

For Whom The Bell Tolls

by Shane Idleman

This sermon delves into the deep symbolism of Revelation 8, highlighting the opening of the seventh seal, the significance of incense and sacrifice, and the powerful role of prayer in the midst of future events. It emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God, recognizing the rejection of God through idolatry, atheism, and carnality, and the need to turn away from sinful lifestyles to avoid God's judgment and embrace His power and salvation through Jesus Christ.

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Description

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Transcript

That did cross my mind later on. For whom the bell tolls. Revelation 8, 1-3.

I covered some of this already, but I just wanted to put all of this in context. When He opened the seventh seal, and if you don't know what's going on, make sure to go back and listen to the messages. When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about a half hour.

And I saw the seven angels who stood before God, or stand before God, and they were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, he came and he stood at the altar. And he was given much incense.

And a censer is something they used that had the incense in it. And during the sacrifice, the sacrificial system involved this where it was almost like they would use certain essential oils, alright, to relate for today. But certain herbs, frankincense and the myrrh and things we hear of.

And they would actually do that with the sacrifice. And that sacrifice then was called a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord. The sacrifice being made for the sins of the people.

And I'm going to encapsulate this really quick. In the Old Testament, they were waiting for Jesus. Looking ahead.

Now we look behind. And so for a long period of time, it was the blood of bulls and goats that would temporarily, temporarily cover the sins of the people. That blood was not powerful enough to take away their sins for eternity.

A once and final sacrifice. So they would put the blood on it, on the altar. And without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin, Leviticus says.

And so that blood would be shed in order to cover the sins of the people. Once a year or so. So the high priest would go into the holies of holies before God, make that sacrifice, but then have to keep doing it every year.

And then when Jesus came, He is what is called our Passover Lamb. Or the Lamb of God. Without spot, without blemish, the perfect sacrifice.

And that sacrifice was the final once and for all sacrifice. The shedding of His blood is so important. And so this angel came in the book of Revelation here.

We're talking about future events that could be coming up. John is seeing a vision in heaven. And he was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

That's interesting. He's got the incense which represents sacrifice. And with that is the prayers of the saints.

That's a powerful reminder of how powerful prayer is. Did you know you can pray now and they will outlive you? Your prayers outlive you. When you die, God doesn't say, well, there goes those prayer requests.

I wish I could tell people, and many times we've done memorial services where family members that they've been praying for after the person has died come to know the Lord. And they didn't know it. They didn't know it.

Many times on their deathbed, crying out to God, save my son, save my daughter. Their prayers outlive them. And I will just tell you up front that on all these sections, the commentators are really all over the place.

Ellicott's commentary says this. Benson's commentary says this. The Pulpit commentary says this.

It's like so many different views out there because it's a little vague on exactly what this means and how it pertains to us today. Nevertheless, the book of Revelation said there's a blessing for those who read it and obviously obey it. So the prayers of the saints.

It reminds me of Psalm 141. Let my prayer be set forth as incense before you. So remember that when prayer is boring, you need to change your thinking.

I'm offering an incense to the Lord. My prayers are going up to God. God is the one thing, it's the one promise that Jesus even gives us.

Go into your prayer closet. Shut the door. And the Father will hear you.

The power of prayer. That's why it's so hard. That's why it's so difficult.

That's why it's so challenging. It can be boring. Do you know the least attended event at any church is a... Just let that sink in.

Let that sink in. The most important thing that we can do is the least attendance. A least attended.

And it's really a reflection of our heart, is it not? The fire of God. And maybe we don't think God really answers. I mean, I know not everyone can make things.

I know. I understand that. But it really is an indication of where we're at spiritually.

There's no fervor. There's no desire. And often it's because there's no desire for that because that desire hasn't been fueled all week.

If you've been praying and fasting all week full of the fire of God, you can't wait until the next prayer meeting. If I've been on Netflix and Voodoo and Amazon Prime and eating too much and drinking too much, and oh my goodness, I have no desire for that. My taste buds are dull to the things of the Spirit.

And that's why we threw out there that challenge. There's a phone number you can text us at. It should be in front of you on a sheet.

Where if you text us the word fasting, we will add you to the fasting text messages that go out. There's about 183 people right now from this church who are fasting. Well, some are out of town probably.

But who are fasting and praying for rent in the heavens and for our nation. And the biggest encouragement is to get back up and start again. And the things I hear more than anything, Dave's a good example.

