

REVELATION 1:1-3

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Revelation chapter 1 as we begin our study in this very exciting and very controversial book!

Why is this book so controversial?

Because most Christians do not understand what the Old Testament says regarding prophecy. You see, the book of Revelation is putting together what is spoken of in the Old Testament, the prophecies of the end times, into one book and giving us an order of things.

Let me show you what I mean about many of the pictures, many of what the book of Revelation speaks of and how it comes right out of the Old Testament.

You see, out of the 404 verses in the book of Revelation, 278 contain references to the Old Testament, almost 70%.

Also, it has been calculated that there are over 500 references or allusions to the Old Testament in the book of Revelation.

Thus, if you know the Old Testament, this book will not be difficult for you. If you don't know the Old Testament, I will try to help you understand what John is saying, letting Scripture interpret Scripture.

But not only do people feel it is too hard to understand, but many churches won't teach on it because it is controversial, it does not fit in with what they want to do, and even some pastors' have no clue what this book is all about, so they don't teach on it!

But let me ask you this. God has given us this book, He thought it was important for us to see these things and thus, don't you think He will give us the understanding that we need as we read through Revelation? Of course He will and of course He does!

But, like the late Prime Minister of Britain, Winston Churchill said about the Soviet Union, they are *“A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”*

And again, tragically, that is how many people view the book of Revelation.

My prayer as we go through this study is that you would have a clear understanding of this book. We might not be able to pinpoint every event down to the tiniest detail, but we should have a good picture of the things that are going to be taking place and I believe taking place very shortly!

Let me ask you this question. *“When you think about the book of Revelation, what comes to mind?”*

For many they think of the Antichrist, or maybe all the cataclysmic events that will take place, and don't forget about the False Prophet, the One-World Government, the One-World religion, the Mark of the Beast, the cashless society, the Battle of Armageddon, and-so-on!

That is what many people focus on and we will talk about these things, but the main point of Revelation is simple! It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and we see that pointed out to us in Revelation 1:1!

Make no mistake about it, Jesus Christ is coming back to deal with the evil in this world and then to set up His Kingdom to rule and reign for 1,000 years! That is what all these birth pains of the Tribulation Period will produce. The birth of the Kingdom Age!

Now why do people call this book *“The Apocalypse”*?

Because the word **“revelation”** comes from the Greek Word, APOKALUPSIS, (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis) and we get our English word, *“apocalypse”* from.

Now when we see this word, we think it is speaking of *“the chaos and catastrophe associated with the final destruction of mankind.”*

But this Greek word simply means, *“to uncover, to reveal, or to make manifest.”*

Think of it like this. I don't know if they do this any longer but imagine a statue that is going to be unveiled in a park. And it is covered. People are gathered around. And at that right time the cover is removed from the statue and everyone sees it!

That is what we will see here in our study of Revelation, like I have said. It is the unveiling of Jesus Christ in all of His glory!

Now that is not to say that there will not be cataclysmic events during this period of time known as the Tribulation Period, there will!

But who is this period of time for, these seven years?

The focus is upon unbelievers and the Jewish people.

You see, for unbelievers God is going to pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world!

Let me share with you a few Scriptures to show you what I mean.

In Isaiah 26:21 we are told, **“For behold, the Lord comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; The earth will also disclose her blood, And will no more cover her slain.”**

Now granted that does not say unbelievers but think about it. If you are believer and the Lord has already taken the punishment that was due us, then why would He pour His wrath upon us? He wouldn't and thus, this punishment is for unbelievers!

Then, in Ephesians 5:6 Paul wrote, **“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”**

Again, I think that is clear, God's wrath is coming upon those who have rejected Him!

Then, in I Thessalonians 1:10 Paul wrote, **“and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”**

We are waiting for the Lord to come for His Bride, the Church and then His wrath will be poured out upon an unbelieving world!

In II Peter 2:9 Peter reminds us, **“then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”**

God’s judgment is not for believers, but for unbelievers!

And lastly, in Revelation 3:10 we are told, **“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”**

Again, this wrath or trial that is coming upon the whole earth is for earth dwellers and we are not earth dwellers, are citizenship is in heaven. So, once again this wrath is for unbelievers!

