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Revelation

Chapter 8 - Revealing the Forces of the Heavens

The Powers of the Air (7 Trumpets)

The 4th Calling Out - The Indictment Against the Celestial Lights

vs. 12

Revelation 8:12: The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

It's not my fault that the fourth trumpet is not a long verse. We get some of these other trumpets, it gets a little bit longer. But it's as long as it was. And I think it's important for us to look at each one specifically and individually. So, we're going to do that.

When we look at Revelation, oftentimes people come with certain preconceived notions, and there have been movies made. It's interesting that Armageddon is oftentimes a word that is used repeatedly, and to the best of my knowledge, you can correct me if I'm wrong, I don't think I am, but Revelation 16:16 is about the only place Armageddon is mentioned. One verse, and it just basically means, "*Har*," an old Hebrew word, which makes reference to mountains, and "*megiddo*" is a place where there's a gathering of many people. And there actually is a place that's not too far from Jerusalem, more towards the northwest, and there is a place where many wars have been fought there and will probably be a gathering place towards that final day. Yet, that it would be a major focus of the world, just shows how off base they are in really understanding what Revelation is all about. It's our goal to go to a book that literally means to be revealed, "*apocalyptos*," telling us that God desires to reveal to us things. It's important that we get it straight. And so, as we go through, hopefully, your understanding, your comprehension of these things is improving, and not that I have the answers, but we're just simply looking at what

Scripture is saying and the things that are being proclaimed as we go through this wonderful book.

Now, because there are usually elephants in the room when you deal with the last days, eschatology, I'm going to deal with a particular issue and segue into the text that we're looking at. So, the particular issue that I want to deal with is one that oftentimes comes up, is the church. Are God's people going to be in the middle of the tribulation or during the tribulation? Are we going to be in the tribulation? So, I'm going to give you 6, 7, maybe even 8 reasons why the church is not going to be in the tribulation. I'm never really good at math. So, it could be 8, could be 6. It just depends on how you put it together. But we're going to go through just a list of reasons why the church is not going to be in the tribulation, and we believe this very strongly. I'm going to go through these pretty quick because I'm just using this as a platform to go to the passage that we're looking at.

The first is, that according to 2 Thessalonians 2, Scripture tells us that lawlessness will reign. It is impossible for lawlessness to reign when the church is on the earth. In

fact, we are the preservatives of the law. Those that walk in love, Scripture tells us according to Romans, fulfill the law. And so, that lawlessness will be reigning is telling us that the church is no longer an influence within the world, and it's a pretty good barometer in that.

The second is that according to Revelation 7, Revelation 14, Revelation 11, according to Revelation, the testimony to the world is going to be coming from the Jews. It's not going to be coming from the church. Now, that's kind of bizarre when you think about it, because Revelation 1 tells us that the church is literally lamps of the light of the world. And so, why wouldn't they be the great testimony during the time of the tribulation? I mean, that would be the time when the darkness was the darkest. And if God has called us to be light, we know according to Matthew 5, that's what we're called to be; according to Ephesians 5, that's what we're called to be; according to Revelation 1, that's what we're called to be. So, we're the light of the world, why are we not shedding light? But the fact of the matter is that God has called 144,000 to be the testimony

during the time of the tribulation, thus clear proof that the church is clearly not going to be there.

Then we also see within the text that the wrath of God is being poured out during the tribulation. Of course, 1 Thessalonians 5, we oftentimes quote, God has not destined us for wrath, but God has destined us for salvation. So, that's a pretty clear point within the text of 1 Thessalonians 5.

And then I would say, what we understand, according to 1 Thessalonians 4, the church meets Christ in the air. The tribulation is about Christ coming to earth. So, according to 1 Thessalonians 4, the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, 1 Thessalonians 4, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. So, you know, that's a pretty clear point too.

The church is not once mentioned in the tribulation. You go through the tribulation, and if in fact the church is so important, which is being established at the very beginning of Revelation chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3,

why is the church not mentioned at all during the tribulation?