How many? Three weeks? Yeah, three weeks. Mainly just water. And he's crying.

He's holding. He's like, now I know why you talked about it. Why is it? Because you're starving the appetites of the flesh.

And whenever you do that, you get filled with the Spirit of God. I have to fast before I preach. I have to pray.

I prayed this morning, God, speak life into this message. Because it's a tough cookie. I don't know... And we're going to keep reading and locusts come out of the pit.

And the high priest on the Day of Atonement placed incense before Jehovah. This altar was elevated. It was a high place.

It was a high place. The altar is a place of death that gives life. Think about that.

The altar. This place of death. I don't know if you've ever seen an animal being slaughtered.

Have you, farmers? And I remember even just going hunting and a friend of mine got an elk way up above Rifle, Colorado, and he wanted me to watch it while he went down a mile or two and got everybody. And

it's pitch black. And I hear wolves.

And it's like, what? It was probably the scariest time I've ever had. Because there's nothing you can do. You're standing by a dead elk.

I can have a .357. I can have a 30mm rifle. But it was pitch black out. And so I remember, I've never been so... I see lights like a mile and a half down the hill.

But what they had to do and gut it and have it fresh meat. And it's horrific if you're not used to it. I remember the first time I saw that, I was really taken aback.

But this, I won't even describe what happens at the sacrificial system. And how many of the blood of bulls and goats and rams. And that's why they would have the offering.

Those who didn't have much, they would bring a little turtle dove. And that's why when God made that covenant with Abraham, He said, the she-goat, the heifer, the ram, the turtle dove, and the pigeon. He carried all areas of sacrifice there.

All levels of what people could bring. And this horrific event was a place of death. The blood that was everywhere.

The animal. It was just quite alarming. But that spot, that place of death gave life.

It covered the sins of the children of Israel. And I've thought about it before, but I think it's too graphic. But I would love to sometimes, not love, I guess, but illustration-wise, put up some of the scenes from the Passion of the Christ.

I can't watch it. I begin breaking down. That someone paid that price for me and for you.

That place of extraordinary death. Unspeakable. Could you imagine being there? I would probably have a meltdown.

Fall to the ground weeping. That place of death gave life. That's why most of you in this room have spiritual life.

Because that place of death. It's in God's economy. Something has to die in you before Christ can truly live in you.

And that's why we do encourage people to come to the altar. Because it's a place of death where we lay down certain things. Certain struggles, addictions, strongholds that have had us in bondage for years.

We lay that down. A place of death. Lord, I am dying here.

And I need to come up revived and filled with Your Spirit. Because genuine repentance took place. It's powerful.

The reason we stress it a lot is I've seen more lives changed at the altar than anywhere else. There's not even a close second. Not even a close second.

Marriage is restored. There's been times it's like, hey, such and such is divorced. And we're praying and then a month later, we see them both down here crying together.

Whoa! Third recovery home. Marriage is about over. We see the prodigals we've been praying for.

See them over there. People healed, set free. A place of death that gives life.

It's so important. But Proverbs says, he who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is repulsive. God only hears the prayers of those whose hearts are right before Him.

But be encouraged, if your heart is not right before Him, He does hear that cry I talked about last week. Help! That prayer. Isn't that interesting? No other prayer.

I can't hear you. Your iniquities have separated me from you. And there's no relationship.

How many people go through the motions? Billions, let's say, different religions, different things, going through the motions each week. And there's nothing. But they say, if you're real, I know I've been praying to elephants and raccoons and chimpanzees, but if you're real, it breaks my heart going to a friend's house, they have an altar with a Buddha and a little elephant.

Guys, hello? That's nothing. You have to know the one true and living God. But thank God He meets you where you're at.

He meets you where you're at. I get that question, what about the person in Sudan who's never heard about Jesus? Well, I trust in God and His goodness, and He'll give him a vision. Or a dream.

But Romans says, his invisible attributes are clearly seen so that people are without excuse. If somebody in their native tongue in Africa in the jungle says, there's got to be something more than here, I feel this condemnation. Did you know no matter where you go, a person knows you can't steal a neighbor's chicken? Where does that come from? Moral compass, moral Creator.

And if they turn to Him, they turn to Him, God, I believe in His mercy and grace, will show them their need for a Savior. He'll connect the dots. I don't have to worry about that.

