

It was my senior year of college and my second year of living in a dormitory. One morning at breakfast I saw two Chinese students sitting at a table. I recognized them as fellow residents on the same floor where I lived. They had impressed me as friendly and fun-loving... but I'll admit... I did not know them very well. ... I asked if I could join them at their table... and they motioned their consent.

One of them drank coffee with his breakfast... and I thought that I would impress them by saying the word for coffee in their own language. My grandpa (who had worked in the oil fields with Chinese immigrants) taught me a Chinese word... that he said meant "coffee." ... It was a common word that he always seemed to utter... whenever China... or Chinese people were mentioned around him. "Hawk-eye-chuck-eye-own..." was the word.. he would say (as if he knew how to speak Chinese.)

So I pointed to my dorm-mate's coffee cup and proudly said with a smile "Hawk-eye-chuck-eye-own..." Both of them (at the same time) turned their heads swiftly to look at me. One of them asked while he tried to choke back his laughter: "*What did you say?*" So I said it again - "Hawk-eye-chuck-eye-own..." They both broke into such a boisterous hilarity that turned every head in the dinning hall toward our table. ... "*What...? What?! Didn't I just say coffee?*" ... I asked. No answer. Just greater riotous laughter. ... It was then... for the first time... I began to realize that "Hawk-eye-chuck-eye-own..." did not mean "coffee." ... I asked them what it really meant... and neither one was willing to translate it for me. ... To this day... I have no idea what it means. ... (But I do know how to make a coffee-drinking Chinese person to laugh very hard.)

My college experience with my fellow dormies... reminds me of the way many Christians treat the Book of Revelation. We try to portray that we know more about it – than we actually do. ... A lot of people have no idea what this book means. They might even speak things about it (... and speak boldly) but have no idea if what they are saying is true – or why. It is a foreign language to them. Someone gave them an understanding... but it is their “Hawk-eye-chuck-eye-own...”

That is why (for the third week in a row)... I have sought to provide you with a provisional overview and some rules of interpretation (called hermeneutics) – so that we might know a little better what we are talking about ...and why. I hope to minimize the frequent occurrence of distorting what it actually means. (Since a lot more than simply being laughed at... is at stake here.)

Last week I mentioned the over-all theme of Revelation. It is - the Lord's coming – again. But I want to say a little more about that... in light of providing an overview. (Perhaps it will like an eagle flying 900 feet in the air... looking down at the landscape from above.) ... And then next week (hopefully) we will begin a more detailed look with a verse-by-verse study through the book. Today (just like the past two weeks) I will be jumping around a bit. However... I will begin today... by having you take a look with me at the very first verse of Revelation.

Revelation 1:1

Notice (if you will) that “Revelation” is singular. It is not “RevelationS”. The Greek word is “*apocalupsis*” ...from which we get the word “*apocalypse*.” The word means “*to take away the covering...*” or “*to unveil*.” (I am FAR

more sure of this... than I ever was about the meaning of “Hawk-eye-chuck-eye-own...” – and you can be too.)

(Here is something very important to realize... as we get an overview of the book.) Revelation is more than an unveiling of future events! It is about the unveiling of a Person! ... What did verse one say? “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (You see...) When Jesus returns – He will be revealed... He will be unveiled... EVERYONE will understand Who He really is!

When Jesus came to earth the first time... He was veiled. His complete Deity was veiled by human flesh. ... But when He comes again... the veil will be removed... and everyone will see Him in all His glory as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. ... And from the very first Chapter (here in Revelation)... we will see Jesus - unveiled.

Revelation 1:13-15 (ESV)

¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

When we get to this (in our verse-by-verse exposition) in two weeks... I will explain *what I believe all of this means*. But the point that I am making now... is that John had a glimpse of Jesus – unveiled here. ... As one of Jesus’ closest disciples... John had walked with Jesus back and forth from Jerusalem to Judea – a several day journey – and they did it (at least) three times... camping out with Him under the stars... sharing a lot of meals together for three years. ... NOW someone very familiar with Him... saw Jesus unveiled. (And) folks... (let me tell ya’...) it was a different Jesus!

Jesus is the focus of the Book of Revelation. As we get into all the images and symbols... let's never lose sight of this! From verse one and chapter one... John makes this clear.

Through all the evil images and symbols that we will encounter... the power and purpose of Jesus (in overcoming them and re-claiming His rightful ownership of Earth) is the focus. First... let me say a word about how Revelation shows His power. ... Power oozes out of His pores!

He has ultimate and effectual power to accomplish anything He desires. We see that He has power (and He will) destroy the dominating kingdoms and influences of evil on this earth. ... But not just that! Jesus can (and will) build back what hasn't existed since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. The world will be freed from sin and suffering.