The only thing that you see are saints crying, and this is another point. I told you, you can number them however you want to. This is another point that when God is first talking to the church at the beginning of the Book of Revelation, chapters 1, 2, and 3, where they're on earth, it says Christ is walking among them, and He is talking among them, and He is talking to them while they're on the earth. The conversation as you go into the tribulation begins God's conversation with them in the heavens, and it's at the place of the altar that He has the communication with them. You don't see Him walking among them on the earth. So, clearly another case in point.

We understand according to Scripture, and it's mentioned a number of times, we won't go to all the Scripture that's mentioned, whether it's in Revelation or the Book of Daniel or Jesus makes mention and quotes Daniel in Matthew 24, but that the tribulation is a seven-year period. According to the Book of Daniel 9 in particular,

and you could probably tie in Romans 11 in this, that God has ordained a time for the Gentiles and a time for the Jews. According to Daniel 9, the seven-year tribulation is the time of the Jews. It is no longer a time of the church. So, this is one of the reasons why. In fact, He says one more week remains for us to complete your times, and that's in the end time, and it'll come up again. So, we know that if that's true, then now we're in the time of the Jews. We're no longer in the time of the Gentiles, and God's going to be working once again through them (Jews), and He's going to be moving through them.

And then last but not least, and will bring us into the segue where we're looking at today, what we're looking at in the tribulation specifically, is the judgment that is coming upon the earth by what venue? Well, by the angels. The bottom line is, that in the tribulation, angelic beings are administering the judgment. Now, this is a very important point that is oftentimes overlooked. When you go to the first few chapters of the church now, and Christ is talking to the church, He says He walks among the church, and He tells the church, "Look, you have a

problem, and if you don't fix it, I'm coming to you.” Okay, so, that's Jesus disciplining His church, right? That's not what you're seeing in the tribulation. What you're seeing is a judgment of the angels, which here again, we can list a number of passages of Scripture. Hebrews 2, Galatians 3 and 4. The bottom line in that is that God had ordained the angels to oversee the law. And so, what you're seeing is the judgment of the law in the time of the tribulation, which is a key point with the time of the Jews, because they're over the law. So, it's the judgment of the law, and who administrates and administers judgment of the law? The angels do. The Scripture tells us repeatedly that. So, where is Christ? Why isn't He doing that? Because He's not of the law. So, you're seeing the angels doing the administering of the judgment, and that brings us to the point of the trumpets.

And as we come to the trumpets, once again, just to reiterate, the very beginning of Christ's claim in the earth, it begins from the time of Christ, and then those seals go all the way, and that seventh seal then opens up the trumpets, which then begins the tribulation. So, up to this

point, what are we seeing? Well, as Christ is opening up the seals, He's revealing the condition of the earth and the difficulties of the earth. Where did all the problems come from? Well, what's clear is all the problems came from man. Man was the one that brought up all the problems and the horrific things that were happening to himself on the earth, whether it was the white horse, whether it was the black horse. So, you go through the apocalyptic horses. But each one of those are representative of man taking the reins, so to speak, and it takes us through history of how man has messed up the world. Christ is taking back the world to Himself, but you can just see how man has so distorted it. By the time you come to the trumpets, the seven trumpets, which is the last seal that is broken, then that begins to declare judgment is now coming. It is as judgment comes upon the earth for the things that man has twisted and distorted, it is that which makes the tribulation begin to stir and the winds begin to blow. Now, what we see at the beginning of Chapter 7 of Revelation is that the winds are held back until God sets aside His servants as testimony, and that's the 144,000 in the midst.

We come to Chapter 8, then we begin to see not only the prayers, but God now allowing the judgment of the angelic beings to then go into the world. Throughout the text, we've covered in Chapter 8, the first, the second, the third, and now we're on the fourth trumpet, which is the calling out of the indictment against the earth. Why a trumpet? Because it's a wind instrument, and let's see, wind, "*pneuma*," the same word, right? And "*pneuma*" and "wind" and "Spirit" is the same word. So, the spirits of God are beginning to move and declare the indictment and the judgment against the world.