And yes, during this period of time there will be a harvest of souls, many will come to saving faith, more than ever before, but it is out of this judgment that they are turning to God!

The second group of people that this period of time is for is the Jews. Now that may shock some people because they feel that God is done with the Jewish people. Not at all!

In fact, remember what Paul wrote in Romans 11:25-27 that God is not done with them. Paul wrote, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”**

Paul does not want us to be ignorant of the fact that God is not done with the Jews. You see, He promised them that the Messiah would sit on the throne of David and rule and reign and that has not happened yet. And God does not lie and thus, Israel will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior as He will take away their sins. And it is only Jesus that can take away sins, and that tells me they come to saving faith!

We are also told in Daniel 9:24, **“Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.”**

The subject of this prophecy is the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem, not Manitowoc or Rome or any other city!

The scope of this prophecy is 70 weeks or 70 seven-year periods of time, 490 years in total. This has not been completed yet, as I will show you.

Again, this is a Jewish focus. This has nothing to do with the church.

As you read through these verses in Daniel you will see that the angel goes on to tell Daniel that after 69 of those seven-year periods of time or 173,880 days the Messiah will come.

The starting point is the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, which was given by the King of Persia, Artaxerxes to Nehemiah on March 14, 445 B. C. (Nehemiah chapter 2).

Thus, if you would count off 173,880 days, including leap years and-so-on, you would come to April 6, 32 A. D. We call that day Palm Sunday, the only day that Jesus in His earthly ministry was heralded as the King, the Messiah!

The exact day and Jesus held them accountable for not knowing that day!

So far so good.

Then Daniel is told that the Messiah will “**be cut off**” or executed for a capital crime, even though he was not guilty.

After that the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed, which occurred as Titus and the Roman army came down upon Jerusalem, and destroyed the city and burned the Temple to the ground in 70 A. D.

Now we have a problem, there is one more week or seven-year period of time that has not yet been fulfilled.

Folks, that is the seven-year Tribulation Period that is coming, its focus is the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem, and also a Christ rejecting world!

But what about the church?

The church is in the gap between Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27, we call it the church age or that period of time when the Holy Spirit is drawing a bride for Christ.

It is when that last Gentile gets saved that the Lord will call His bride home and then the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period will start.

Who wrote this book?

We are told in verse 1 and verse 4 that John wrote this book, but that was a common name.

Thus, many argue on which John this was.

I think the historical evidence points to the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, and the brother of James.

Justin Martyr wrote early in the second century, maybe around 135 A. D., that, *“There was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.”* (From Dialogue with Trypho, chapter 81).

Also, another second century church leader, Irenaeus wrote that the apostle John was the author of this book and he should know. You see, Irenaeus was a native of Smyrna and as a boy he was a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of John the apostle.

I don’t believe there should be much controversy in who wrote this book and remember, this book was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; it is from the lips of God!

The writing of this book was probably around 95-96 A. D. Keep in mind that the first wave of Roman persecution against Christians occurred under the reign of Nero, who ruled from 54 to 68 A. D.

Under his command both Peter and Paul were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ as well as many other Christians.

Then came the second wave of Roman persecution against Christians and this time it was Domitian and he ruled from 81 to 96 A. D.

Domitian demanded the people to worship him as God, Caesar worship. If they refused, they were either placed in prison or put to death. Obviously, Christians would not worship anyone but the true and living God, which made them targets of Domitian!

Extra-biblical sources tell us that Domitian tried to boil John in oil, but the guy wouldn’t die, so he was sent to the island of Patmos, a penal colony.

He was exiled to die on this rocky, barren, volcanic island located in the Aegean Sea about 32 miles from Ephesus and 40 miles from Miletus.

This small, isolated volcanic island was only ten miles long and six miles wide.

It is here, in this barren penal colony, that the Lord gave to John the Revelation of Jesus Christ! And I guess sometimes God needs to get us alone so He can speak to us clearly and what the Lord showed John must have blown his mind!

After Domitian died in A.D. 96, Nerva replaced Domitian and John was freed and allowed to return to Ephesus where he lived out the remainder of his life and ministry and was buried there in Ephesus.