And let's be honest, that's just an excuse so I don't have to follow God. Well, what about the guy who's never heard about Jesus, huh? You're just using that to conceal your prideful, arrogant heart. That's all it is, straight up.

There's so many facts that prove there's a God, it's on them. People don't reject God because they lack facts. Hey, just take a biology class for a year.

Hello? Microbiome, the cell, the myocondria produces energy, and the energy takes your carbohydrates, your proteins, your fats, it breaks it down, and then it assimilates it, then it digests it, it fuels the skin cells, the cancer scales, the stem cells. That all just happened one day. Give me a break.

My goodness. But think about that. These are excuses.

How can God allow all this evil to happen? The Bible says He gives man over to themselves. To me, that just proves we need Jesus even more. That argument doesn't make sense to me.

And then he goes on to say, in the smoke of that incense with the prayers of the saints, it ascended before God from the angel's hand. The prayers of the saints have power. I hope that prayer room is packed at Ren in the Heavens at 515.

I don't know if it was last time we did or a couple times ago, we had to actually move it to the multipurpose room. 50 people at 515. 50, 60 people.

We might have some worship in there as well, but that's getting the fires going. How many of you have heard of Charles Haddon Spurgeon? How many know that they had 100 people in the basement underneath interceding every time he preached? He attributed to probably one of the best preachers that I've heard of him. Obviously, he was in the 1800s.

But I've got his sermon volumes. That guy, he can take one text and just camp out for an hour and think of things I would have never even crossed my mind. Where did that come from? The boy preacher at 18, 19, 20.

Becomes a pastor of this large church in his early 20s. People praying in time with God. Your prayers outlive you.

I actually was going to do a whole sermon on this, but I had to share this point. The sacredness of the secret place. The sacredness of the secret place.

Folks, you've got to find that secret place. You've got to find that secret place and spend time with God. Remove the distractions.

I texted my wife last week. I said, I miss our other house because I had an office. So guess where my secret place is now? The garage.

And the kids laugh because I vacuum it and keep it clean. Hey, don't make a mess in the garage. That's like where I eat and pray.

That's it. That's all I've got. But you open that door at 4 in the morning.

Pitch black and just the power. The sacredness of the secret place. I don't know about you, but I have to pull away from the busyness of the day to really hear the heart of God.

Because everything's contending for our time. I'm convinced without a shadow of a doubt that the best way the enemy sidetracks us is not by the big sins. I'm actually going to talk about that maybe Sunday night when small things are a big deal.

You need to be here every night, don't you? But it gets us busy. I'm a pastor. I'm a Christian.

But if I'm busy, I've got to do this. I've got to do that. Then I get frustrated.

Anybody else get frustrated when they're too busy and plans aren't going away? And things are going haywire. And now I'm not being nice to people. My emails aren't as nice.

Or my texting. And now I'm busy. And now you've got to be here.

And can you speak here? And I do get opportunities to speak at different places. And I do turn down quite a bit sometimes because it's just too much. Too much.

And he gets us busy. And we've got to have those boundaries in place. And what I would encourage you to do, what I did, there's five things I wrote down.

What are my priorities? The father, husband, of course, and the pastor. And for me, it's sermons, podcasts, in God's Word, writing articles. The reason I haven't written a few more books is I've been too busy.

And then this is what I have to do. This is throughout the day or throughout the week. Now other things, of course, you've got to make time for sure.

But if you stay focused on those things, and no, I can't be at every function. I can't be at every potluck. I can't be at every meeting.

I can't be at every association meeting. I can't run for that board. I would love to be at more school district meetings and give them a piece of my mind.

But I get flustered because I can't do that. And then they're what? Three hours. And then this is sacrifice and this.

We do need more people to do that. If God puts that on your heart, do it. But the sacredness of that secret place.

You've got to find that secret place. I've got kids though. We can go in the bathroom.

Lock the door. Get them down to sleep, right? Wayne Jackson wrote this. There was a relationship between the use of incense and the application of blood, which I explained earlier.

The results of our prayers. This is incredible. And I really thought about it.

Looked up some cross-referencing. The result of our prayers is dependent upon the shedding of the Lord's blood. And the power of that blood for the Christian must be accessed by prayer.

You ever hear those old saints say, put the blood on it. We plead the blood. Now, I don't know if you necessarily have to do that.

