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Revelation

Chapter 1

Revealing the Mystery of Light

The Light of Love (vs. 7-20)

A Light: Mysteriously Portrayed (vs. 19-20)

Revelation 1:19-20: “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.”

The Book of Revelation, “apocalypses,” unveiling, revealing, exposing, shedding light on. So, as we come to

the first chapter, it really is about shedding light on things. It is about light. It's a mysterious light as Scripture is going to say. In fact, as you come to the end of the passage, it almost really has a kind of cumulative effect in the fact that he says, "You want to know what the seven stars are? I'll tell you." But he tells us within the passage, if you look specifically within the text that we just read, that this is a mystery, verse 20. It's a mystery, which is telling us that it's something that's been veiled but now is being unveiled. God is revealing something to us, and it is something that had God not unveiled, it would not be revealed. There are things that we cannot understand. (Deuteronomy 29:29) The hidden things belong to God. The things revealed, of course, He's let you know that, but there are certain things that are hidden. It's particularly interesting in the setting that it is because the seven churches there in Asia Minor are pretty much all together in a very close area. They are churches that have been immersed in mysticism. Obviously, in many respects the worshipping of stars; looking to the heavens. So, God knew this. He ordained it, and these particular areas are involved in those kinds of things. God says, "I've been

talking to you all along.” Of course, we know that through creation He's been talking to us and that He set things in the stars and the signs in the heavens for us. He's talking to us, but most people don't understand what He's saying, and it really is a mystery to them. In fact, you talk to a scientist about, “Well, what are the stars telling you?” or you talk to some kind of astrologist, they'll tell you something else, and there will be many other interpretations of what people see in the sky, but God is saying something; to most people, it's hidden.

In our day and age, we have groups of people and there have been throughout history, orders and groups of people that have called themselves kind of esoteric groups that perceive that they have a certain knowledge that nobody else has. We call them Gnostics, and their perception is, “We know the mysteries,” and then you actually are sometimes allowed to be a part of that secret order. Have you ever heard of those particular phrases? There was a secret order and probably still is, “Skull and Bones,” probably one of the greatest that has permeated the world and “Hashahin” is one of the secret orders.

“Knights of Templar” have their secret order and what they basically tell you is that they know secrets; they know the mysteries. So, you come in, and if you're, you're a part of the group, you get to know some of the mysteries.

What God is conveying within the passage is that He has mysteries, and there are things that are given specifically to the church. Those things that are given specifically to the church, only the church will understand these wonderful mysteries. So, as we come to the passage, He begins to unveil these things to whom? To the church. Now once again, just to remind you, who wrote the book? Well, the Spirit of God wrote through a man by the name of John, and the reason why God chose him was because this is a relationship that is very close.

We know fundamentally, to give you an example, in Proverbs 2 it basically says, “If you'll search out the things of God with all your heart and desire it, then I'll show you the hidden things and the wisdom of God, but if you're not going to seek for it, then I'm not going to show it to you.” So, that becomes really a staple throughout

Scripture that God reveals the hidden things to those that are seeking.

In John 1, some of the disciples come up and of course, John the Baptist has already pointed to Christ and one of the first things that Jesus asked these two disciples is, "What is it you seek?" That's really the question, and whatever you seek, you'll find. So, what are you seeking? God begins to reveal the mysteries if you're seeking Him.

In John 15, He says, "You're more than just servants. You're My friends, and to a friend, I'll reveal to you the things of God." So, He begins talking. Now, we know that the closer that the disciple was, the more was revealed to them. For instance, Peter, James and John were the closest; they were taken on the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ. So, they saw things that the other disciples didn't even see. So, that John among those three would be chosen to write this book is telling you what? He had a close relationship with God. So, the thing that we've tried to emphasize all along is that these things are being revealed because of the closeness in nature that you have with God, and if in fact you're not close with God, you're

not going to understand the mysteries of God. It's going to be a closed book to you. The closer you are to God, the more you're going to understand the book. The further away you are from God, the more ambiguous it is going to seem and probably extremely enigmatic.