To help support that time frame, listen to what the second-century church father, Irenaeus wrote, *“We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision [the book of Revelation]. For that was seen not very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign.”*

Now, if that is the case, which I believe it is, then John was not writing about the events that occurred in 70 A. D. as Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple burned to the ground. And the reason is obvious. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, this book was not going to be written for another 26 years!

Make no mistake about it, this is not a historical book but a prophetic book!

I want to spend a little time talking about the various models for the book of Revelation, and, as you will see, there is only one model that will stand. And if we get this wrong, then our understanding of this book will be off as well.

Let me show you the various views and you will see what I mean.

First of all, there is – ***THE PRETERIST APPROACH!***

We have just touched on this view showing the foolishness in thinking that this was fulfilled in history already but let me lay out what they believe!

The Latin word “*Preter*” means “*past.*”

Thus, they believe this is a past event and not future.

But as you study the historical record of the first-century Roman Empire, you will see that they do not fulfill the words that were spoken by John in Revelation.

Jesus never returned in 70 A. D.

Sin still reigns in the hearts of man.

Satan is not chained.

And, if we are living in the Kingdom Age, I am very disappointed!

So their view of the book of Revelation is not as a future event, predictive prophecy; but a historical fact of first-century Rome.

Obviously, I don’t think this view is correct, it does not fit what the Scriptures are teaching.

Then there is – ***THE HISTORICAL APPROACH!***

This view believes that the book of Revelation is a sweeping historical panorama of all church history. It has nothing to do with end time’s events.

This makes no sense. Think about it. How would this help anyone!

And what they do to fit this into history is that they often resort to allegorizing the text in order to “*find*” in it the various historical events they believe it depicts.

For example, the fall of Rome to the barbarians, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, the advent of Islam, even the French Revolution, and-so-on.

There is nothing in the Scriptures to support this view, none at all!

Then there is – ***THE SYMBOLIC APPROACH!***

In this view they once again don't see the book of Revelation as a future, predictive prophecy but that it is nothing more than allegories of spiritual truth.

Those that adhere to this view believe the book of Revelation is never to be taken literally!

Now think about that for a minute. If the whole book was just an allegory, if it was just symbolic, if we were not to take it literally, what hope would that give to us?

Absolutely none and yet, if you do take the book literally, there is great hope in reading this book – ***Jesus is coming back!***

Yes, there are allegories and symbols that are used in this book, but when they are used, they are told to us and the Scriptures themselves reveal to us what they mean, we don't have to guess!

Again, I don't think this view is correct; the Bible does not support it.

We also have – ***THE IDEALIST APPROACH!***

And in this view, they see Revelation as the timeless struggle between “***good and evil***” that is played throughout the history of mankind. Nothing again supports this view.

We also have – ***THE SPIRITUAL APPROACH!***

The difference between the spiritual approach and the symbolic approach to the book of Revelation is that the spiritual approach emphasizes the perennial battle between good and evil.

And yes, God wins out over evil, but this view misses the whole point, there is much more that will happen.

This view negates what Revelation says is going to take place. It is not just symbolism. But those that believe in this view don't believe in prophecy at all, they just see the book showing the battle between good and evil, Christ and Satan.

Very similar to the idealist approach but again, to believe this you have to reject John's point in why he wrote it.

So I reject this view also, the Scriptures don't support it!

The last view, and the one I believe the book of Revelation shows is – ***THE FUTURISTIC APPROACH!***

In this view the book of Revelation is seen as future, predictive prophecy.

In other words, much of the book of Revelation, chapters 4 through 22, are all future events.

This is the only view that makes sense and fits in with what the Scriptures teach.

Now some will argue that if this book is to be taken as future events then it would be meaningless to those whom John was writing to, the people of his day.

I like what John Walvoord has to say in regard to that criticism. He writes,

Much of the prophecy of the Bible deals with the distant future, including the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah, the prophecies of Daniel concerning the future world empires, the body of truth relating to the coming kingdom on earth as well as countless other prophecies.

