by saying, “I'm writing to you from One who loved me and from One I deeply loved. We're both sitting down and telling you ‘I love you too.’” How comforting. I mean, when you think about the future, what is there that could shake you on that one?

“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins...”

Another wonderful thing that as you begin to read the different epistles, you begin to realize, “I'm being freed from this. I'm being freed from that.” I mean, Galatians tells us that we're freed from what man thinks. Isn't that a wonderful truth, that you and I, we don't have to care about what man thinks anymore? That if we please God, that's enough. Most anxiety that I think people have is that they're worried about what other people are going to think about them, or you have the anxiety about being taken care of. “What's going to happen? What am I going

to eat? How am I going to clothe myself? What kind of roof am I going to have?" He goes, "Wait a minute, I take care of the birds, flowers. No problem. I got that." So, He begins to reveal all of those things, and on top of that wonderful truth, He says, "I've released you from the bondage of your sins." Now, there's an interesting picture in this because he begins to talk about the washing.

In fact, if you read the passage,

"... and released us from our sins by His blood."

Actually, by the washing of His blood.

There are a number of examples, I won't go into all of them, but Tabitha in Acts is one; of course, the jailer when Paul was beat was another. But there's a picture of people coming in and washing bodies, sometimes dead bodies, of the wounds that had marred their bodies, and before they either bury them or somebody that has been beaten severely and they're washing their wounds. This is kind of the picture that's conveyed here. The wonderful point is that Christ is washing the wounds. If you think about it, the wounds that you and I bear are sometimes yes, afflicted by other people, but oftentimes afflicted by

us, and you get this wonderful picture of Christ coming, and He says, "I'm washing all the wounds of those sins that have come into your life and all the hurts and I'm healing you." And you say, "How do You do this?" And He says, "By My sacrifice for you, that's how much I want you to be whole." So, you see the blood actually washing and cleansing us from all the hurts and all the pains. It has this feeling like, "I'm clean because He loves me so much." I mean, there's no other conclusion that you can come up with. "I'm clean because He loves me so much." Now, the question you have to ask yourself is, why is He telling this to the seven churches? And the answer is very clear, because they've been ordained to proclaim the clarity of the simplicity of this message, that it's only Christ that sets you free from all of these things that have been pushing you down. That's why Christ says so clearly, "Come unto Me all who were weary, heavy laden, beat down, oppressed," and oftentimes by our own sins, as well as by those around us and God says, "I'm going to wash it all away and all the pain is going to go away and all the hurt's going to go away and all the sores and all of the things that have held you back, I've taken." "By His

stripes, we are healed.” And you can just feel the cleansing. He's telling the church this is what motivates you; this is the Light of the world.

Remember, Romans 12:1, listen how it starts off,

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God...”

And then he goes on,

“... present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice...”

Well, why would I do what I do? See, the church is motivated by the fact that they've been shown mercy. This is the one thing that causes the light to shine brightly. Unfortunately, a lot of times churches go around pointing their fingers at everybody and instead of being light, they become darkness. People walk out feeling this heavy cloud over them because they were in the church. Think about it, what is light? Well, it's obviously the opposite of darkness, which is the metaphor for depression, sorrow, hurt, pain. So, what is the church supposed to do? Well, what is it Galatians 5 says? “It was for freedom that Christ came to set you free.” What is a church? It's a freeing agent. So, we're telling people, “You can be washed; you

can be cleansed. The mercy of God has been showered upon you.” And as Titus 3 so aptly puts it, we once too were, but we've been set free. In fact, it's the one thing that Paul stands on when he writes to Timothy. He goes, “You know, I was, but I was shown mercy, and it was for this reason that I would proclaim the message. It was like God picked the perfect guy. Because I know how merciful God can be.” And that's what the church does.

So, watch the very next phrase, because this is what really defines us and what he's going to convey defines our light.

(Revelation 1:5) “...and released us from our sins by His blood.”

He paid the price, obviously, for something we did.

(Revelation 1:6) “and He has made us...”

So, if you look, “He has released us,” in verse 5; “He has made us,” in verse 6, to what?

“... to be a kingdom, priests...”