But we realize we gain access to the Father through the blood of Jesus Christ. And then we can preach boldly because the Bible says we can go in boldly to the throne room of grace. So I can boldly come to the Father and say, Lord, because of the shedding of Christ's blood, I want to pray according to Your will.

Here's the things I want to pray for because of what Jesus did and has set me free. I want to pray for these areas of concern. Lord, put the blood on the prodigal son's life.

Wake them up. Give them conviction. And then the angel took that censer.

Filled it with fire from the altar. Oh my goodness, I'm getting worked up here. The Bible, I don't think every word is there for a reason.

I don't think God said, oh, whatever you want to write in this sentence, go ahead. Filled it with fire. Filled it with fire from the altar.

That would be another good sermon. Are you filled with fire? I just have to share this too. Filled with the fire of the Spirit, maybe you don't know, is one of my most passionate topics.

How many of you know that? No, come on, you know. Right? The fullness of the Spirit. The anointing of the Spirit.

The filling of the Spirit. Why? Because that is what made the most dramatic change in my life. The anointing of God upon your life.

Full of the Spirit of God. Not perfect, but forgiven. Get back up.

Fight again. Filled with the fire. And this topic, so many people, that's why they come to church here, and they write us, and they travel, and the fire of God, they want that.

But conversely, that's why some people leave. It's like Jekyll and Hyde. You need to stop talking about that Holy Spirit stuff.

Man, just relax. Relax. Don't get so emotional.

It's all about theology. Theology. Theology.

Sir, you're just convicted because you don't have the fire. I ask these guys, when was the last time you led anybody to the Lord? There's no passion. There's no fire.

And if you don't want to go deeper in your life, you want to stay, my sermons will offend you. I wouldn't like myself in my 20s. I know.

I would not be coming to this church in my 20s. Because I wanted to party. I'm having fun in my 20s.

I don't want this guy convicting me. And so it's hard because it hurts. You're trying to help people, but they get upset at you because they're convicted, and they don't want to change.

And they lash out at you, and make up things, and say things. But a lot of it has to do with this topic, does it not? Filled with fire. Filled with fire.

It's a biblical term. Somebody by the name of John the Baptist, I mean, I don't want to say goosebumps, I don't want to say, but this topic, there's something dynamic that takes place in the life of a believer. John the Baptist said, when he comes, when Jesus comes, he will immerse you, overwhelm you, look it up, baptizo in the Greek, he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

Jesus said it, why are you mad at me? It's because many don't want the fire. Because the fire will make you go deeper. The fire will make you weep over your sins.

The fire will change your carnal life into a life on fire for God. It's funny, we read about the prophets, but they went through hell. The children of Israel go to the prophets and say, tell us smooth things.

Tell us things we want to hear. There was no prophet that was popular. Do your own research.

There was no prophet in the Old Testament. Isaiah? Oh, Lord, no. Jeremiah? Ezekiel? Daniel? Daniel, maybe.

Because he wasn't convicting the people, they were already in captivity. Joel? Amos? Obadiah? Was Jonah popular? Micah? Nahum? Habakkuk? Zephaniah? Zachariah? Malachi? Was he prophet? Was he popular? Malachi? He'd say, remember the wife of your youth, you adulterous generation, and return to

her. God hates divorce.

You think he's popular? None of the guys are popular. You will not have a solid biblical message and be popular with most of the church and definitely not with the culture. There's just no way around it.

But a good reminder that I'm actually reminding myself, so just... The truth will offend, but my attitude shouldn't. The truth will offend, but arrogance and anger should not come out. Right? The truth will offend, and rightly so.

It cuts the heart. So he filled the censer, he filled it with fire upon the altar. He threw it to the earth.

Good luck figuring out what that means. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquake. And it's a good reminder, God's fire refines us, or it consumes us.

God's fire will refine the believer, but it will consume the unbeliever. And I love talking about God's fire. And I remember a popular Bible teacher said, we shouldn't talk about that because it's always about judgment.

No, it's not. Read your Bible. I'm not afraid of God's fire as a believer.

At all. I need your fire. Because when I'm on fire, it puts others on fire.

John Wesley would tell his preachers, light yourself on fire, and people will come and see you burn. Why? Because fire is passion, is it not? We watch, oh, that guy's on fire. Man, when Colby was around, he was.

Or my favorite, I know Pastor Abraham might disagree, but Michael Jordan. The goat. There's no way.

No, you don't have to clap. Clap for Jesus. But that guy's on fire.