So, as we come to this, it's like what is said in Amos 3:7, he says God does nothing unless He tells His servants what He's going to do. Now, we were reading in Jeremiah today, the world is going to be surprised at the end of the days because they don't know the secrets. There are certain things that if you're close with God and He's been talking to you, you're looking at the world and you're going, "Oh, man, He's close." You start saying that to the world, they're going, "What are you talking about?" So, as we read in Luke 17, it's like in the days of Noah, right? Nobody knew except Noah. So, those that are close to God will see. It is this point that he begins to focus on. He says, "I bore witness of Him before. I was the one that was close to God. He reveals this to me and I'm the one that's going to bear witness to you of these things."

So once again, I don't want to overplay this, but to reiterate, if you're close to God, these things will just begin to light up. The more we talk about them, you're just going to go, "I get it." Light bulbs are going to start coming on. As you go on, you begin to see that he puts certain pictures in play, and without us going through the whole text, you begin to see Christ there, standing. Of course, John begins to describe himself as this guy going through a lot of tribulation, and it was during this time that he hears the voice.

So, if you look on your sheet, we begin to realize that God is speaking through somebody that He loves. Obviously, it's a relational book. Otherwise, you're not going to get any secrets. If you're close to somebody, they're going to tell you their secrets. If you're not close to them, they're not going to tell you their secrets. So, the person that's close is going to get the secrets and then He's going to be sharing it to those that He loves.

In fact, if you look it says,

(Revelation 1:4) "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,

(Revelation 1:5) 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..."

That's why He's telling us.

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

So, there's an affection that seems to be drawn there and that He's coming with those that He loves in verse 7, victoriously. So, interesting pictures that He begins to proclaim.

What is then described as you go 9 through 20 is this Light that is exposing that is revealing to us, and he puts it in an interesting context. We won't go through every verse, but if you have your outline, it is a Light that is unexpected by the world, obviously.

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

If you look in verse 8, it is a Light eternally determined.

(Revelation 1:8) "I am the Alpha and the Omega..."

This is not something new. This is something that has been. So, why are we just now seeing it? You can't really see anything without Christ revealing it to you. It's been there all along and He's fundamentally saying, "It's always been here and was determined from the very beginning, but now it's going to be revealed to you by Me." So, it's eternally determined enduring even through darkness. That's one of the characteristics of the light of God. How do we know that?

Well, if you look in verse 9,

(Revelation 1:9) "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation..."

"Fellow partaker," which means that there are other partakers of tribulation, and how is it that they remain not only aligned with the rule of God, but they persevere? Isn't that what it says in the verse? They persevere, which is the same thing in Christ, right? So, how is it that this light seems to be able to persevere through the darkness? That's one of the characteristics of it. It's not only unexpected by the world, it's not only eternally determined, but is enduring through darkness. It is voice

activated, which is interesting, “You hear My voice, and you come.” You say, “I saw the light.” “No, you heard the light.” Yeah, faith comes by hearing, and you heard the light, the voice of God called you, and it’s like a light bulb came on, and you go, “This is truth. This is truth”: And the reason for that, of course, is that the voice speaks to the heart; the eyes speak to the lust. So, God begins to speak to you, and you can hear Him, and He says, “Come” and He calls and it's like an announcement. It’s like a trumpet calling, “Come.” You feel that. Voice activated.

Verse 11, of course, “Write these things down. This is to the church.” And then as you go through verses 12-16 and all the way to 17-18, you begin to see these interesting pictures of Christ intimately with the church. Now, I don't know if we would have necessarily painted it this way, but he turns around and the first thing that he sees is these 7 golden lampstands, right? Isn't that the way it reads in your text? Unless you have another rendition. But he turns around and he sees these 7 golden lampstands, and then he sees, “Wait, there's somebody in the midst of them.” Now, the way it seems to be pictured is there

seems to be maybe 7 separate ones, but all conglomerated around Him or whatever, but He's standing in the midst of them and they don't seem to be lit. It doesn't say that they're lit. It does say that they're golden which gives a reference to that which is valuable.

