

## "Buckle Up Tight!: An Introduction to the Book of Revelation"

Revelation 1:1-3

<sup>1</sup> *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,* <sup>2</sup> *who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.* <sup>3</sup> *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.* (ESV)

I'm going to give an introduction, because I think most of the problems that people have with the Book of Revelation are because they enter in unprepared, or they enter in without sharpening up a few basic skills. In other words, what I'm going to give you this morning is the product of basic Bible study techniques, and I'm amazed – if you just do your basic work at the front of the Book of Revelation – how much more it makes sense by the time you get to the end. The problem is that most people don't do that; most people approach the whole Bible in one way, and when they get to the Book of Revelation, for some reason, they throw off all of the guards and just dive in. We're not going to do that. Basically, we're going to lay the foundation by way of introduction. The bottom line is we're going to just look at the first three or four verses of the Book of Revelation. And if you understand the first three, four or five verses – certainly the first four verses of the Book of Revelation – you pretty much have the whole thing nailed. Now, you're saying that has got to be an oversimplification. It is an oversimplification at some level, but at another level, it really is not. If you understand what's going on in the first four verses, the rest of the book makes a lot more sense; so that's what we're going to do this morning.

There are two things I want to cover before we do that. If you've ever been in a class with me, you'll know what these are. There are a couple presuppositions as we enter into Revelation that are not only going to make it easier for you to learn, but it's going to make our relationship a lot better. What do I mean by that? The first supposition is from Deuteronomy 29:29. Let me read that to you; it says: *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."* So in other words, Moses has just read the whole covenant law to Israel; this is shortly before his death; he has read it to them all. And now he says to them, "The things that are revealed, the things that I just read to you belong to us and to our children forever. But the secret things belong to the Lord our God. In other words, some things He gave us are quite clear, and those belong to us to obey them. But there are secret things that we may never know. So when you begin to look at the Book of Revelation, there are some times we are going to come to a spot where it will be an "I don't know" moment, or an "I'm not sure" moment, or maybe this is one of those secret things of the Lord. In other words, some of you have been sold a bill of goods, I think, that when we die and go to heaven, all of our questions will be answered. I don't know that they will. If God is infinite and we are finite, there will be no end of questions and no end of things we can learn. So what we have to realize going into a study like this is that some things maybe God doesn't intend for us to know. And if He doesn't intend for us to know, it doesn't help to fight about them, and oftentimes it doesn't help to try and figure them out. So that's the first presupposition.

The second presupposition is this: It's called the "Burger King Principle." The reason it's called the "Burger King Principle" is – I have no idea. My teacher in seminary, Richard Pratt, taught me this, and he had some great reason why he called it the Burger King Principle, but you'll remember anyway because it's crazy. The Burger Principle is this: Basically, you can't say everything any time you try to say something, otherwise you'll end up saying nothing at all. Make sense? Let me read it one more time. "You can't say everything any time you try to say something, otherwise you'll end up saying nothing at all." Why is that an important presupposition to go into the Book of Revelation with? It's just this: You can't say everything. People come at the Book of Revelation from a number of different angles, and guess what? I'm not. In fact, it's funny, I told the first service what people often do in the hand shaker line. If you ever wonder what happens in the hand shaker line—you could make a documentary about what happens—people come through and shake your hand, and every Sunday a good number of people, sometimes few, sometimes more, think it's their duty to tell me what I got wrong during the sermon, or to tell me what grammatical mistake I made, or some kind of mistake, and that's fine; I appreciate that. After I gave this big, long speech in the first service, only one person did that, so I had a laugh there. But the point is that when you enter the Book of Revelation, some of you come from a tradition that is one way, and some from a tradition that is another direction. And on any given Sunday, I'm never going to be able to cover all—there are at least four major views or four major approaches to the Book of Revelation, and I'm not going to be able to use any of them or all of them at any given sermon. So my point is this: I don't want to fight with you. In other words, if something wasn't said that you think ought to be said, just ask me about it, but I don't feel like it's my job to argue about it. Basically, what I say is what I say, and that will be what it is. I'm not saying that's necessarily the best thing; I'm just saying that's all I've got for you. With all of that said, as we enter The Book of Revelation we're going to answer three questions today. What are the three questions we're going to look at?

The first question is this: What kind of book is it? There are lots of different books. There are 66 books in the Bible, and they are not all the same kind. What kind of book it is, what genre of literature it is determines the way you approach it. So you've got to ask that question when you go into the Book of Revelation.

The second thing you've got to ask is: To whom was it written? What was the audience for this book? Did they have specific issues that occasioned the writing of this book? By the way, if you're a Bible study leader or a teacher, this is just basic stuff. You're just asking basic questions; what kind of literature is it? To whom was it written?