As you look at the first one, the calling out is the indictment against the earth. It's where man misuses and abuses the resources that God has given him, and the judgment comes upon the earth. In each case, you're going to see the phrase, "a third," "a third," "a third," and as we talked about, it gives reference specifically to man's influence, man's effect on the earth. A third being, remember, a third of a hen in the drink offering that was being poured out in the Old Testament. A third of a hen was what? It was exactly how much blood is in your body.

So, it's a picture of man taking his life and using it for whatever he does. But the unfortunate thing is he's brought pain and sorrow to the earth. He's misused the thing that God has given him. So, it's an interesting way of describing man's influence when it says a third of this, a third of that is destroyed. And it's just referring to the fact that you did this. It also is the gracious hand of God, which says, "We're not going to destroy it all. But just to let you know, you did this." It's an interesting point. So, the first one is a declaration of the misuse of what God has given us against the earth, against the grass, against the trees that God has given us. The point that what have we grown but pride? What have we done but pursued the temporary? Of course, that's the picture of grass, as He will say throughout Scripture.

The second one that is blown is an indictment against the seas. Of course, that's man refusing to recognize the boundaries and the limitations that God has placed on him, and that's his natural proclivity, just to go way beyond what God has said. As you look at Scripture, God has continually used the seas to be boundaries of even

nations, and of course, we recognize those sometimes in our political schemes. But the indictment is that. Here again, in each case, you can see the indictment as it is worldwide, but you can also see the indictment upon yourself. I mean, I've abused and misused the things that God has given me, and I've disregarded the boundaries that He's placed upon me. I mean, anytime a child doesn't obey his parents, he disregards the boundaries that God has placed upon him. Anytime he disregards authority, he does that. So, here again, the indictment begins to be proclaimed. Now, the point of this, and I just want to make a special point of this, these are real physical judgments that are coming upon them. They are representing something, but that does not make them unreal. So, are the trees, the grass, the seas, all these things being destroyed? Yes. It's like the plagues of Egypt. Were the plagues of Egypt real? Yes. They all represented something, but they were all real. Why would they have to be real? Because we're in the law, and so, it has to be the real judgment that is coming upon the people on the earth. So, the second calling out is the indictment against the seas.

The third calling out is the indictment against the rivers and the springs. Of course, the grand picture of rejecting God and His invitation of life and renewal to us, and because of that, your life has become bitter. So, wormwood goes into the waters. And why is this world a bitter place to live? Why is it a bitter place? Because you've rejected the gentle, flowing rivers of Shiloh. It was a place of rest, a place of peace. So, are the rivers really going to be polluted with poison? Yes. They're really going to be polluted with poison. But here again, they're giving a picture of why that's true. Once again, you see man's influence.

We come to this one, the fourth. What's interesting about the fourth trumpet is that it's talking about the moon, the stars, the sun, and specifically, as you go into Genesis 1, you see that the sun, the moon, the stars were actually created during the time of the fourth day. So, we're on the fourth declaration of the angel, and so it's on the fourth day that we see this being proclaimed. You say, "Well, wait a minute, wait. The sun wasn't created during the fourth day. There was already light before that." Well,

there was light before that, that's true. But the sun was created on the fourth day. The point of the matter is, as Scripture tells us very clearly, God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. The only thing that God had to create was not light. He had to create darkness. And that's what the Book of Isaiah says, that He created darkness. He formed light, but He created darkness. Light has always existed because God is light, but what hadn't been existing up to this point was darkness. Then, He'll separate the light and the darkness, and then He'll finally come to the point of using the sun, the moon, the stars. But He's letting us know that He's orchestrating some things before these things are even invented. So, fourth day, it's an interesting point.

