

12.08.19

Revelation

Chapter 1

Revealing the Mystery of Light

The Light of Love

Radiating the Unfailing Love of Christ

vs. 7-20

Revelation 1:7-20: BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the

seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 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.”

My wife doesn't believe I'm going to finish this. That's ok. You don't have to have faith in me, just faith in God.

Isaiah 46:10 says that God declared the end from the beginning. He goes on to say in that verse, all of His purpose will be established. He will accomplish everything that He said. Scripture reveals to us that the heart of God, the plan of God, the thought of God has ever been in the works. It has never not been in the works. God has so ordained that there would be the heavens filled with people that loved Him, and this has always been His intent. He is accomplishing it and will finish it.

When we start off on this particular passage in verse 7, we see the Lord coming in the clouds. I think sometimes when we read particular phrases, our thoughts are “Well, clouds are nice.” And it speaks of in the Psalms that God

actually has the clouds like chariots so that to us the clouds don't really have to take on any kind of meaning, but that's never true with God. All the things that He has created, and we spoke about this a while back especially when we were going through the Book of Hebrews because Hebrews really conveys that the things of this earth are shadows. They are shadows that are pointing us to that which is real. The day is coming when you and I will actually see a real tree. We see trees, but it's just shadows. We're going to see real water. We're going to see real life. But now we just see dimly. Someday we're going to see all of those wonderful things. Scripture tells us that there are trees in heaven. It tells us that there's water in heaven. It tells us these things, but it's nothing like this. So, the clouds themselves are even shadows. The stars above are even signs of what is real. God is pointing to something, and all creation declares the glory of God, right?

So, Psalm 19 tells us that the sun coming up every day really displays not only the faithfulness of God, but the day when the Bridegroom comes, and He takes us home.

Revelation 19 ultimately goes there, in which the marriage supper of the Lamb comes, and we go, “Ok. So, every day You’re reminding us that You're coming. Every day.” He goes, “Yeah, My coming has always been in the works.”

As we're going through this Book of Revelation, my hope from the very start has been and will be to demystify the boo. To help you see that everything has a purpose, and every point is pointing ultimately to us having a relationship with God, that God is bringing His church home. Within the book, He's not only warning us, but He's revealing to us the things that we should be doing even while we're here. He gives us pictures and those pictures hopefully will stick in your mind so that you would ultimately embrace the real rather than just the pictures.

When he starts off in verse 7 and he says,

(Revelation 1:7) “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING...”

Once again, the tense of it seems to be that this is a present continuous thing. In other words, it's not something as much futuristic as it is happening currently. From time to time, I would lie on the grass and just look

at the clouds. Sometimes you try to figure out what they were forming and other times the beauty of the clouds themselves was just magnificent. I remember on one occasion, and this happened to me on a number of occasions, but on one particular one I remember, in which I saw one small cloud and then it was like I turned away, and as I looked back up, it had gotten bigger. I turned away again, and it looked like there was more in the sky. This particular verse is conveying that the Lord is coming and has been coming, bringing clouds. The picture is one of not only Him in the process of coming, but in the process of the clouds growing. As the clouds grow, what we understand is that it begins to produce a power, and that power oftentimes thunders and roars. It will be that picture that he gives us in Chapter 19, when Christ is coming, that you hear the thunders and the roar.

Remember, what are those? It's the voice of the saints, and it's their cries of victory. So, what is God doing? He's gathering His saints together.

This is why 1 Thessalonians 4 says we will meet Him in the clouds, and this particular text does not refer to clouds as

much as inanimate as it does, “He is coming *with* the clouds.” Isn't that what it says? “With the clouds”.

Hebrews writer will say,

(Hebrews 12:1) “...since we have so great a cloud of witnesses...”