2 Timothy 2:20 says there are a lot of different vessels that are used; some honorable; some to dishonor. He talks about gold and silver. Well, this is an honorable use, but gold has a descript of longevity. Very interesting, I don't know if you've ever thought about it or not, but before Pentecost, before the church was born, the Pentecost, you had synagogues, you had mosque, you had other meeting places of types; you had worship centers in which you would worship idols. You didn't have a church. Church was born in Acts. Now, through the years we've had a lot of churches and a lot of very strange things that call themselves church, but the point is, church has remained. It was made to be an enduring thing, and God established the church. So, the gold makes reference to the fact that it is not only valuable in His eyes and honorable in His eyes, but it's going to be an enduring

thing. It's the vessel that God has chosen. Now, obviously if it's a lamp, it's chosen to do what? Bear light. So, there's no guesswork on that one, but He's standing in the midst, and He has the seven stars in His right hand. His right hand. That's interesting, which right hand is the hand of power. It's the hand of authority. So, it's within His power, to what? Bring the light. If the church is coming to Him and sees Him as a center focus, then they are endowed with by Him the light. The lamp itself is not the source of light. It becomes light because of their closeness to Him and their focus on Him. So, it's an interesting picture. Here you have Him, He's standing among the lampstands, and He Himself is literally a light. How do we know that?

Well, if you look in verse 16,

(Revelation 1:16) “In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword...”

We'll talk about that in just a minute.

“...and His face was like the sun shining...”

So, that's pretty bright. That's a lot of light. So, 7 stars, the sun shining. Obviously, the text has something to do with

light, and it is the mystery of light that He begins to unveil within this. Now, here again, one of the reasons why we haven't gone into a lot of details about the things that He's wearing or the way that He looks is because we're going to cover that as we look at the seven churches, because many of these aspects are going to come to fruition and be understood in a greater way.

If you look it says,

(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.”

Now, all you have to do is go to Ephesians 6 and begin to understand what that's all about, but what he begins to talk about, of course, is not only a garb that he's describing as of the garb of Christ, but actually the garb of church. Remember, the church is the body of Christ. So, when Christ talks to the church in in Ephesians 6, He says, “Put on the breastplate of righteousness.” And you begin to see that the church begins to take on the personification of Christ, of course, which is the goal of

the church, (Ephesians 4) that we actually come into the image; we're building each other up to be like Christ. So, every picture you're going to see, you're going to see not only Christ, but you're going to see the church take on that work. So, when you consider the breastplate of righteousness, breastplate actually protecting what? The heart. The purpose of it is to protect the heart and you're guarding your heart by your love for what is right, your desire to do what God is telling you to do. Your heart begins to be guarded. What makes it gold? Well, it's gold because it's enduring.

So, they're all pictures, even when it talks about the fact that (Revelation 1:15) “His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace...”

If you'll go into Revelation 2, just to kind of give you an example,

(Revelation 2:18) “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze...”

He doesn't use that description with all the churches, He just uses it with Thyatira, but He's basically saying, “I've

given you the feet to proclaim the gospel with the same fervor that I would proclaim it, and you need to be strong in this.” Obviously, within this particular area, there was a lot of mixing of false truths, and He says, “Your feet have got to be on fire. You’ve got to do what is right and go with that message in great boldness.” So, He's going to be painting these pictures and this is why we see the description because He’s describing light; describing the church being the light of the world and how they're going to be the light of the world, whether taking the message or living in the righteous way. They're going to have to clean up their act, so to speak, and make sure their heart is right. He's going to give all these wonderful pictures, so that obviously, in verse 16, it comes to the fact that He says, “Now, it's in My power to light you, lamps. I've got the seven stars.” Now, the question that immediately pops up, is what are the seven stars? Well, this is what He's going to tell us as we come into the mystery. The mystery is going to be revealed to us, but we come to the passage as we drop on down.

(Revelation 1:17) “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...””

Now, after He says this, which is probably one of the phrases that Christ repeated most among His disciples, “Fear not, fear not. Fear not. Fear not.” Even after He was raised from the dead, “You don't to be afraid because this has all been done for you.” Of course, this is basically fundamentally the message of the good news. The good news that we bring to the world is, “You don't have to be afraid anymore. You don't have to be afraid of dying. You don't have to be afraid of living. You don't have to be afraid of the consequences of your guilt. God has freed you from that. He has freed you from fear. So, fear not. “This is My goal all along, to free you from your fears.”

So, we pick up, if you would in verse 18,

(Revelation 1:18) “and the living One; and I was dead...”

Probably the best way to read that is, “I came into death” or “I partook of death.”

“... and behold...”

“I won.”

“...I am alive...”

Once again, I think the great emphasis within the passage is that light came into darkness, and the darkness could not overpower it. “I won.” The emphasis now is going to be not only forever more, but what He defeated, and if you look at me in verse 18,

“and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”

That’s a very important phrase because what He's really establishing is much of what the church is going to be responsible for proclaiming. It is probably the great light that we are to proclaim. The fact that He uses the phrase “keys” is going to fit in perfectly when He talks to the Church of Philadelphia.