Baseball player. Certainly on football. Or people going around their community.

They're on fire for God. It's a very good thing because the opposite of fire is cold, temperate, lukewarm, uninterested. And that's why the great prophet Elisha standing on Mount Carmel.

Let's see if the people liked him after this. He said, how long will you waver between two opinions? If God is God, follow Him. And the people answered him not a word.

Interesting, when Elisha prepared the sacrifice in the altar, what descended? And it licked it up. It consumed everything. God's fire.

God answered by fire. There's so many rabbit trails. Guys, help me here.

Come to rend the heavens and we'll see God's fire refines or consumes. It liberates or it condemns. Shaking of the earth often parallels God's judgment.

Let the mountains shake. That could be what this is. Noises, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes.

There's so much going on. There's so much going on. Make sure you find a quiet place.

I just thought of when God went to the other prophet, Elisha, he says he wasn't in the fire. He wasn't in the thunderings. He wasn't in the earthquake.

God was in the still, small voice. All these competing noises. I have found, as God is my witness, that He is rarely in the noise.

I have to calm my heart and calm my soul before Him to hear Him. It's a gentle whisper. He will wake you up maybe with an alarm.

But God leads in the stillness. And it's probably because He will not compete with other voices. Hey, I'm loud too! Hey, I'm loud too! Get rid of that noise and begin to listen to God.

So the seven angels who had seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And I'm not going to go through all the different verses, but it was much like the Egyptian plagues. First, the trumpet struck the vegetation.

The first trumpet. The second trumpet, the seas were struck. The third trumpet, the waters were struck.

And the fourth trumpet, the heavens were struck. And again, if you get time, you can listen to the different views I taught about. Some people believe that this had to do with AD 70 when Titus conquered Israel.

I can't make that connection here. Or Jerusalem. Others believe that Revelation is a long history of the church age or we're going to see a time where cataclysmic events are taking place.

Or you won't see a time because you'll be raptured. And some people think we will go through the tribulation as well. See, there's different views on there.

Great men of God are divided on that. Personally, obviously, if God's going to pour out His wrath, we are not here. I mean, that's a no-brainer.

Unless He preserves us somehow, some way like He did the children of Israel when He rained down on Egypt, the nation of Israel was spared. Is that interesting? And then when the death angel flew over, whoever put the blood on it, whoever put the blood on their door, some of you maybe need to put the blood on it this morning. You need to repent and you need to finally believe in Jesus and stop playing games with God.

Stop playing games. That's another sermon title. Stop playing games with God, right? He's just downloading.

I'm telling you. I don't know if I want to say this or not. Maybe it's encouragement.

I've been thinking about it. But I've been fasting a lot this week, mainly just water. Very challenging.

Maybe I'll have a little juice just to get me through like I did today, but I'm telling you, you feel so much better. I told my wife, don't talk to me for three days, right? What a blessing to have a spouse and kids that are on your side. And it was hard because of toxicity or getting rid of stuff, but when that freedom comes, when that breakthrough comes, it's powerful.

It's very powerful. When we set a time to pray and to fast, and I looked and I heard an angel. My point was you're not going to die, right? Take doctor supervision if you need to.

If you're obviously on medication, you have to be real careful because blood pressure medication, for example, lowers your blood pressure. Guess what fasting does? Lowers your blood pressure. So you've

got to be careful.

Or if you're on statin drugs and you're producing, your liver is holding back the cholesterol and then fasting is going to have some benefits there. Arapamycin, metformin, things like that. You have to be careful.

You have to talk to your doctor and navigate these things. But we don't die from fasting. We die from overconsumption.

And I believe we are called to take care of this temple that we have. I realize now more than ever, if I don't, I will not be a very good parent or pastor. It affects everything.

How we take care of the one gift that God has given us. By the way, that topic upsets people too. Just stick with preaching as you enjoy your six-pack of donuts from Krispy Kreme.

Am I just speaking truth? I'm speaking truth. I'm trying to convict people to wake them up. Wake them up to the realities of what we are doing to ourself.

And I looked and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven saying with a loud voice, woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the remaining blast of the trumpet and the three angels who are about to sound. In other words, get ready, get ready, get ready. The fifth trumpet.

Lord help me. The locust from the bottomless pit. Then the fifth angel sounded and I saw a star fall from heaven to the earth.