Now, let me just kind of put that in a better order, to actually be kings, not a kingdom. I wouldn't put the word

“kingdom” there. It's making reference to the fact that He's made us to be kings, and He's made us to be priests. If you look in 1 Peter 2, he talks about the fact that we're a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that we've actually been called out of darkness and been ushered into His marvelous light. So, the point is that He has rescued us. He has rescued us, first of all, to reign with Him, to be kings. Now the word “kings” in the text is making reference to leaders of people. I've oftentimes thought about the whole etymology of kings, and of course, you go back to the Old Testament and the etymology of the root word is “molech,” which the god of Molech, the people worshipped, and they sacrificed their children to, and in many respects, when the nation of Israel said, “We want a king.” He goes, “You want a Molech? They're going to take your children.” So, He begins to describe the way of kings. In the process, God goes, “Ok. You want somebody that will rule over you. I'll be your Molech, but instead of taking your children, I'll save your children.” So, He takes their word and transforms it. So, by the time we're in the

New Testament, this word for king is actually “leader of peoples”. God says, “I've chosen you to lead people.” Ok. That's half of it. To what? To be priests. So, the second part of it, “I've chosen you to lead people to devote themselves to God.” That's why God has called the church. We're here to lead people. Unfortunately, oftentimes the church is being led around by the world. The world is telling them, “Do this. Do this. Do it this way.” We should be leading them. God has called us to lead them to be devoted to God, because a priest was always the picture and the Greek word in this particular text is “one solely devoted to serve God,” and that's what we're doing. We're calling people to Himself. You hear people, “Where are you going?” “I'm going to follow God. Come on with me.” And if you think about it, “Go into all the world and make disciples.” That's what we're doing. We're leading people to be like Christ. We're pointing them to Him. Now, why would God choose certain people to do this and others not? He's looking for those that have actually partaken of His mercy. Think about it. When you have realized the love of God and the mercy in your life, do you think you would be good at leading people into

mercy? Do you think you would be good at leading people into the love of Christ? The love of Christ will begin to constrain you and begin to move you, and you won't lead people by hitting them over the head. You'll lead people by actually patching them up and ministering to them. So, God has called the church to be these kinds of lights.

If you look at the passage,

“and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever...”

If this is the way that it's going to be, if this is the way that it's supposed to be, I don't want this to ever end. I mean, the point of the text is, if we're going to be gathered together and we're going to be drawn to Him because of His love for us and because of His great mercy for us, I don't want this to ever stop. Do you want this to ever stop? Think about the way that most men gather together, it's men bragging about what he can do and how grand he is, and 90% of the people feel small. But you and I are going to be in heaven and we're going to be trying to outdo each other on who was shown the most



mercy, and that only gets better because the greatness and the love of God is just the greatest thing to celebrate. So, God has called the church, and if you understand the picture that He's painting and that's what He's doing, He's painting this picture of the hearts of the pastors with God in unity of calling us all to be leaders of men that we might devote all of our efforts to serve God, and that's what we're about. That's what the church is about. We're lights in the world calling them out of darkness and I have found that the more I began to serve God, the more I began to point to Christ, not only the happier I am, but it seems like all the other problems in my life disappear. When you're serving and taking on the mind of Christ, according to Scripture, you begin to get empowered by the Spirit of Christ. I've oftentimes told my wife, "I don't know where I found the energy to do that but there it was." And there's just a realization as you begin to serve Him, God endows you with the strength because God has ordained that this should be.

The beginning of Revelation is all about this, and as we begin in this first chapter, you're going to see Jesus and

He's going to stand around the church and He's in the presence of the seven churches. That's where He is. We'll talk about the things that He's put in the sky that they could relate to, and every time they'd look in the skies, they could see the seven stars together, and God says, "See, it's just like that, and I'm walking around among you." As you go through Revelation, He's going to paint picture after picture after picture, and you know why? Because the purpose of pictures is to stir emotions, and what is He trying to stir in the church? "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." And in some of the pictures, you'll just see how horrific the world is, and in some of the pictures you'll just see how wonderful God is, and in both cases, He's going to begin to stir in your heart, "You've got to get here now." And we know that Scripture says, and every man that hopes in this, every man who has this hope in himself, purifies himself as He is pure. Scripture says that you and I have actually a crown waiting for us who have longed for His appearing, and I can hardly wait for that. So, as we go, we're going to be seeing how God is unveiling things for the purpose of the church longing for His coming.

## Closing Prayer:

Well, Father, we want to give You thanks for Your word and how it stirs in our hearts a longing for You. Lord, You have called us and You have shown us mercy. It is this mercy that beams on us that forms this light, that we begin to convey to others, "I was shown mercy. I was given a new life. My sins have been forgiven. My past wounds are now gone. I am called to point to the One who frees." The church is that wonderful agent, and we stand on this word. Christ came to save sinners. Why are you here? God ordained that you should lead people to be devoted to Him. What's going to convince you? When you receive His mercy, the love of Christ upon you, sins forgiven, past erased; the love of God embraced you. That's our forever message. Take, embrace this today, for the Lord is calling this church to be a light, and if you've never partaken of that mercy, you can't be the light. Come today with me.