But if you come with me to Revelation 8:12, we'll just read the verse,

(Revelation 8:12) “The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun...”

Once again, making reference to the fact that man has had an influence in this judgment.

“... and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck...”

The word just basically means pounded, struck hard. I don't know how it's going to happen. I mean, maybe some meteor is going to hit them; maybe another planet's going to run into the sun or another sun run into the sun. But they're going to be hit hard, and God's going to somehow knock out a third of them, and the point is that there's going to be darkness.

Now, if you look at the phrase, it says,

“... a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened...”

“Darkened” is going to actually be the key issue within this particular passage.

“... and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.”

So, the lights that were there to give guidance, direction, all sorts of things are now going to be hit and struck. And once again, the key phrase is darkened.

What we understand is that the church, in fact, if you turn into John 1, and actually I'm not cheating when we turn to another book such as John, because John wrote the Book of John and Revelation. So, we're actually using the same author. Well, beside the Holy Spirit, but just the same author of all the other books. That's why we're probably going to go into other books too.

John 1, as it declares,

(John 1:1) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(John 1:2) He was in the beginning with God.

(John 1:3) All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

(John 1:4) In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

(John 1:5) The Light shines in the darkness..."

Now the question is, why is there darkness? And the answer is, because man has rejected God. That's why there's darkness. So, Christ is coming to the world that He

might, and He gives this interesting picture of Himself being light that is coming to the world to, if we can put it this way, hold or push darkness back. It is the declaration or the purpose of Christ to bring light into the world

It says,

“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

Another text would use that phrase, “could not overpower it”. So, there's a war going on between the darkness and the light. And as it says at the beginning of creation, God separated the two so that you know that there's this clear difference. So, Christ comes in the world, and He begins to push that darkness. Everywhere He goes, He's pushing. I mean, you take light, and you put it in a room of darkness, and what happens? The darkness goes. He pushes back. This is what Christ does. This is what the church should be doing. This is the key point. In fact, if you drop on down, it talks about John being a light, but he was not the true light.

(John 1:9) “There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”

He turns on the light.

Now, we have a fundamental problem according to John 3, and the fundamental problem is, and the judgment that comes upon the world to the lights that man begins to embrace, if you look at John 3, it reads this way,

(John 3:19) “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.”

So, darkness is in the world. Christ comes to display and to push back the darkness. Man loves darkness rather than light because of his deeds. The purpose of Christ is in Him bringing that light to every man, and he goes on and makes that statement. The same thing is true with the church. And once again, that's why in Revelation 1, it gives a picture of a church as the candlesticks, the seven candlesticks that are lit. And as we've read in Matthew 5, you are the light of the world. You're here to push back darkness. Now, what we're seeing within the passage is that the church is not only holding back, and their

purpose is not only to hold back the darkness of sin, but it also holds back the darkness of judgment. Because within the passage that we're looking at, what we're seeing is the judgment of the angels that comes upon us. Look, the wage of sin is death, right. So, that means that if you sin, you should die that moment, die. But the grace of God holds back, pushes back that darkness that comes. So, the ramifications that come because of the things that we do. I mean, the psalmist says, "I'm so thankful God has not rewarded me according to my iniquities, but according to His mercy He has given me." The church is that which pushes that back, and it's one of the reasons why earthquakes and all kinds of things coming from the sky aren't burning a hole in the earth right now. I know that maybe scientists will say it's luck. That's a scientific word, I think. But we actually believe that God is holding back these forces because light is shining in the world.