And we realize that a storm is brooding, but it's a magnificent one, and these white billowing clouds are beginning to sound thunderous. How do we know they're white? Well, it tells us in Revelation 19 that all will be wearing white, and you can just see the multitude that are coming with Christ and gathering together with Him. I've oftentimes said every time you go outside, and you look, and you see those wonderful white billowing clouds, you know what you should be remembering? All of the saints that are coming. Isn't that a great picture? It's like the sun rising every day is God saying, “I'm coming. I'm coming.” What are the clouds saying? “We're coming. We're coming.” And what does the church say at the end? “Even so, come quickly.” So, the pictures that He paints are wonderful pictures and the signs that He gives us, of course, Genesis 1:14 says that the lights that He places in

the heavens are for signs as well as for seasons that He's painting pictures and He's giving us points. Unfortunately, man takes the signs, distorts them, twists them, even worships them, which they were never intended to be. But just because he misuses them doesn't mean that they were never meant to be signs. For God is the One who created them, and they were created for our good, for our benefit, but more than that, to display His great love for us. It's impossible to look at an unending universe and perceive that God would be ending. It's impossible to look at a non-ending universe and when God says, "My lovingkindness is from everlasting to everlasting," to think that there's a limit to His lovingkindness. So, He paints these wonderful pictures in the heavens and in all things that He creates, and you have to come out saying, "God is good, God is good." It's these pictures that we begin to see and not only that, but He's going to paint a picture of Christ with the church. Now, we're going to be talking about these seven stars because that's part of the lampstands, and that has been an ever picture throughout Scripture, because when we talk about light, the psalmist tells us that "Thy word is a lamp unto my

feet, a light unto my path.” We know that His word became flesh and dwelt among us, so He became the Light of the world.

It's interesting that John the Baptist is even described in John 5:35, he was a lamp shining brightly; burning and shining.

In Daniel 12:3, it talks about the saints in that final day that will be revealed, and he writes this, and I quote the verse,

“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

Isn't that a great picture? God is painting pictures and He's painting them into a great tapestry of creation. He's revealing to us wonderful things, and He's going to use His creation. The Creator, Jesus, is going to reveal the use of His creation in these pictures in the Book of Revelation in the way He is unveiling the pictures.

It says this,

(Revelation 1:7) “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him...”

Which seems to make reference specifically in the text to His people. Because as he goes on, he talks about, “every eye will see Him,” and he goes into the general term of nations. This particular phrase that he seems to be using seems to be talking about kin. The point is, that with His great love for His own, His own received Him not, and probably one of the greatest piercings that even happened to Him was the rejection of His own. All the world will testify as well of their own rejection as the passage says,

“BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.”

A passage that sounds tremendously similar to the passage in Zechariah, in which he proclaims the same truth.

He goes into verse 8 and he tells us that He's the beginning and the end. He actually uses the Greek alphabet to declare that.

(Revelation 1:8) “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come...”

And we talked about that, “who is being; who was being.” In other words, never an interruption in His presence, never an interruption of His faithfulness. Now, this is a key point because as He begins to paint the picture, He's establishing a foundation. The foundation is of what? Of His continuance. It is not unlike the picture in the Book of Hebrews in which he starts off and he says, “Now, I just want you to know that there are angels, but there's a Son, and He's like forever.” And it is the picture of endurance or continuance that we see begin to be embellished clearly in the Book of Hebrews.

In fact, ultimately, as the writer of Hebrews will say in Chapter 10, you have need of endurance. It will then show us that wonderful picture of endurance of Christ on the cross in Hebrews 12, and the text will say, “He

endured the cross.” He endured. So, he’ll ultimately conclude in Hebrews 13, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.”

What we're going to be introduced to is the Light of the world, what we're going to be introduced to is the fact that we are called to be lights in the world. What is that light? We know that the world has its own kind of lights and its own kind of direction. What's the difference? Here's the difference, and you're going to see it over and over again, the true light is always enduring. It lasts whereas the light that is not true will not last. So that once again in Hebrews it says you are saved if you hold firm your assurance until the end. One of the great testimonies of light to this world is that believers rejoice in the Lord always. Anybody can rejoice in the Lord, or anybody can rejoice when things are going well, but a believer rejoices always in the Lord. The continuance of his light doesn't flicker. He remains the same because that's who our Savior is. So, He declares, “I'm the same. I never change.” We bank on that, don't we?

(Revelation 1:8) ““I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.””

Now, watch the next verse. These are not 2 separate disjointed thoughts. John now begins to describe the evidence of light in him.

(Revelation 1:9) “I, John, your brother...”