Now, we can do a lot of cross-referencing, of course, and this could resemble Satan falling from earth or a demonic type of something falling from earth that Jesus said, I saw Satan fall like lightning. And so often we think stars or the moon or clouds, those are actually Old Testament imagery. Is Jesus actually coming back riding a cloud like it says on the cloud? Or does that mean the clouds of judgment when Christ comes again? And so a lot of times you have to go back and look at how the Old Testament, I'm pretty sure John was writing based on what he knew about the Old Testament as well and God would use that.

So something demonic here is falling from heaven. And to him, it was given the key to the bottomless pit, the pit of the abyss, possibly where the demonic demons, remember Jesus, I think so many things that come to mind, when they said, do not cast us to the pit, but put us into the swine. So there could be a place where they're being held.

And the reason I say could have or this is considered this or this commentary, because I'm a person who can't say this is exactly how it's going to be going to pan out when I don't know how it's going to pan out. How can I say, oh, this is exactly what this means. Give me a break.

Every commentary is divided. That's arrogance. That's pride when we're not open and teachable.

And he opened the bottomless pit and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. So something is opened.

Now, what's interesting, the sun being darkened, it could just mean our vision is clouded. You know, we're not able to see certain things. Maybe it lines up with in the last days, many will, what, fall away.

They will not be able to see clearly again. Regardless, divine permission had to be given from God for what follows. Like I said, smoke is a devastation.

It's either devastation, or it's a loss of sight. If it's not physical smoke, it could be. I mean, when I read it, it sounds like a demonic... It's kind of hard to understand.

But do you know that Satan is not equal with God? The book of Job is so interesting. Satan was going back and forth on the earth. And he said, he's talking to God.

And he wanted to go do something to Job. He had to get permission from God. So God allows certain things.

So this demonic opening of this pit that releases all types of demonic bondage and demonic strongholds. And there's a lot of parallels to even right now. I mean, remember Satan used to be like kind of trying to be sneaky and deceptive.

Now he's just out there. You see some of these concerts from some of these artists. They'll have 666 on the stage.

They'll have devil skulls. And they'll have dressed up as Taylor Swift crossing a line even. And some of these artists, these rappers and these... It's like, you know, just as everything is just devilish.

And I remember Lady Gaga's image. And who's the lady on the voice? Is it voice? Kate Perry, Katy Perry? Kate Perry, her dad's a pastor. And so pray for her too.

But when she'll come out singing these demonic lyrics dressed as a demon. Hello? That's not good. That's not good.

Little Nas X. Unbelievable satanic. They think 666 is cool. They think, oh, it's cool until it has you in bondage.

And you bow to that leader who wants to destroy you and take you out. It's everywhere. When I saw the flyer for the satanic group is wanting to meet the library, I'm like, you've got to be kidding me.

Who allows this stuff? Like that would have been just laughed out of the consideration 20 years ago. Now it's welcomed? Commentary from Ellicott. The emblem of a fallen star is used elsewhere in the Bible.

It speaks of Lucifer from Egypt. Falling from heaven. Christ describes Satan as lightning falling from heaven.

I knew I read it somewhere. Some great power or ruler is represented then by this fallen star or they're represented by the fallen star. The abyss is the same word rendered the deep in Luke 8.31 where the demons besought our Lord not to send them into the abyss or the deep.

Then out of that smoke came locusts upon the earth and to them was given power as scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass or the green or the trees, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Hey, there's believers during this time.

So everybody thinks all Christians will be out of here when it gets tough. Maybe, I hope. That's what I'm praying for.

I love that position, but now this could be the 144,000 we talked about a couple weeks ago. You can bring in a lot of different things, but we do know that God seals those who are His. Do not harm those who are

sealed with the Spirit of God.

I remember in Ezekiel, God was going to bring judgment on the people and Ezekiel said, he told the angel actually, go and mark those who sigh and groan over the sins of the land. Mark those so when my judgment comes, it will not fall upon them because they share the same heart that I share for compassion for God's Word, for a love of God's Word. They want to stand up for the truth.

Oh, they might not be perfect. They just might not be nothing in their own eyes, but God sees their heart. They are marked by God when they put His truth.

They elevate His truth. They look to His Son for redemption. It's a very powerful thing.

And only those who had the seal of God on their foreheads were not harmed. And what did locusts do? They devastate. They devour.