Let me give you some examples. If you look with me in the Book of Ephesians, and by the way, the great indictment really is that man not only loves darkness, but he also follows the wrong light. Jude 1:13 talks about false

prophets. Guess how he defines them? Wandering stars. And if you think about it, in many respects, what he's talking about really, I won't get into debate about this, but probably planets. Because you look in the sky and the stars are kind of like fixed, and one of the ways you know it's a planet, for all you stargazers, is that planets move. They don't stay like stars do. So, you go, "Okay, that's a planet." And of course, man down through the ages have worshipped these stars, Mars, the god of war, right? Venus, the goddess of love. Why? Well, first of all, probably because they're some of the brightest lights in the sky. The irony is, that they're not stars at all. They just reflect. They're not stars at all. They don't have any true light in them at all. But man throughout the ages, whether it was the tower of Babel, worships the heavens and has once again gone to the wrong source and embraced the wrong thing. And of course, we have things like the horoscope, but of course, nobody uses those things, right? Yeah. People open up the paper or wonder what's going on and what fate has for me now. Are you listening to the stars to tell you? Why don't you go to the Creator Who made the stars? See, the point of the matter

is that man sees and interprets the stars as something that he uses with astrology. I have the definition of astrology. They claim divine information about human affairs. Astrologists do. They look at the stars, and they go, "Okay, we got some information that is being given to us." And you have these superstitious horoscopes where people begin to try to live their life according to this. But rather than seeing and recognizing the stars for what they are, what are they? Well, Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows forth His handiwork. Have you ever asked yourself, "I wonder how smart God is?" Okay, I don't know. Okay, look at the stars. Because Isaiah 55:9 says, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways higher than yours. So, God has given you this simple thing. You're going, "I wonder what He's trying to say. He's trying to connect the stars." He goes, "I'm just trying to say it's a long way out there." And you're going, "Oh, okay." It's like the sun. I mean, God says, "I made the sun for you to work during the day." And we go, "Oh, so, we'll build a city that never sleeps and have light bulbs and work at night, and we'll

sleep during the day.” He goes, “Well, that wasn't why I made the sun.”

In fact, Jesus will say this in John 11:9,

“Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble...”

(John 11:10) “But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles...”

That's deep, isn't it? Well, it is deep because He's given a principle, but He's also saying, “You guys won't recognize the axiomatic obvious. Whatever's there, you'll do the opposite.” Man has an ability to just distort the simplest of things, and it's man's inability to recognize the obvious that really is a sign of his rebellious nature. It's that which really defines him. Of course, 1 Thessalonians 5 says, “Look, We're children of the day. We don't go out carousing in the night.” Usually if somebody's out in the night, they're probably up to no good. Why? Because they're looking for the night, the darkness of cover to hide them. But they almost take the night as a cue to go get busy rather than, God says, “I've made the two for

reasons.” So, man has continued to reject the thing that God had given.

But if you look with me in Ephesians 5, which, okay, let's see, John was at the church at Ephesus. So, we can use the Book of Ephesians. Ephesians 5, I love the way that it's put, because it's really talking about the fact that we're to be different than the world. Of course, at one time we were a part of the world, but now we're walking in the love of Christ, which is another name for the light of God. The love of God is the light of God.

But if you look with me in Ephesians 5, it reads this way, (Ephesians 5:1) “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

(Ephesians 5:2) and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Then he goes on and lists,

(Ephesians 5:3) “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

(Ephesians 5:4) and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting...

(Ephesians 5:5) “... no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

His point is, that those are all deeds of darkness.

Now, his statement will be this, in verse 7,

(Ephesians 5:7) “Therefore do not be partakers with them;

(Ephesians 5:8) for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light...”

Now, the purpose of the church is to hold back the darkness. Now, if you're not walking in the Spirit of Christ, you're not holding back anything, and the judgment of darkness is coming in your sphere. So, that the church exists, it's holding back, and what Revelation is wanting the church to know is you've got to stay on top of things. Look what you're holding back. You understand what I'm saying?

So, it says,

(Ephesians 5:9) “(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

(Ephesians 5:10) trying to learn...”

Why do we study the Bible? Yeah. You and I shouldn't be guessing. We shouldn't be walking around, “I think I know what God wants.” You don't know what God wants. But we try to learn what is pleasing to God. It's why we get in the Word of God.

“Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

(Ephesians 5:11) Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.”

Okay. What's one of the ways that we hold back darkness? Well, light comes in the room, it exposes darkness. By virtue of doing the right thing, you're exposing what is wrong, and the church should be that light. I mean, the world will tell you, you kill a baby in a womb, it's not murder. The church comes in, and they go, “It's murder.” That's light. It's truth. Take the church out and everybody will be convinced because you get enough people to say the wrong thing, everybody believes it. So,

the church is here to proclaim it's wrong for a man to sleep with a man. Romans 1. It's wrong for a woman to sleep with a woman. I mean, it literally says, these are unnatural things. Even nature shows you, you don't do that. But the truth has been so obscured by the darkness of man's desires that, and everybody's intimidated. Nobody wants to say anything about it. "I don't want to say anything about it." That's what church does. We're the pillar and support of the truth, or another way of putting it is, we're the pillar and support of light, and we expose when something is wrong. We say it's wrong. It doesn't mean that we're going around hitting people over the head with the King James Bible, but what it means is, that we're going to say that something's wrong. Our hope is, that you'll embrace what is right so that you might have life in you. Because anybody that embraces darkness is not embracing happiness, is not embracing peace, is not embracing joy. In fact, there's not a hope. Darkness has no hope. Darkness is obscure, depressing, oppressing, right? And before long, you just can't see. Talk about stumbling; you're going to stumble over everything. And so, the church is there. It shines a light. "Thy word is a

lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path.” (Psalm 119:105)
We're showing people where to walk, how to go. You take us out, the sin itself darkens, but then the judgment that comes because of what is going to come, and God says, “You're holding all of this back.”

Look with me in Matthew 18. Just to kind of give a picture of this. We're familiar with the chapter, you don't want to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Christ puts one on His lap and He goes, “Don't cause one of these...” One of the goals of the church is to keep people from causing a little one to be hurt or to lose their life or to be abused. We're there. And so, we're shedding light on the things that are wrong, the things that would cause pain and heartache. Of course, as He says in the text, it'd be better for a millstone to be hung around your neck, and you be dropped in the depth of the sea than you cause one of these little ones to stumble. But as He goes down, He says, “Now, you as a church need to speak up and say something. So, you know, a brother's in sin, it's not just him sinning. It's the influence of his sin that is darkening the world around him.” People go, “Well, he goes to

church. I guess it's okay.” And God says, “You've just darkened that room.” So, the purpose of the church is to stand up and say, “Brother, you can't do that.” See, look at the passage.

It says,

(Matthew 18:15) “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

(Matthew 18:16) But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you...”

And say, “You’ve got to stop doing this.”

Of course, we all sin in many ways every day, but what we're talking about is that which is overtly affecting the body and people around him. So, it has a sense of aggressiveness to it.

It's like 1 Corinthians 5, where Paul is talking about the gross immorality that's going on, and people are bragging about it. In the church, people are bragging about it, and Paul says, “This has got to stop. And this is what's going to happen. If you don't listen to me, I'm going to turn you

over to Satan, and your flesh is going to be destroyed.”

Now, here's the point. And I know that people perceive, “Okay, the church is just being mean, they're just trying to be judgmental. Don't judge me, man.” Heard that before.

So, here's the deal. If you really care for somebody, see, faithful are the wounds of a friend, right? Deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6) So, if you go to your brother and you say, “Okay, you're messing up. You're hurting yourself, you're hurting other people, and there's destruction coming along.” The church is there to hold back not only the sin, but the judgment of the sin.

And here's the point. Paul says, “If you're not going to listen to the church, then an angelic being is going to do his role. He's going to take you out. Right? But what the church does as light is we go, “There's another way.” And we're pushing back the darkness of the sin and the darkness of the judgment. People go, “Well, the church tried to correct me. That's a horrible thing.” We're trying to save your life. We're trying to save your life. We're trying to tell you not to do this because the wrath of God is going to take you home. If you're a child of God, He's going to take you home. He's going to say, “There's no

reason for you to be here. If you're walking around saying, "I'm a child of God, I'm a child of God," and you're just darkness, darkness, darkness, He goes, "Okay, come on home. You're misrepresenting the family." So, the kindness of God is for the church to hold back that force.