The message of the Book of Revelation has a lot to do with you and I (right now.) I hope that you will grow more confident in studying it... that there is nothing we are facing (today) that Jesus cannot change in an instant... if He wanted to. ... (You say)... *"Yes... then why hasn't He? Why do I still have to contend with THIS stifling issue in my life...?"*

My prayer is that God will raise the conviction inside of you that understands – If He hasn't removed a particular challenge in your life... then it means He has some great/eternal purpose for it. Nothing comes into the life of a child of God - that has not been sifted through the perfect/loving will of God. (And) whatever is causing you difficulty – Jesus COULD remove it – but right now... God is using it (in some way) for your good and His glory. ... (And) recognizing the purpose of Jesus in Revelation will help

us deepen this conviction. Knowing Christ power and Christ's purpose are very valuable.

So here is a recognition of Jesus' purpose that we'll see in Revelation. The immediate purpose is the removal of evil. Jesus is masterfully accomplishing the plan of God that has existed down through the ages of time... that will result in the removal of sin from the world... and the destruction of Satan.

The world that you and I live in (right now) is not the world as God intended it to be. We often hear people ask: "*Why does God allow horrible (bad) things to happen?*" ... The simple answer is: **THIS** is not what God intended. People want to blame God. "*Man (because of Satan's influence) does evil – HOWEVER God allows it! God is ultimately to blame...*"

What God allows is man's freedom to choose good or evil. If God didn't allow such choice – He would force us... we would be robots... and without the freedom of making our own choice to obey Him or not – we could not show any love Him or to anyone else. Love involves willful choice. ... We were made in God's image – which includes the ability to love – and this requires the ability to choose freely.

Revelation is about God putting down sin forever – without taking away our freedom to choose. He is working His plan perfectly.

When I was in high school... there was a popular comedian named "George Carlin." My friends and I would laugh and laugh at his crude humor. (But) George Carlin was an outspoken atheist. He passed away in 2008... but before he died *this* is what he said:

...I want you to know something... and this is sincere... I want you to know... when it comes to believing in God... I really tried... I really... really tried. I tried to believe that there is a God... Who created each of us in His Own image and likeness... that He loves us very much... and keeps a close eye on things. I really tried to believe that... but I gotta tell you... the longer you live... the more you look around... the more you realize something is... wrong here. War, disease, death, destruction, hunger, filth, poverty, torture, crime, corruption. ... Something is definitely wrong. ... This is not good work. If this is the best God can do, I am not impressed.

Atheists who reject God... also reject the whole idea of man choosing evil for himself... and they have no idea that God is lovingly working His plan for doing away with evil – while preserving man’s ability of free choice.

But Jesus has a purpose that goes beyond the removal of evil. God’s bigger purpose is that we might have fellowship with Him and enjoy Him forever! Even before the beginning of creation – God’s desire was to be the Father of mankind (those who chose Him.) ... Near the end of Revelation (as it concludes) we read:

Revelation 21:3-4 (ESV)

³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*

⁴ *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

That is a day we all long for! ... Until it comes... we have the Book of Revelation to comfort us. ... Many don’t find much comfort in this Book. Comfort is the last thing they find. As long as the question hangs over their head: “*Will we (as believers) have to live through all these atrocities that are recorded in this book*” – there will be NO comfort at all.

I spoke a little on this last week... and I certainly will have far more to say in the coming weeks – especially between chapters 3 and 4 in Revelation. (Chapter 4 will describe what many theologians believe is a description of the rapture – before the Tribulation on earth breaks out. So I will be saying much more when we get there... about why I think the church is going to be raptured... or removed from the earth before the severe judgment of God – like no other catastrophic time in history - takes place.)

But today... (since I told you that Revelation ought to comfort us... and thoughts that *we might have to live through the awful process of God cleansing the earth of it's sin* - would keep anyone from being comforted – I thought that I should say just a little more – so that we can be reassured and encouraged.

What I am about to show you is not the strongest argument for what is called the “pre-rapture” understanding – which believes that the church will not be around during the Tribulation. There are many *stronger* arguments for that position (and I am saving those for when we are between chapter 3 and chapter 4 in our study.) But in today’s overview that I am giving – there is a pretty strong reason for believing that we’ll be gone.

I would like to begin by showing you the simple outline that John (himself) gives for the entire book of Revelation. Bible scholars who are “Pre-tribulational” in their belief... and those who are not... all seem to agree that Revelation 1:19 is John’s outline for all that he is about to present.

Revelation 1:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

Revelation is divided into **three** sections: **1.** “The things that you have seen...” **2.** “those that are...” and **3.** “those that are to take place after this...”