Why is he stating in that way? Because he's conveying to us that we're related by an act of love of God, and we've become conjoined as brothers, or we would use the words “fond of each other,” “*phileo*”.

If you look in the passage,

“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation...”

Why would he rejoice or convey or open up in his addressing with the word “tribulation”? It would seem like it would be a put off. No, it's the test of true. It's a test of real.

“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance...”

Perseverance, endurance, continuance. It's the same word, "*hypomonē*". It makes reference to the fact that you're faithful not only to the end, but you're unmovable in it. We have an anchor for our soul, both sure and steadfast. Love never fails. I mean, if somebody loves sometimes and they don't love another time, where's the light? There's no grandeur to the light in not pointing to anything unique or anything strange, but you watch somebody remain consistent in their love for God and their love for one another never changes. That's a light. I mean, that's almost blinding in comparison to the darkness of the world. John says, "I've been persevering." Not unlike what Paul said to the Ephesians, "You want to know why I'm here? Ok." He goes, "Here's a mystery. I'm a Jew. You guys are Gentiles and I'm suffering for you. Now, that's a mystery." I mean, what would cause a Jew to want to suffer for a Gentile? What would cause him to want to go to prison? John says, "I'm your brother. You want to know why I'm here?"

We understand that the Isle of Patmos was a place where they sent prisoners, and they broke rock and he's

probably in his 90s. Suffering in his 90s and having to do hard labor that I don't think went too well, and I'm sure there were a lot of aches and pains, but he kept saying to himself, "But I'm here for my brothers." I mean, what other reason would he be there except for the fact that he's proclaiming the gospel? Probably the very gospel that he penned that wonderful message of the love of God. "Brothers, you want to know why I'm here, and you want to know what makes me true? The perseverance.

If you look, it is a theme, and I won't go too much into it because there's so much else I have to say today and we're just going to summarize the text that we're looking at. But if you look with me in Revelation 14:12, we're kind of in the midst of the difficulty of this, but it reads this way and you might want to underline it,

(Revelation 14:12) "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus."

Never waver. They do exactly what God says, and not only in external appearance, but actually with the heart.

What's the perseverance of the saints? They follow Jesus

explicitly. They follow Him implicitly. They do exactly what He says, and they do it from the heart. His commandments are not burdensome to them. What are His commandments? “Love one another as I have loved You.” Love the Father. It is His commandments, because as Romans will say, love really fulfills the Law, and it is the commandment of Christ. John says, “I'm persevering for you.” You go, “John, that's just like Jesus. The same yesterday, today and forever” and John goes, “Yeah. That's why I'm here to bring you this message. Because the message to you is, you can't let the light go out. The light has to keep burning. You can't stop, no matter how difficult things become or how arduous your life is. You're here for reason and you need to remain consistent.”

(Revelation 1:9) “I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

“This is why I'm here, to proclaim the testimony of Christ, and for your sakes, I was in the Spirit.” (Revelation 1:10)
Why would he be in the Spirit? You're going to be in the

Spirit too if you suffer for Christ. Peter will tell us that if you suffer for doing what is right, the glory of God rests upon you, and there is an empowerment and a great strength that comes from God when you're doing what you're doing to please Him. He doesn't always take away the pain or the suffering because where would the endurance be? But in the midst of the pain and the suffering He gives you the strength to endure. It's fundamentally the principle of 1 Corinthians 10, right? That you're not going to be tempted above what you're able, but God will somehow get you through it; not around it, but through it.

So, as we look at the passage, He begins to convey this picture, and you say, "Well, Pastor Gary, you're saying that he actually wasn't taken up into the presence of God?" No. I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying that every picture actually happened, but it's also telling us something. And it happened in such a way that it might tell us something. That God is painting a picture for you to see. The reality of it in your life.

So, he says,

(Revelation 1:10) “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...”

The Lord's Day would be what? Well, the Sabbath is never called the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day was always referred to as the first day of the week, which is Resurrection Day. It's why we meet. We don't meet on the Sabbath. We meet on the Lords Day. The church was always meeting on the Lord's Day once after Pentecost. Then it began to be on the Lord's Day that they would meet with them, and if you look at the disciples, it was the first day of the week that they met with them after resurrection. The Lord's Day is the picture of resurrection. We celebrate Resurrection Day every single week, and we declare we're going to celebrate resurrection until we are resurrected.