In fact, turn there with me to Chapter 3. We understand according to the history of this, that the Church of Philadelphia, maybe a small church, being kind of ostracized by many of the Jewish works within their

particular city; a place of brotherly love, but not really. So, they're being pushed out and they feel insignificant, and God goes, "Don't worry, I have the keys." You know those esoteric groups that we were talking about, those secret clubs? These places are in places like that, and then they see you coming and they shut the door. You go, "I was hoping I could get in." God goes, "You don't want in that club."

But it reads this way,

(Revelation 3:7) "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David..."

Why is He using that phrase? Because the Jews are locking doors to their synagogues, to the Christians.

"... who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens..."

"I have the keys. I'm the One."

'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a

little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

(Revelation 3:9) 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue...'

Why does He use the word "synagogue"? It's Jewish.

"... the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet..."

"They're going to beg you to be a part of your special group."

So, within the passage, when He says, "I have the keys," it's a symbol of "I have the authority and the power over these things." Now, the question you have to ask yourself, "Ok, what's the authority and the power over?" Well, first of all, death, which is an absence of life. People could suffer death even while they're living because of the fact that you can be literally absent of life. Have you ever seen somebody in a coma? Have you ever seen somebody deeply depressed? I mean, it's possible to see an absence of life within that person; vitality, excitement, joy; all

those things. When Christ says, "I came to give you life and life abundant," as in John 15, He even describes it as joy abundant, but He makes reference to that which is vital and very active. Of course, the Spirit comes in and breathes life into us. Without the Spirit of God, well, most of the movies go this way, you are the "walking dead." There is such a thing as the walking dead because even when those that aren't following Christ die, their souls are eternal, but they live in death forevermore. So, death is the absence of life which is the absence of being with Christ. So, what does the church proclaim? The church proclaims life everlasting. It proclaims, "You want to live?" "I don't know. My life isn't worth living." "You want to live? We have the keys. Christ has the keys." So, not only did He defeat death, the whole physical thing, but He defeated all that comes with that death, the absence of life.

Now, the second word that He uses is a very interesting word because it's a compound word, "Hades." It's a way we often pronounce it. It's a compound word in that the first part of the word is " α " which is the first letter in the

Greek alphabet. This letter in front of a word, means “not” or “without”. So, “not” or “without” is the first part of it. “*Δου*” is the second part of the word. It's actually where we get the word “perceive” or “to see” or “to acknowledge”. So, without acknowledgment, without significance, without perception, without seeing.

It's interesting when you go in Scripture, it says in Psalm 37:10,

“Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;
And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there.”

Isaiah writes this in Isaiah 51:6,

“Lift up your eyes to the sky,
Then look to the earth beneath;
For the sky will vanish like smoke,
And the earth will wear out like a garment
And its inhabitants will die in like manner;
But My salvation will be forever,
And My righteousness will not wane.”

Isn't that a great text?

Paul writes in Romans 5:21,

“... grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The question that we ask people basically fundamentally as a church, “Do you want the keys to get out of the death? Do you want the keys to get out of an existence of insignificance and emptiness, because that's basically the picture of Hades. It's a place of no longer being perceived or cared for or considered by anybody. You're in the place which nobody sees you. Nobody knows you. “Oh, I'll have plenty of company in hell.” They won't know you're there. You won't know they're there. It won't be a place of good ole boys gathering together. It's a place of nothingness, and when you think about it, this is the state in which people exist. They are walking around lifeless, and they are walking around insignificant. In fact, going to these commercials again, they have commercials, “See me.” Now, I know what they're trying to do, but the bottom line is that I think one of the reasons why they're using these kinds of ways to lure people to buy things is because they know that most people feel like nobody

sees them. They're just another number out there and nobody cares, and “Nobody really perceives me. Does anybody ever take notice of me?” The psalmist will say, “Don't put me in the land of forgetfulness.” And the man on the cross next to Jesus will say, “Remember me.” So, that Hades is this picture and Christ says, “I've got the keys, and the whole reason that I did what I did was to free you.” This is the point; this becomes the focus of the light, and the church must proclaim these things.

If you go a little bit further in verse 19,

“Therefore write the things which you have seen...”

Which obviously are the things that He's been describing to him in the text.