These three sections are definitely **not** divided into three sections that are equal in length. (And) once we go and look within the book and see what can only qualify as the three sections that John identifies (here)... we find that: **1.** “The things that you have seen...” is all contained in chapter one. It is John seeing Jesus in His unveiled state... in the midst of the churches... **2.** “those that are...” is the church age (which was in existence at the time John wrote Revelation.) The church age began at Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit came – and ends when the rapture happens. Chapters 2-3 in Revelation describe the complete church age as SEVEN (the number of completion) churches... and then AFTER the church age in Revelation 4 to the end of the book we see how Christ will receive the scroll (the deed to the earth) with seven seals... and bring evil to an end... **3.** “those that are to take place after this...” After what? Answer: **#2.** the Church age!

From Chapter 4 until chapter 19 the church is never mention. It is the center of our attention in chapters 2-3. The church is mentioned 19 times in Revelation 1-3... BUT NOT ONCE in Revelation 4-18. Why the silence...?

Don't you think that it is remarkable (or at least) totally unexpected for John to shift from detailed instructions **FOR THE CHURCH** ... to absolute silence about the church... **if** (in fact) the church is going to be around during the Tribulation? If the church is going to have to endure it... then isn't it rather cruel for God not to have John include something about the

church's role – AS HE GAVE SUCH A DETAILED STUDY OF TRIBULATION EVENTS?

The New Testament is full of instructions for the church. From the first chapter of Romans – all the way until the 4th chapter of Revelation... the primary emphasis of New Testament writers involves how believers ought to conduct themselves. We are told about our morality... our theology... our faith... our behavior... and our mission. But those instructions abruptly STOP when we come to Revelation 4. ... Why the silence...? ... I think that the answer is quite clear. The church will not be around. The church will be raptured. We will be with Jesus in Heaven.

John MacArthur writes (and I certainly agree)...

“It would be inconsistent for the scriptures to be silent on such a traumatic change for the church. If any time of the rapture – other than the pretribulation view were true, one would expect the Epistles to teach the fact of the church in the tribulation, the purpose of the church in the tribulation, and the conduct of the church in the tribulation. However there is no such teaching whatsoever.”

Let me add... that there is no purpose for the church in the Tribulation. The Tribulation is all about the final application of God's wrath here on earth. God will bring judgement on all the evil that exists. He responds to mankind's wickedness. (Revelation refers to God's wrath over and over again – Rev. 6:17-18... 14:8-10... 14:19... 15:7... 16:1... 16:19... 19:15.

The purpose of the Tribulation is for God to execute His wrath on those who used their free will to reject Him. What would be the point of God leaving those who are no longer condemned by Him... because they have been made righteous in Christ? We no longer deserve His wrath – because Christ took our place and bore God's wrath for us ALREADY.

Living through the tribulation would mean that Christ's atoning work was INCOMPLETE.

Scripture repeatedly says that the salvation of believers include being spared from God's wrath. Why would His most severe wrath (that has never been seen before) - **NOT** be included in any of these promises?

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

I absolutely love what Tim LaHaye wrote. He certainly puts it all in perspective for me:

"I simply cannot imagine the heavenly Bridegroom whispering to His chosen one: 'Yes, My bride, My precious one, I love you so much that I gave My life for you. I want to nourish and cherish you. I want to take you home with Me and celebrate our marriage with joy and singing, and feasting. I want to be with you forever. But before I bring you home, I want you to experience seven years of the very fury of hell, and seven years of the terrible wrath of My Father. But try not to worry. I'll come back when it's all over.'" ... [P A U S E] ...

An argument from silence... isn't always the strongest way to argue a case. But I believe that this argument from silence DOES communicate a tremendous truth in Revelation. The church will be snatched away from the earth. We will be absent during the Tribulation. We will be with Christ and be with Him (in what is described in Revelation 19) as His mighty army... when He victoriously returns. **That's** where we are seen again in this book.

Revelation ought to comfort every believer who reads this book. But I have to ask: Are YOU a believer who can be comforted by it? Have you used your freedom to choose to accept Jesus' offer to take YOUR much-deserved wrath of God upon Himself. (You see)... by accepting His free offer of tremendous grace – accepting Christ's death on the cross to take YOUR punishment – you will no longer be the target of God's wrath.

Why not accept God's free gift of forgiveness and eternal life with Him. That is what the Bible - from Genesis through Revelation - is about. God wants you to stop rejecting Him... and to have fellowship with Him... and to enjoy Him forever.

I would like for anyone who would like this... (those who do not have the assurance that they do have it)... to pray with me as we close today. Prayer is an attitude of the heart that submits to the will of God. Would you do that with me today? Would you submit to His way... and His plan...? The way to begin that is by accepting His free gift of forgiveness from His wrath... and submitting yourself to His eternal plans for you.