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet.”

A trumpet was fundamentally used for two things. One was to warn you about a battle coming and the other was to declare a celebration. Both things are true. Two things are happening within the Book of Revelation. There is going to be a war. There is a great battle that we're in, but

we're going to win. So, there's going to be a party at the end. "I heard this great voice." And what's interesting is the voice then will begin to get described as not only a sound of a trumpet but like thunder, and it almost as if the whole body of Christ is working in unison to proclaim the message.

(Revelation 1:10) "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,

(Revelation 1:11) saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches..."

And then he lists the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

These seven churches, as we'll go on to see, He speaks to directly. He knows them very well. What we're going to see within the passage is a description of Christ, and certain things that He's wearing, perhaps something that He's holding. All these descriptions will be used as he deals with the different churches. So, they have a significance. Sometimes the thought may be, "Well, when I see, is He going to look like this?" I can't tell you yes or

no, but I can tell you He looked like this today on this day to point out to these different churches, and it may be throughout all of eternity to remind the churches, “This is why I wear what I wear.” But we look at the passage and as he begins to describe what he saw; for instance, when he deals with the Church of Thyatira, he's going to talk about flame of fire and burnish bronze. When he deals with the Church of Sardis, he's going to deal with the seven lights, the seven stars. When he deals with Philadelphia, he's going to talk about, “I'm going to give you keys and nobody's going to shut you out.” Well, he says in verse 18, “I have the keys of death in Hades.” So, in every case, he's beginning to convey a picture, but it is all focused on the church, and that's why it's so important that you understand this, that God has ordained the church to reign with Him. It is the church that He's called to be His venue to proclaim His light.

So, he says, “Write these things down.”

(Revelation 1:12) “Then I turned to see the voice...”

That's a strange phrase, isn't it? “Of course, I wanted to see what was behind the voice.” That's what he's saying.

This is a fundamental principle and let me see if I can clarify it for you, that we can't see until we first hear. Scripture tells us that faith comes by hearing, and we walk by faith, not by sight. When we hear the word of God, then He opens our eyes, but it's not until we hear the word of God that our eyes are open. Now, the wonderful thing is God has so ordained that the church not only proclaimed the word of God, but that the church itself corporate lights. So, the first thing you should see when your eyes finally open up is the church being the example of what you know God to be. So, what does he see?

“... I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands.”

Obviously, that's what he needs to see. Here again, what are the seven? Well, drop on down to verse 20.

(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.”

The first thing you see is what? The church, because it's the evidence of light. We actually get to see what that voice is all about visibly in front of us.

“... I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; (Revelation 1:13) and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.”

An interesting picture that the church at Ephesus would be familiar with, especially from Ephesians 6, as well as Laodicea.

(Revelation 1:14) “His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.”

Obviously, Thyatira.

Here again, just summarizing, but if I just give you a picture of this. Thyatira was a city in which they actually made molten things. So, they would go to work making these molten things and what do you think they saw when they were there? Fire. What else did they see?

Burnished bronze. So, what is God saying? When you go to work, I'm there. Do you understand what He's saying? The same thing is true when He'll talk about the bitterness of the water with Laodicea. Well, they had a bitter stream that came down. It was sulphur water and it stunk. He goes, "I'm going to spew you out of my mouth, just like you do that." In each case, He's going to reveal, "I'm with you. I know where you live. I know what you see, and I want you to see Me in all of it." So, the Scripture begins to reveal that Christ is walking around His church. They are part of Him; He's a part of it.

(Revelation 1:15) "His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace..."

Obviously, Thyatira is very much into this.

"... and His voice was like the sound of many waters."

Who is that? Scripture doesn't separate us from Christ in the sense that the body of Christ is who we are, and you can just hear the sound of many; the praises that God has really raised up the body of Christ the church to give Him glory, to praise.

In fact, go back to Revelation 19. Don't ask me to explain these too much in detail. You need to stop. I don't want to go off on too many tangents. Stop it.