“... and the things which are...”

I don't want you to limit too much that particular phrase because what he's talking about is the way things exist. Now, we're going to see as we go in the Book of Revelation is, you walk through a day, and you say, “Well, how are things going in your in your neighborhood?” “Fine. How are things going in your world?” “Ok, I guess.”

“How’s the economy?” “Pretty good.” God says, “Ok, you're not seeing the way things exist. Let Me show you the way they exist.” So, it's a very interesting term. God is not just going to pass through in a discussion and say, “Well, you know the way things are.” He's going to show you the way things are, and He's going to go into some detail, and He says, “You see this? That's really a snake in the grass. That's what that is.” So, when He says, “Ok, I'm showing you what you're supposed to be doing, what the church is supposed to be doing. So, you're going to see these things then I'm going to show you the way things exist.”

If you look in the passage, it goes on, “And then I'm going to show you the things which...” Now, underline the word “will,” because that's a key word. It's going to be easy to remember because “Mellow yellow,” but it's the word “*mellō*,” but it doesn't mean mellow. It makes reference to something that is purposeful or intended to happen. So, what He's saying in the passage is what must happen, what must take place after these things. The point is kind of cumulative again. He's saying, “Ok, I'm going to show

you the way that it was meant to be; I'm going to show you the way things exist, and then I'm going to show you why things have to change." So, He's going to go into some description because by the time you come to the end of Revelation, you're seeing the wrath of God. You're going, "Why is He so mad?" But if you understand and have taken the journey with Him, you go okay, you're with Him. Things have got to change, and you're with the church at the end of Revelation going, "You've got to get here quick. Come, Lord Jesus, quickly." So, He's getting you to understand these things so that you're on board, but you have to see things for the way they are rather than the way that the world is bringing them, or that maybe your mind has distorted them. God's going to show you the way they really are.

(Revelation 1:20) "As for the mystery of the seven stars..."

"Mystery," that's an interesting word, and by the way, it's interesting; it's one of the pictures that are on here. It's the first picture that we're going to see as He talks to the Church of Ephesus, in Revelation 2:1,

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands...”

Why does He do that? Well, because mystery is a big word with the Ephesians in particular, and of course they look to the sky, they believe that their goddess Diana actually fell from the sky and put her in the temple; whatever that twisted thing was, and then began to build idols that of course, made her look far more alluring, or whatever. But it's a place of great mysticism. We know that according to Acts, that they began to ultimately, as Paul was preaching, burn their magic books and all these things. So, it was a place of God just really doing a work in their midst, but there's a lot of influence of mysticism in this area, of magic, of all kinds of witchcraft, and we know that to be true. So, that mystery is kind of a catchword with them, all kinds of little esoteric groups that are kind of peppered all the way through and believing this and some philosophical, and some into the whole realm of the of the stars. He speaks to them, and He says, “You know, the seven stars in heaven.” We've talked about this and

here again, I'm not going to over belabor this, but there's a key point in this. If you were to talk to almost anybody in the world throughout the history of the world that knew anything about the stars, and you were to ask something like this, "Where are the seven stars?" They would say, "Well, they're right there" and in every case, they would point to Pleiades. Here again, in Japan with Subaru, but they're going to point to these, and some will call them "Seven Sisters," but in Amos, King James actually translates it the "seven stars," and NAS translates it "Pleiades"; Job as well. It goes all the way back in Job, and like we talked about, these are things that you can see in almost any part of the world, which is a pretty bizarre thing. You can't see most of them, but you can see this. What's even more bizarre, and this is my point, we know that God created things, right? There are a lot of stars in heaven. Why would that place be the seven stars? Do you understand what I'm saying? I mean, I can look at the stars and I can say, "Well, there's seven." I can look over here, "There's seven. I can put those seven together." They know where the "seven stars" are. Now, here's an interesting key point to this, that in order for

you to see the right place, you actually have to be looking for it, because it's not really easy to see. Which I believe is one of the things that God is saying.

Let me show you passage in John. If you look with me in John 3. We're talking about light and darkness here. It says this in verse 19,

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

(John 3:20) “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

(John 3:21) “But he who practices the truth comes to the Light...”