They destroy. One of the commentators here, I believe he's from Germany, Niebuhr, the head is like a horse, this locust, the head is like the horse and the breast is like a lion and the feet are like a camel, embodied like the serpent and a tail like the scorpion. A lot of times too, the Bible will use images like Russia is what the bear, you know, China's the dragon.

And you'll see that too throughout Scripture that God will use certain things like that. And they were not given authority to kill them. They were not able to kill those sealed by God.

Oh, I'm sorry, they were not going to do anything to them. But they were not given authority to kill the unbelievers, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like that of a scorpion when he strikes a man.

In those days, men will seek death, but they will not be able to die. So it's some type of maybe a plague, maybe some type of something that's such chaos and devastation that they want to die, but they can't. It's not something leading to death.

And the shape of the locust were like horses prepared for battle. On their head were crowns of something like gold. And their faces were like the faces of men.

So then this makes you think, okay, these weren't literal locusts. You know, is this some type of biological attack? Welcome to my world. And they had hair like women's hair.

And their teeth were like lion's teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron. And so what John is doing 2,000 years ago, God gives him this vision and this is what he sees and this is what he's explaining.

You know, people have said nuclear holocaust, tanks, our fighter jets. It's hard to know. I just know you don't want to be here.

And their wings sounded like chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions and their stings were in their tail. Their power was to hurt men five months and they had one king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit.

And he says, one woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. So again, many people say these are evil spirits.

Other translators say that the interpretation is unknown. Again, Ellicott said, just as natural scorpions of the earth have power to cause suffering, so these allegorical locuses of the vision appear to possess the means wherewith to plague mankind. This is why what's going on should not be a surprise to a lot of us with what's going on in Israel, right? We know, I mean, if you take time, you read Ezekiel 38 and Ezekiel 39, a lot of people think that could be the nations surrounding Israel coming against Israel to take that land and to wipe her off the face of the earth.

It's a fulfillment of that. And actually, I believe, I haven't read it in a while, but it shows that Israel appears as being defeated. And then Christ comes, steps on the Mount of Olives, and the split occurs, and the King of kings, the Lord of lords defeats, because that's actually His land.

He's of the lineage of the tribe of David. His land. Now you're fighting in Christ, now you have a problem.

Nothing, nothing. What nuclear weapon are you going to use against Him? Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. In those days, men will seek death, and they will not find it.

They will desire to die, and death will flee from them. So let me bring this home. For whom the bell tolls, for whom the bell tolls, for whom the bell tolls, a form of godliness.

This is so important right now in our culture. 2 Timothy. But know this, that in the last days, perilous times will come.

Anybody think we're living in last days? For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasting, proud. No, this is not right now. Blasphemers.

They blaspheme God. They wear their rainbow flag and dress up as the opposite sex and put their fists in the face of God. You will not prevail.

God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, he will reap. You think you're mocking God, but he will have the final say.

They are blasphemers. Disobedient to parents. Unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanders, without self-control.

Brutal. Despisers of good. Traitors.

Headstrong. Haughty. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

But here's the kicker. They have a form of godliness. All these people.

You ever listen to these Hollywood actresses and actors? Debauchery and sin and darkness, yet they have a form of godliness. We just love everyone. God is within.

I'm a good person. A form of godliness. It's because they make God in their form.

And so they have a form of godliness, meaning that word form gives an appearance of something. Gives an appearance of being good. But they deny its power.

Having a form of godliness, but they deny its power from such people what? Turn away. So for whom the bell tolls, this is for you. Your lifestyle either confirms or denies God's power as working in your life.

That's what it boils down to. They have a form of godliness, but what's the Scripture say? They have a form of godliness, but they deny its power. See, they're not denying its power.

Their lifestyle denies the power of God in their life. I have a form of godliness. I'm good and I love people.

It's all about love, yet you're rejecting Him. You're caught in sexual perversion and your lifestyle screams just the opposite. So their lifestyle is condemning them.

And there's four things we have to watch too. I'll bring this home shortly. A rejection of God via idolatry.

For whom the bell tolls, it's going to be to those who reject God because of idolatry. It reminds me of when Jesus said it's hard for a rich man. Isn't that interesting? Why not a poor man? Why not a middle class? It's hard for a rich man who has idols, wealth, can buy, do this, God of their own life, it's hard for that man in their heaven because he doesn't see his need.

Could that be you this morning? Could that be someone listening? On radio later, this message is as much for you as it is for others. On that note, we got an email this week that these sermons that are going to be airing every night in downtown San Diego at 6 p.m. on KBright, that area needs the Gospel as well. All areas right now.