(Revelation 19:3) “And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.”

(Revelation 19:4) And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”

(Revelation 19:5) And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”

(Revelation 19:6) Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder...”

Coming out of what? Clouds. Coming out of clouds, and they're white clouds. I mean, if you look it says in verse 14,

“And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.”

You don't think that's a cloud? Whoa, that's going to be a great cloud.

Then the great praise,

(Revelation 19:6) "... "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

(Revelation 19:7) Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come..."

And the bride dressed in white in the clouds is coming with Him. We've got the sun and the clouds together. A wonderful picture that is.

So, as you go back, he begins to talk about His head and His hair white and His feet were burnished bronze.

Then it says,

(Revelation 1:16) "In His right hand He held seven stars..."

Now, this may be the only thing that keeps me from really summarizing the whole chapter at this point because this is a very significant thing. He's not going to tell us things that He's not given us pictures of before. He's always going to bring in the familiar that you might understand because the purpose of Revelation is to what? Reveal. So,

He's not trying to be secretive here. This is not some esoteric book in which you try to figure out, "Ok, what's the formula so that we can open up the door?" God has been revealing, and Christ created all things to reveal His wonderful message that He loves you. So the place that he goes is in Asia Minor. It is a very superstitious place, but it has an amalgamation of both east and west. We talked about this. It is a representation literally of the world so that much that was coming into the ports, in particular at the very beginning of Ephesus, which was basically the port city, they would bring in and then mail would go from Ephesus to the route that goes. So, the churches that are covered is basically the mail route that was used. They were kind of clustered together in a pretty short distance area, but all very powerful and very renowned cities in which God had ordained and placed churches in. It is a picture of a symbol of the world, of things that they believed, and obviously the world has a way of misconstruing everything. They'll take an amoeba and somehow make it something that was here before the foundation of the world that caused everything to

exist. So, whatever the world sees, they twist and distort. We know that.

The church at Ephesus, which will be the first church that we look at, was very much into the heavens. In fact, their god, Diana, or Artemis, depending on if you're Greek or Roman that was worshiped, they had built this magnificent temple under her, and probably one of the seven wonders of the world, the greatest, greatest temples ever built. The Ephesians believed that something fell out of the sky. It may have been a meteor. I'm not going to debate it, but it was kind of twisted and distorted and they finally go, "Oh, goddess Diana" and they worshipped. As time went on, they kind of remolded and remade, and she became this woman. I won't go into all the descriptions of her, but anyway, she became the allurements of the city, and they began to fabricate idols, but they never really lost that initial whatever it was that came down from the heavens. Man has always been looking for answers in the heavens. God says, "The answers have always been there, but you can't know them without Me." So, He begins to pull in pictures from

the heavens, and what picture do you think He pulls in? Well, one that the Ephesians are very familiar with. They wouldn't call it seven stars. They would call it the Seven Sisters in the heavens. We would know them as in our vernacular, the Pleiades. The Japanese have counted, and they say that from the visible eye we can only see 6. So, they call theirs Subaru, which some of you drive one of those. But it has long been, interestingly enough, something that has been visible in the sky. Now, here's something that's even more interesting, if you just kind of hang in there with me because Pleiades is actually mentioned in Scripture at least three times, if not four within this particular text. But what's interesting is that if you were to go out and look at it on any given clear evening, it's not a big constellation. Nevertheless, what we understand is it is a star cluster and it's actually the closest star cluster to the earth that is visible to the eye. If you were to even get some binoculars, you could probably see the nebula in there. Many of the ancients believe that it's actually the birthplace of stars. But when you look at it, it looks like a faint little, tiny dipper. That's all that it looks like. If you're looking for it, if you were to

get Orion, which most of you know what he looks like, and you were to kind of see where he's pointing, he's pointing just north, well, there's little Pleiades. There it is. Now, it's interesting that Orion, also mentioned in Job as well, is a constellation that was always perceived as the great giant. He's a great giant of the skies and was defined by the ancients as one that was mean and out to get you, a hunter, the great hunter, so to speak. Almost a picture of Nimrod. So, it's like God has put something in the sky, a great hunter, and he seems to be going after Pleiades. What's also interesting in this is that Pleiades is probably the only constellations that I know of, and I'm not saying that I know all of them, but the only constellation which they say that you can virtually see on any part of the globe no matter where you live. If you were on the North Pole or at the bottom of South America, you could see Pleiades. That's pretty interesting.