So, if you look at the passage, He says this,

(Matthew 18:17) "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

(Matthew 18:18) Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth..."

Now, what is the church trying to bind on earth?

Darkness.

"... shall have been bound in heaven..."

He's telling the church, "You need to do some binding, and you need to set people free." Anytime you see darkness, you need to bind that. Put a stop to it, because that's what He's called us to do. Now, you say, "Be better to not have the church." Well, Revelation says, "I don't think so. Because if you don't have the church, this is

what happens.” See? So, it's the grace of God that brings the church, and when the church is quiet, we're causing more disruption than anything else.

Last passage to turn to is found in Corinthians. There's actually no reason I can connect this one. 2 Corinthians, if you turn to me to Chapter 3, reminds us that there's a light of God and it's being veiled. It's being covered, just like when Moses, when he came down from the mountain, had a veil over his face when he saw God. He says, “We have Christ, and in Christ, the veil is taken off so that people can see light.” So, it's the genuine, sincere, real love for Christ that people are looking for, and that's the light of the world.

He goes on and says this,

(2 Corinthians 4:1) “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart.”

That's the light of the message, right? We've received mercy. All this can go away. Darkness in your life can go away if you receive the Lord.

(2 Corinthians 4:2) “but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

That's the light. You know, when you're walking in truth, that's light.

Now, he says this,

(2 Corinthians 4:3) “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

(2 Corinthians 4:4) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

(2 Corinthians 4:5) For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake.

(2 Corinthians 4:6) For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” ...”

Interesting analogy of Genesis 1, right?

“... is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

This is the treasure that we have in us. So, we're this light, and the picture that Revelation is conveying to us is the same picture that God was revealing to the seven churches of Asia Minor, “You've got to shine those lights, because there are forces that are going to take you out, if you don't. And the reason I placed you in the world is to hold back the powerful forces of darkness that not only want to get you to pursue that sin that will clearly depress you and make your life miserable, but also wants to bring in the ones that will torture you for doing it.”

The world is a strange place if you think about it. The world will have a message on TV, well, have TV shows, and they'll have all this alluring stuff; people shooting each other, you know, it's a wonderful thing. “I wish I had a gun.” You know, after you watch some of those shows, you say, “Man, I just wish I could just blow somebody up, you know?” And so, they kind of allure you with that. And then, of course, they allure you with the whole

relationship, or not relationship happenings, and you go, "Wow, I wish I had about 20 girlfriends." But they get you longing, and you go out, and you tap a girl on the shoulder, "You're under arrest." "What for?" "You just were hostile towards a young lady. She didn't even ask you." "Yeah, but I'm just watching a show. You should have seen what they did on the show." It's interesting how they'll allure you in the darkness of sin, and then they'll snatch you up when you do it. The graciousness of God is to bring His church in the world, and His church subdues this darkness, and says, "You don't even want to go there. They're out there looking to trap you, and it's going to ensnare you. The sin itself is going to put you in bondage. We're going to bind this darkness, and we're going to free you." And that's what the church is about. That's why these pictures are given, that are true pictures, that are things that are going to happen at a particular time. But God is revealing to the church so that they would do what they're called to do.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your word that sets us on the right track of just understanding what You've called us to do and maintaining that purpose on this earth as long as You have us here. We look forward to the day that the trumpet will sound, and You'll take us out, take us home with You, and so shall we ever be with You. What a wonderful day that will be. But Lord, until then, may we push back this darkness.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. God has called you to be children of light. You once were darkness. Now, you are light. Shine. Shine. Do what is right. Let the world see the clarity of hope that is in Christ Jesus.