If the events of chapters 4 through 19 are future, even from our viewpoint today, they teach the blessed truth of the ultimate supremacy of God and the triumph of righteousness. The immediate application of distant events is familiar in Scripture, as for instance 2 Peter 3:10-12, which speaks of the ultimate dissolution of the earth; nevertheless the succeeding passage makes an immediate application: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent . . .” (2 Peter 3:14).

- John Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 22

Thus, I see this futuristic approach as the only one that fits. All the other approaches are based on the opinions of man, and that doesn't work.

And so, as we read through this book, we will take it literally unless the text says otherwise. That is the best approach to this book as you will see over the next few months.

What about chapters 1-3, if they are not future, then what are they speaking of?

That is a great question and Jesus answers that for us. You see, Jesus divided the book of Revelation into three main points and if we follow them, then this book makes sense. If we don't, then the outline makes no sense, and the rest of the book will be confusing.

Revelation 1:19 gives us the outline of this book. This verse reads as follows, “**Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.**”

Thus, the outline is as follows:

THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN – REVELATION 1

Here in Revelation chapter 1, we see the vision of Jesus that John gives to us. That should just make sense, John sees this glorious picture of Jesus and in the outline that Jesus gives to us the first section deals with – ***THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN!***

THE THINGS WHICH ARE – REVELATION CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

These are the things that deal with the church, or the church age and they speak of church history from its start until the last days church of Laodicea or the Lukewarm church where Jesus is outside knocking to get in.

And keep in mind that these are all churches that existed in John's day as well, located in Asia Minor as we will see. Which again should just make sense because the second division of this book deals with - ***THE THINGS WHICH ARE!***

THE THINGS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS – REVELATION CHAPTERS 4-22

This deals with the things that will take place after the church age and it will lead us into the opening of the various judgments of God and the things that will take place during this seven-year Tribulation Period into the Kingdom Age, the short rebellion after the Kingdom Age, the Great White Throne Judgment and then the Eternal State with a new heaven and a new earth with a new Jerusalem coming down.

And we will see this outline come to pass as the church age closes and in Revelation chapter 4, we see John speak of what takes place – ***AFTER THESE THINGS***, or after the church age. And it is interesting because there was a sound like a trumpet, and John was immediately caught up to heaven and I believe it is a picture of the Rapture of the church and we will look at that more when we get to Revelation chapter 4.

Thus, that is the outline we will follow as we go through this fascinating and I believe, very timely book dealing with the Revelation of Jesus Christ!

But let me share this with you from Romans 11:25, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until *the fullness of the Gentiles* has come in.”**

I would like to focus on that phrase, **“the fullness of the Gentiles.”** It is important.

What does that phrase mean?

He is speaking of the last Gentile to be saved before the Lord takes His Bride, the Church home in the Rapture. It is at this point that the Church Age comes to an end and God will be dealing with the nation of Israel once again during the Tribulation Period or the 70th week of Daniel, that last 7-year period before the Lord returns to set up His Kingdom on this earth, as I have said!

The Scriptures also speak of the **“times of the Gentiles”** which is different.

Some say that this took place back in 1967 when Israel re-captured the city of Jerusalem, but I don't see it that way.

In Luke 21:20-24 we are told, **“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”**

The times of the Gentiles began when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took the Jews away captive and it continues on today when Gentile nations are persecuting the Jews, even though they are in their homeland.

Just look at how the United Nations treats Israel and how they treat terrorist nations. Israel is the bad guy, and they try to tell Israel what to do instead of going after these terrorist nations, who are on the security council! Go figure!

And as you read those verses in Luke, they are speaking of the end of the Tribulation Period and when this event happens, the Lord will return, and the end of Gentile rule will come to pass, no longer will the Jews be persecuted by Gentiles, for *the times of the Gentiles* will have been fulfilled!

I want you to see the difference between the *“fullness”* and the *“times”* of the Gentiles, they are speaking of two different issues, as I have said.

I also think a great summation of not only Revelation but the Bible, is given to us by Norman Geisler and William Nix.

This is what they said,

The “Paradise Lost” of Genesis becomes the “Paradise Regained” of Revelation.

Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation.