So, the Seven Sisters, which are very familiar to the Ephesians, God's going to be talking about seven clusters of stars. Now, let me give you some passages of Scripture in the Old Testament that make reference to the Seven

Stars, and one is found in Job 38. You don't need to turn there. I'm just going to make mention of it, but in that particular text in Job 38:31, it makes mention of Pleiades, and he says this,

“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,
Or loose the cords of Orion?”

Scientists have seen an interesting phenomenon of Pleiades, and that is that you have these stars that seem to be clustering, and from time to time the area moves maybe a little bit, but the stars seem to move as one. It's like they're bound together, and they don't move unless they are together. They are like one unit. This is why Job makes reference to, “Can you loosen the bonds of Pleiades?”

When you come to the Book of Amos, he makes mention of them again and let me just say, Job 9:9, I think mentions as well. If you look with me in the Book of Amos, and I told you this is probably going to be the death of me on this one. But in Amos 5, it says, (Amos 5:8) “He who made Pleiades in Orion...”

So, why would God bring this up? Now, in this particular text, I want you to see something. It's a text of contrast. So, Pleiades, Orion. What's the contrast? Small, big. Orion is huge, massive in the sky. Pleiades, if you don't know what you're looking for, you're not going to find it, but it's there no matter where you are on the earth.

(Amos 5:8) “He who made the Pleiades and Orion
And changes deep darkness into morning...”

We're dealing with contrast, aren't we? Keep watching.

“... Who also darkens day into night,
Who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the surface of the earth...”

So, in each case you have these contrasts that are placed within the text.

“... The LORD is His name.”

Who creates the contrast.

(Amos 5:9) “It is He who flashes forth with destruction...”

Let me see if I can clarify this particular word, “šōd”. The word that he uses here is making reference to someone that has been oppressed to the point of being desolate.

So, it's not, necessarily talking about destruction itself. It's talking about one who has no power left in them.

“It is He who flashes forth with destruction upon the strong...”

So, the strong would be the contrast in the passage. You have the desolate who have no strength, the strong, but He seems to win with the desolate.

“... So that destruction comes upon the fortress.”

The powerful. Who wins? Not the fortress, and night is not going to win over day. God is the One that creates them both, that delivers the outcome.

There's a passage that is familiar to all of you. It's found in Micah, if you'll turn there with me. Micah 5.

(Micah 5:2) “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. is goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”

Now, who would have thought that the Creator of all things would come out of Bethlehem? Can you see

Bethlehem? Well, I can see big Jerusalem right next door. Nope, that's not where He's going to be. Herod's there. He's going to be in Bethlehem.

It's the same point that he brings out in Zechariah. If you look with me in Zechariah 4. I love this passage.

(Zechariah 4:6) “Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.

(Zechariah 4:7) ‘What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”’”

(Zechariah 4:8) Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

(Zechariah 4:9) “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

(Zechariah 4:10) “For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel...”

I don't know if you think this is ironic or not, but if you go into the very next paragraph, what is he talking about? He's talking about a lamp in the very next paragraph, and he's going to give the example of the two prophets as the lights, and they're somehow hooked to a source that doesn't end.

Read the text with me,

(Zechariah 4:11) “Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?”

(Zechariah 4:12) And I answered the second time and said to him, “What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?”

In other words, oil is coming directly from the tree into the oil. What does that mean? It never runs dry. It's into a source of life that never ends. Why will the lights not go out? The oil will never run out. Now, it's in the same context of “who would despise small things”. God does something wonderful, magnificent. He comes and He's born in a manger. He comes out of Bethlehem. The weak and the foolish things He chooses to confound the great

and the mighty that no man would boast. He has chosen the church; to the world it's not ostentatious, it's not invasive, it's not large, it's not ominous, it's not showy, but it's there to anybody that wants to see it. It's visible. In fact, they say that the seven lights in there are brighter than the sun. Every one of them. That God has so ordained that the church should be a place, but to the world, it doesn't look that great. It doesn't look that big. There are other sides of the sky that look far greater. The picture that he's given here is Jesus is walking around these candlesticks, these clusters of seven stars that are that are visible, and He says, "If you're looking for Me, you'll see Me. I'm right there in the midst of you. I'm a part of your lives, and I'm involved."