We'll put it another way. He's searching for the Light. The passage seems to be conveying that God has ordained this valuable vessel called the church to be the venue in which light is shown. In order for you to come to that light, you're going to have to be looking for it. You're going to see this play out, by the way, with the seven

churches. His point is there is nothing that God has ordained in the churches to be ostentatious, glitzy or showy. There's nothing about that in the text. In fact, what He does is He rebukes the Church at Laodicea. He rebukes the Church at Sardis, in particular, trying to get a name for themselves, and He goes, "That's not what we're about. We're not ostentatious. We're not showy. We're not out there, but if people want to find us, we're there." It's always been interesting to me how certain ones end up in this church, because we're definitely not out there, but they said, "I passed by that place for years. Then all of a sudden..." I can tell you what happened all of a sudden, you started looking. That's what happened. Up to that point, you weren't looking, but all of a sudden, it's the seeking. So, Jesus basically fundamentally says, "If you're looking for the Light, you'll see the Light, but this is a Light not like the world. I mean, the world has a lot of bright lights. In fact, their lights are so bright they eclipse the stars, but if you're seeking, you'll find."

So, He paints this interesting picture of which the people in Ephesus go, “Ok. I see the seven stars.” He goes, “Ok. So, you understand this.”

So, as He paints this picture, He says this,

(Revelation 1:20) “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw...”

Who was holding it? Christ. Where was it? In His right hand. Once again, “I'm the One that empowers.”

“...and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches...”

Now, once again, immediately our thoughts go, “So, where's our angel?” And he says, “It's me.” How do we know that? Well, if you if you look in Revelation 2:1, John writes, “To the angel of the church in Ephesus...” Right. Ok. John is writing to an angel?

Paul will say in Galatians 4, “When I came to you, you treated me like an angel.” What does the word “angel” fundamentally mean? It means messenger. You're a messenger of God. Who are the messengers of God in the Old Testament? The Angels were the messengers of God.

Not only does Galatians 3 tell us this, that the Law was sent by the angels; Hebrews 2 tells us this; Stephen talks about it in Acts 7. So, they were the messengers of God's word, and also the ones that every recompense of injustice was dealt with. So, he begins to describe them. We are the messengers of the gospel. The Angels long to look into these things. Why? "Because what is this grace thing? What is this forgiveness of sin thing?" We can proclaim the good news. So, God has established the church to be the messenger. Now, what Christ is going to do is He's going to work through the messenger in each church. You look at churches and they pretty much go according to the pastor. You can have a lot of interesting denominations, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian. I've known some very good Presbyterian churches. I've known actually, some good Lutheran churches. I've known some good Methodist churches. What's the difference? The pastor, and if he's close to Christ, Christ enlightens him and makes him a light, and that church becomes a light. If he's not taking his cues from God, because interestingly, when you come to Chapter 2, He turns to the Church of

Ephesus, He goes, “I’m about to take your light away.” But you stop shining, you stop existing.

So, the passage says,

(Revelation 1:20) “... the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

So, God has ordained that the church be that which is enduring, that which is an honorable place to proclaim the wonderful message of “Here are the keys to give you life, and life abundant, joy. Here are the keys to keep you from being insignificant and feeling worthless and sensing that nobody cares. I care.” It's a message that we give as a church, isn't it? There is somebody that cares for you. You're not just a number; you're somebody valuable to us. So, it is that wonderful light. Now to me, what's interesting is that not only will he make mention of this word mystery here within this text, but as you go into the very first church, it is the church at Ephesus where if you've ever read the book of Ephesians, at least times 6 times, the word “mystery” is interjected more than any other book in the Bible. Corinthians, 2; Colossians, maybe

3 or 4, but Colossians is in the same area, but why does he make reference to that? Well, what he's making reference to is there are going to be things that are hidden and that only those that come in through that door of Christ gives life, and Christ frees you. We'll actually begin to see, and the church is the place that proclaims this. In fact, the church is not only the place that proclaims it through the pulpit, but the church is that which upholds it, or as Paul will write to Timothy, it's the pillar and support of the truth. I can feel the hearts of different ones going, "Praise God. That's exactly what Scripture says." And you can feel the support, and then people begin to ask, "What does that church believe?" And as well, Jesus so clearly puts it, you're a light set on a hill. You're there to proclaim that truth unapologetically and to live it like it's real.