- Geisler and Nix

What do they mean by that?

Think about this for a minute. What was lost when sin entered the world will be regained as Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom and rule and reign for 1,000 years and then on into eternity as He creates a new Heaven and a new Earth for us to dwell in with Him!

It is as Paul said in Romans 8:18-23, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

Thus, the book of Genesis is the book of beginnings and the book of Revelation is the consummation of all things.

That means this is an important book for us to read and apply to our lives. It is not a hidden or closed book but there are built in blessings, as we will see, for those who read and hear and apply these things to their lives.

Let me share this with you and then we will get into our text this evening. We are told, We all know what took place September 11, 2001. Nineteen terrorists. Four planes. Two towers of the World Trade Center. The Pentagon. And open field. Nearly three thousand people died.

What if you had known about all that with absolute certainty on September 10, 2001? What if you had gotten information on the afternoon of September 10, 2001, about what was going to happen the next morning?

What if your wife or your son or your mother or your brother-in-law was going to be on one of those planes?

Would you not do absolutely everything in your power to use the information you had received to help people avoid the fiery destruction that was coming?

Something is coming that is going to be infinitely worse than 9/11, eternally worse – the judgment of God.

God has given information in the past that has helped people escape the coming conflagration [inferno, fire], and there have been times when people have made powerful use of what God revealed about the future. . . .

[But why is there no excitement in the church today about the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?]

We have been lulled to sleep by the ordinariness of our lives. Our senses have been dulled by the humdrum of one day after another.

We need to see God as he is. We need to be convinced that Jesus is reigning as the risen King. We need to have him speak to the situation in our churches. We need to know that God is right now on his throne, in control in Heaven, worshipped by myriads upon myriads of heavenly host. We need to see the way that God will pulverize wickedness, obliterate those who oppose him, and set up his kingdom.

The book of Revelation has exactly what we need.

- James M. Hamilton Jr., Revelation – The Spirit Speaks to the Churches, pp. 17-18

In other words, it is time to wake up, have a correct perspective of who is in control, and it is God, and then take what we learn and not become fearful but use these words to share with others about what is coming.

It is as Paul said to the Thessalonian believers as he shared with them that we will be gathered together to meet the Lord in the air and because of those words, **“Therefore comfort one another with these words.”** I Thessalonians 4:18.

And again, he said in I Thessalonians 5:11, **“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”**

God is showing us what is coming so we do not need to fear, and we can be witnesses of Him. He is still in control, He has never lost control, He reigns!

The problem, for many Christians today is that they don't know what the Word of God has to say about a lot of things, including prophecy or end-time events. They don't even read the Bible or if they do, it is few and far in between.

A recent LifeWay Research study found only 45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week.

Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month.

Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they never read the Bible - essentially the same number who read it every day.

We need to be men and women of the Word and let God speak to our hearts and our lives and comfort us in the days we are living in!

With that said, let's jump in and see the redemption program that God has set for us come to its fulfillment!

Let's begin reading in Revelation chapter 1, starting in verse 1, and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we begin the book of Revelation – ***THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!***

REVELATION 1

VERSES 1-2

Remember what I said. That the word "**Revelation**" comes from the Greek word APOKALUPSIS, (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis) and we get our English word, "*apocalypse*" from.

And this word speaks of an unveiling or a revealing, and as we can see, it is the unveiling of Jesus Christ, that is what this book is all about!

Yes, there are many other things in this book, but the focus, the climax is the revealing or the unveiling of Jesus in all of his glory. If you miss Jesus, you have missed everything.

Spurgeon put it like this,

The great fault of many professors is that Christ is to them a character upon paper; certainly more than a myth, but yet a person of the dim past, an historical personage who lived many years ago, and did most admirable deeds, by the which we are saved, but who is far from being a living, present, bright reality.

- C. Spurgeon

If you are here and don't know Jesus, look carefully because He is being revealed to you. He wants to be your Lord and Savior. But it is your choice. If you don't know Him, this book should terrify you. If you do know Him, it should give you great hope because the Lamb of God who has come and taken away the sins of the world is coming back as the Lion from the tribe of Judah to put away evil!