Now, there's something I have to explain about. Here again, ultimately as we come to this, He says, "You need to write these things." And of course, in verse 20, you understand what the seven stars are, what they represent, clearly, the Church of God. But as God has been saying all along to the church, "You are the light of the world." And though the world may not perceive you

as the brightest light, or they may not perceive you as the greatest light, to all who seek will find, and it's an interesting thing that that Pleiades has not only been known by all mankind, but almost every culture knows where it is. In the King James, actually Pleiades that is translated in NAS, is actually translated the Seven Stars. So that God has ordained this to be assigned for us; a sign of something that is enduring; a sign of something that is lasting.

If you look with me in 1 John and of course, it's John who writes Revelation, right? So, he would be a good source to go to in understanding, maybe a little bit better what this whole light thing is all about. If you turn with me to 1 John 2:7. By the way, John is the one that starts off by declaring, "In Him is life and the light was the life of man." So, the point is that he introduced us to the light of God.

He'll state this,

(1 John 2:7) "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard."

(1 John 2:8) On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

(1 John 2:9) The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

(1 John 2:10) The one who loves his brother abides in the Light..."

"Abides," that would be a continuous thing, right?

"... abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him."

Do you know what John is doing for us? He's actually describing to us the light of the church. What is it that declares the excellency of God? It's the love of God. That's the one thing that we can proclaim that is real, that is genuine, that is pure, unadulterated, that is transparent. You see, the difference between the church's love and the world's love is that it's hypocritical. It always has a string attached, but not the church. It's clear, it's constant, it never fails. The love for God, the love for His body never

wanes. It's ever bright; it's ever true; it's ever clear; it's never obscured. It can be seen anywhere in the world no matter where you go because God is the source. Christ is the source, and He walks among us. "Therefore, be imitators of God," Ephesians 5, and then he goes and says, "You once were darkness, but now you're light." God has called you to be that, and you begin to realize that the one thing that God has called us to do is to be consistent in our love for God and for one another. It's that consistency and that purpose that we're called to.

In Matthew 5 we read of this great passage, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," right? "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." If you go down the list and you begin to read this particular list, he talks of these being the ones that actually have and are a part of the kingdom of Heaven. When you go down the list, everything you're reading, you're saying there's nothing grand, ostentatious, or big about any of these people. In fact, He ends by saying, "And by the way, you're really blessed if you suffer for My name's sake." It's in that same text that He turns, and He says, "You are the light of the

world.” Everything that He mentions up to that point is an act of love. It’s an act of love for God, and it's an act of love for one another. I think it's ironic, perhaps, that Japan goes, “No, we only see six.” Because He turns to Ephesus, and He says, “I'm about to take your light out because you've left your first love.” Now, that'll be the reason He tells them. They say that there are days that you can see the one and there are days that you can't. God is revealing to us that there is no light without the love of Christ flowing through us. There is no light. You can talk about the goodness of God, but if you're not radiating the truth, it won't do anything. The word of God will get people's heads to turn, the light will show them the way, and God has called us to be that wonderful light that walks among Christ and is proclaimed for that purpose. We're going to talk about this a little bit more, but some of the qualities that you see within the text are going to be perseverance, love never fails. You're going to see the qualities of transparency and purity of light, but all these things God has called us for, and I'm just so thankful that these are pictures of a personal relationship with God and what He's called us for.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness for us and for Your revealing things to us; things that You have been showing us in the heavens for years, things that we could not understand until, well, until You spoke. Father, open our eyes that we might see Your love. Open our eyes that we might see our calling, that we might not hide the light under bushel, but might proclaim the love of Christ until You come.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I'm just going to ask you to hop on board with the church. We are the light of the world; Christ in us, the hope of glory. So, the word of God says, "Be imitators of God and walk in love just like Christ." If you're not walking in love, if you're not displaying love, where's the light and how great is the darkness?