Let me just give you a couple of passages here and we'll close with this. In Ephesians 1:9, it talks about the mystery of God's will. Let me shed some light on that. You're not going to understand the mystery of God's will until you come to the gospel. It's impossible. So that the word of God begins to reveal to you how you can know,

“What is it God wants?” Paul writes in Ephesians 1, it's obvious what God wants. He's been telling us before the foundation of the world what He wants, but oh, that's right. You didn't get it. For by grace you are saved through faith. It's not a result of works. The people at Ephesus are going, “Tell us the mysteries.” He goes, “I'll tell you a mystery. You don't know what God wants.” “How long have you been looking?” “We've been searching for years.” Ok, that's a mystery, and the only way you're going to find it is by coming to Christ. He'll unlock that for you.

In Ephesians 3:3 and verse 4, there's a mystery of God's grace. Why is God gracious to you? In fact, Paul will be specific in this particular text, he'll say, “Here's the greater mystery, that God is gracious to the Gentiles. You're not even Jews, and God so loved the world, is that a mystery? The grace of God is mysterious. Now, here again, “What do you mean, mysterious?” What I mean is that you can't know it until He reveals it to you. People say, “I'm still trying to figure that thing out; when I figure it out, I'll come to know the Lord.” No, no, no. You come

to Him through the gospel, He'll unlock your inability to comprehend that mystery because He'll only give it to those that receive His Son. Mysteries are only unlocked by the One who holds the mystery. So, if you'll come to Him, He'll tell you about the mysteries. Amazing grace, He saved a wretch like me? I mean, the world can sing that, they don't get it, but you can actually have that unlocked.

In Ephesians 3:9, there is a mystery of God's household affairs. He uses the phrase "administration," but it actually is the word "household affairs". So, as we were reading, in 1 Timothy in particular, "This is how you ought to conduct yourself in the household of God." How is it that if you do this that somehow things turn out ok? That's kind of a mystery, isn't it? Because other people had other solutions, but they didn't seem to work, but if you do it this way, God will preserve the church. Well, that's a mystery, and it really won't be unlocked until you give your life over the Lord.

In Ephesians 5:32, there's a mystery of God's love and relationship with the church. "How does He actually love us?" Well, let me tell you a mystery. You know a husband

and wife? He begins to describe it, and he says at the end, "This is a mystery."

In Ephesians 6:19, the mystery of the gospel, which obviously is the greatest mystery.

Paul will write to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:9, and he says, "We hold to the mystery of the faith."

In fact, in 1 Timothy 3:16, he will say, "great is the mystery of godliness." What's the mystery of godliness? Here's the mystery, you can't be godly, but if you give your life to Christ, He'll change your life. Try to explain that one. You can't explain that to people. It's supernatural, but I tell you what you can do. You can shine, and they can say, "I don't understand it, but that person is different." So, God has called us to be His light in the world. He stands among us. He says, "I know who you are." You can see the intimacy of Christ in this, he says, "He stands in their midst." Where is Christ's attention focused? This church. That's a picture He's painting, and He is sending those seven hearts that are on fire for Him and He's lighting up places. It's not always really obvious

to everybody around, but if somebody's looking, they can't miss it. They can't miss it.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and our desire is to be that church that You've called us to be, to be transformed into the image of Your Light; that our light would so shine before men, that they would see our good works and glorify You just like Jesus did; that we would have the Spirit of Christ, that as Galatians would say, would be the spirit of freeing people, of unlocking those doors. People in great bondage, living yet dead; existing, but not loved, not perceived. Not acknowledged, not cared for, but You've allowed us to with You open these doors. Father, You're defining for us, You're revealing for us what should be, what You've called us to do. As we continue on in this journey in this book, we will begin to see why it is so necessary for that Light to shine; why it has to happen.

Because the way things really exist are terrible, and the church needs to be very different. God, we're calling upon You to walk among us, to light our dwelling, that we might proclaim Your excellencies.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed. Maybe you don't feel alive? Maybe you feel overlooked? Christ has the keys. You don't have to go into a realm of nothingness. You don't have to exist there. You don't have to end there. God has great things in store for you. The message of the gospel is there is Light, and the Light was the life of men. All you have to do is receive Him. The Bible says, "As many as received Him, to them, He gave the power to become the children of God, sons of Light; even to those who believe in His name." That if you'll believe that God so loved you, that He gave His only Son, that if you would just believe in Him, you could live forever. Believe. And for those that love Him and that draw near to Him and that come to Him, He would in no way cast out. In fact, He'll tell you the secrets of the universe.