Don't miss the main point; it is ***THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!***

You may be wondering, "***Why did God give this message?***"

He has given us this message to show us Jesus in all of His glory, like I have said. And that means it is not something that God is trying to hide from us or keep us in the dark about. This is an ***apocalypse*** or a revelation, not ***apocrypha*** or something that is hidden!

And notice the transmission of this Revelation. The Father gave this Revelation to Jesus, who gave it to His angel, possibly Gabriel, who then gave it to John.

You see, God the Father wants to reveal God the Son in all of His glory or as Isaiah 40:5 tells us, "**The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.**"

Now there are a lot of critics out there and they pick at things in this book and they really miss the point on what is being said so they can justify what they want to believe.

Case in point. John tells us that these “**things which must shortly take place**” or “**swiftly take place.**”

Now let’s think about that one. If John wrote this letter in 96 A. D. it has almost been 2000 years, that is not quick!

And here is a place where the critics will jump up and down and say that this did not take place shortly! The Bible is wrong! Are they right?

No, they are not right! Let me explain because in the English, we miss what the Greek is saying.

That phrase, “**shortly take place**” in the Greek is EN TACHEI.

What John is saying is that when things begin, it will occur suddenly, things will move quickly by in a rapid-fire sequence.

It will be over in seven years!

Thus, the event may not be soon, but when it does happen, it will be sudden!

What is interesting is that we get our English word “*tachometer*” from this Greek word.

And what does a tachometer do?

A tachometer is something that measures RPM’s or revolutions per minute. For instance, if we’re talking about a car it speaks of how many times the engine’s crankshaft makes one full rotation every minute.

Again, John is not saying that these things were going to happen *shortly* in the sense of chronology, but *quickly* or *rapidly* once they are set in motion. Once you start the car, the engine starts and the crankshaft turns and it will not stop until you turn the engine off!

The idea is that the things written in this book, once they start, are going to be so destructive, so cataclysmic and so horrific that they can't be prolonged or dragged out because it would mean the destruction of every living thing on the planet!

Let me give you an example to show you what I mean. In Revelation chapter 6, as we are introduced to the four horsemen of the apocalypse, in a very short period of time one quarter of the earth's population is going to be wiped out!

To put that into perspective, it speaks of the combined populations of South America, the United States, Canada and all of Europe just in the seal judgments! Some 2 billion people!

I picture this as the setting up of dominos and then tipping the first one over, and it sets forth a chain reaction that will not be stopped. Each domino will be knocked down!

It is as John Walvoord tells us, *“quickly or suddenly coming to pass, indicating rapidity of execution after the beginning takes place. The idea is not that the event may occur soon, but that when it does, it will be sudden.”*

Now listen to what we read in Revelation 1:2, that John, **“who bore witness to the word of God . . .”**

As John bore witness to these things, he wrote them down and he considered it the Word of God.

Tragically many don't today, but John knew what he was writing.

Let me share with you what is happening in some Christian churches today.

Deborah Dombrowski tells us:

A growing number of well-known evangelical leaders today are teaching thousands of people that the world has a serious problem.

The problem they describe is not what you might expect to hear, especially from evangelical leaders.

They believe that those who claim Jesus is coming back soon and the Earth will face a horrible Armageddon or judgment are actually the cause of the World's major problems and are prohibiting a time of great renewal from taking place.

Talk of biblical end-time prophecy is considered by these men to be unnecessary and downright dangerous.

Tony Campolo in his recent book, *Speaking My Mind*, suggests that these type of end-time thinkers are even the cause of wars. He says, "Their doctrines are a major factor in determining a far-ranging set of consequences that included American policies regarding militarism, the emergence of evangelical Zionism, attitudes toward Palestinians and the role of American geopolitics." (p.207). He later says their "impact on geopolitics can only lead to war." (p. 215).

Rick Warren suggests that Jesus doesn't want us to even think about prophecy or His return. Warren tells us that it is none of our business. He tells us that thinking about Jesus' return is a ploy by Satan to get us distracted. (PDL, pp. 285-286).