Or the second type of person, a rejection of God completely. This would be the atheist. And again, they don't deny God because they lack facts.

They deny God because they are arrogant. Do you ever listen to those famous atheists? Hitchens or Hutchins? What's his name? Hitchens? Yeah, Hitchens. And what's the other one? Hawkins.

Two H's. I'm like, I can't watch more than five minutes. The arrogance just trips onto everything.

It's just the blasphemy and the arrogance. And they pressure them. Well, where did life come from? Well, maybe aliens planted us here.

What? Who created the aliens? You guys, you've lost your mind. You're trying so hard. I don't want there to be a God.

I'm God of my own life. Then I have to repent and I have to submit to myself. Submit and I have to admit, admit that maybe I was wrong.

Pride is what puts people in hell and humility puts us in hell. And humility puts us in heaven. Now I will clarify that for all the theologians.

Not being humble, it's a good work, but humbly submitting to Jesus Christ and repenting. You have to do that. I remember when my pride was hit head on.

Thank God. Thank God when He spans us. If you're being spanked by God, thank Him for it.

Don't get grumbling and complaining. Thank you God for spanking me. Thank you for taking that job away if it meant me rejecting you.

Thank you for giving me that health scare if I was drifting from you. Thank you for my finances being drained if that's what it takes to get me back to you. Thank you for that spouse walking out the door and saying, I'm never returning if it caused you to give up that addiction.

Thank God when He spans you. And then of course, a rejection of Jesus. It can be the same, but often people don't reject God, but they reject Jesus.

Just watch a clip this week from Ben Shapiro talk about Jesus. It broke my heart. It couldn't be more wrong.

Number four, this is where many people live. Carnal, carnal, carnal. For whom the bell tolls, it will toll to those who are carnal.

What they do is they lust after things. They lust after things under the banner of love. Ask those people, say, we're just supposed to love everyone.

Well, you don't love me. Yeah, because you're a truth talker. We don't love you.

You're tolerant of everything except opposing views. They lusted. They lusted.

Their lusts had taken over. Now be encouraged, because Paul says neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor liars. He just goes over it all.

We'll enter the kingdom of heaven. But he says, but such were some of you, but you've been washed. You've been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Now, it doesn't mean those old sins won't knock at your door anymore. You ever been tempted to lie? Balcony. Every time my wife asks, does this dress look good, right? I just had to relate.

I had to relate. She's okay with that. But my kids have caught me in some doozies.

Haven't they? Haven't they? Dad, dad, let's, it's time to go to bed. We're done. We're going to bed.

No, let's go to Chick-fil-A real quick. Oh, they're closed. How about frozen yogurt? Menchie's closed too.

Maybe tomorrow. Right? That little lying spirit in you. Or I've done this.

I mean, I'm guilty. Maybe even this month. Hey, I know.

Is everything okay? Yeah, it's fine. That just means I don't want to deal with you right now. Hello? So it doesn't mean we don't struggle with these things that try to pull us back.

The difference is in this camp, it's a lifestyle. It's unrepentant. I don't care what God's Word says.

I like this. It's who I am. I was born this way.

Big difference, isn't it? One's a struggle. The other is a lifestyle. Be crystal clear on that.

Then I get this a lot. Christians are so judgmental. Actually, many are not judgmental.

We want you to avoid God's judgment. I'm not judgmental. I'm helping you avoid God's judgment.

That's actually love. Paul said we are to warn every man. Paul said that.

We are to warn every man of the wrath that is to come. Boy, Shane, that's not popular. But I've told you before, we're not trying to build a mega church.

We're trying to reach a lot of hearts. And the funny thing is, the more you honor God, the more He gets it out. Like for San Diego, the more He just... Because He wants to get this message out there more than we do.

Think about this. Think about how important this is. Somebody hears this, right? They hear this.

And they die in the next five seconds without receiving Jesus. They're spending eternity in hell. Let that sink in.

Is that not true? Somebody's driving, oh, yeah. They're driving down the 405 or the 5. Let's see if I can name some of the 8 in San Diego, Pacific Coast Highway. And they hear this, oh, that's a good point.

I should do that someday. Bam! Traffic accident. They're gone.

For whom the bell tolls. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of salvation.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/mo0qRE_sGeA.mp4
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