- Deborah Dombrowski, *The End of The World – As We Know It*

Folks, they are telling us that we are not to waste our time studying prophecy, the book of Revelation. But, because we are, not only studying this book and believing that what God has said will take place, we are causing the world's problems. And keep in mind that some 25 to 33% of the Bible is prophetic in nature. Can you imagine cutting out 33% of the Bible! No way!

And what we need to understand is that the church, who was to be the pillar and foundation of the truth, are the ones who are coming against the Word of God and the prophetic events that the Bible speaks of, and they deny this is going to happen!

Make no mistake about it, God means what He says and says what He means, from Genesis through Revelation!

Also, for those who don't teach this book, for those that don't read this book, you are missing out on a built-in blessing.

We get that blessing in the next verse, Revelation 1:3.

VERSE 3

Let me break this verse down for us.

John starts out by saying, "**Blessed is he . . .**" and that is singular. I think this is speaking of a pastor or elder reading this "**. . . out loud . . .**" In other words, this is to be read publicly.

And then John says, "**. . . and those . . .**" which is plural, and I think he is speaking of the congregation or "**. . . those who hear the words of this prophecy . . .**"

What is my point? Why did I take the time to go through that?

Simple. Revelation was to be read out loud in the local church meetings by the pastors or elders. And we are to read this on our own as well.

And, as we will see, John is going to speak of the seven churches in Asia Minor.

Now please understand that there were many more than seven churches in Asia Minor or Modern Day Turkey. Then why only seven?

Because seven is the number of completeness and thus, these letters are written to all the churches throughout the world, it is a message to them all! It gives to us a complete picture of the church!

Tragically today, like I have said, many pastors won't read or teach the book to their congregations for fear it might drive people from their churches.

But God wants us to read this book. He has built in a blessing for those who not only read and hear the words of this book, but also apply these things to their lives!

We might not understand everything, but we will be blessed!

Let me show you several of these blessings that are found in this book, Revelation!

REVELATION 1:3

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

REVELATION 14:13

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’”

REVELATION 16:15

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

REVELATION 19:9

“Then he said to me, Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’”

REVELATION 20:6

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

REVELATION 22:7

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

REVELATION 22:14

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.”

So when pastors and teachers neglect the book of Revelation they are taking away the blessings of God from their people. And when individuals don't read this book, they too are missing out on the blessings that God has for them.

John tells us that the **“time is near.”** Again, John is not saying that it was going to happen in his day, although he believed it could. But that is not what the Greek word means.

The Greek word for **“time”** is KARIOS, which speaks of a period of time or a season.

You see, the next great event or era is the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan as the book of Revelation unfolds for us.

Thus, John's warning to his generation and subsequent generations is to be ready.

It is as Paul said in Romans 13:11-14, "**And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**"

Be watching, be waiting, be ready and walk accordingly, fulfilling the work that God has called you to do.

Jesus is coming folks and I believe His return is near!

I know, some of you thought we would not even cover one verse tonight, but we did, we covered three. Next week we will finish up Revelation chapter 1, there is a lot in that section as you will see.

As I close this evening, let me leave you with these words to think about.

We are told,

A father was trying to read his morning newspaper while his little daughter was asking him all kinds of questions.

He decided to give her something to do with her hands that would give him time to finish his reading.

He found a map of the world in the paper and tore it out, folded it in several ways, and then cut it into small pieces.

He said to his little girl, “Here, honey, is a map of the world. See if you can put the puzzle together.”

Confident that she didn’t know anything about geography, he settled back into his chair and continued to read.

In a matter of minutes the little girl had it all put together on the floor.

The surprised father said, “How did you do that so fast?”

She replied, “Well, I found a picture of Jesus on the other side, and I knew when I had Him in the right place, the whole world would be all right!”

That truly is the key not only to this book, but our life!

You see, if you don’t put Jesus in the right place, you will be terrified of this book and have a wrong perspective of what this book is all about.

But if Jesus is placed where He should be, you will see that He will make this world right one day.

So to me, if Jesus is your Lord and Savior, this book should be of great comfort and hope for you.

If He is not, I pray that you will turn to Him, for if you refuse, this book will bring about great fear in your life, or at least it should!

And remember, it is ***THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!***