The last question, of course, is: Why was it written? Was it just written for the heck of it, or was there a specific reason for it to be written, or was it general?

Those are the three questions. By the time you leave today, I hope you know the answers to them. So the first question is this: What kind of book is it? Remember, I said what you're asking there is what genre it is. When we talk about genres of literature, the Bible has a number of them: It has history. It has prose. It has poetry. It has psalms, proverbs, wisdom, literature. Letters are in there. All these kinds of things. So the question is, What genre is Revelation? Because you've got to understand what genre it is in order to understand the correct way to approach it. The answer is pretty simple: It's a hybrid. One of the things that makes Revelation so difficult for people to get their head around is that it is a hybrid of three different kinds of literature in the Bible. In other words, some people will say Revelation is just a different kind of literature altogether; it's not. It really is a hybrid of three different types of literature that you find in the Bible that are all coming together to do something. What are the three types? The first type you see is apocalypse. Apocalypse is a type of literature that actually became popular outside of Biblical circles in the first century; we're going to talk about that in a moment. The second kind of literature you have there is prophecy. We're going to talk about what that means. What does it mean for this book to be a book of prophecy. The last thing is that it's an epistle – simple as that; it's a letter written from one person to some other people. And you see all of that, by the way, in the first couple of verses.

So, if you read it again, in chapter 1 verse 1, it says, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" The word "revelation" there, in the Greek is the word *apokalypsis*; it's the word "apocalypse." So the first word in whole Book of Revelation is the word "apocalypse." Then in verse 3, later on, he says, "*Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy.*" So which is it, John? Is it apocalypse, or is it prophecy? Then as soon as he says that, the very next thing he says in verse 4 is, "*John, to the seven churches that are in Asia.*" It's a letter. And you've got to take all three of those things into account in order to get it right when you look at the Book of Revelation. So what's the first thing we've got to look at? Apocalypse. When you think of apocalypse—I don't want you to answer out loud; we're too big to do that—what do you think of? If you're a modern-day American, usually when you think of apocalypse or apocalyptic literature, if you're a kid, maybe you think of something like *The Hunger Games*. Have you read the *Hunger Games Trilogy*, where basically there has been some kind of massive nuclear war, something has gone on, and now there's only 12 districts in the world, I guess, that exist. And some people have nuclear weapons, and other people have bows and arrows, and it's just really sort of crazy. Maybe you're an adult, and you've seen something like *The Book of Eli*, where you don't even know how it starts; the movie just starts, and it's just a desert wasteland. In other words, when we think of apocalypse in our modern minds, we tend to think of something like a mushroom cloud, just nuclear devastation. So when we think of apocalypse, we think of gloom and doom. And movies will build themselves in a post-apocalyptic world—Denzel Washington—when we think of that now.

In the first century, would they have thought gloom and doom when they thought of the word "apocalypse?" If they had access to it in the first century, when they thought of the word "apocalypse," instead of seeing a nuclear cloud, they would have thought something more like this (points to picture): *The Wizard of Oz*. What do I mean by that? Why the scarecrow, and the lion, and the tin man, and Dorothy? Notice their faces; they're in awe! If you want to know what apocalypse is, or apocalypse does, or apocalyptic literature is supposed to do, just think in your mind of *The Wizard of Oz*, and remember how dark and gloomy and dingy it is. When Dorothy is taken up in the tornado, the first time she opens her front door, she is just overwhelmed by the glory and the beauty and the crystal clear color of the world as it really is! It's a world as it really is that most people don't get to see. And not only that, but another idea of apocalypse is when the Oz, the great and powerful, is projected, and Toto goes and pulls back the curtain, and there's just a little mild-mannered professor behind it. Well, when you think of the Book of Revelation, and you think of the gospel, the exact same thing happens, only opposite. In other words, most of us, when we look at Jesus, when we consider Jesus, He's just the out-of-work carpenter that, I guess, was crucified; He was down on His luck. But when you pull back the curtain, it's Jesus, the Great and Terrible, and by "terrible," I mean that in the old-fashioned sense - the awesome, glorious One who rules the universe. That's actually behind the curtain, and that leads us to the meaning of the word "apocalypse."

It means a number of things in the Greek. It can mean "to break through;" it can mean "to show forth;" it can mean "to reveal." But the primary meaning is this: It means "to unveil something." An unveiling. My wife already counseled me against this. When I started studying this, and I came home, and I was so excited and said, "I can't wait until my next

wedding!" And she said, "Why?" And I said, "Because when the husband lifts the veil of the bride, I'm going to say, "Behold your apocalypse!" And being a good pastor's wife, she said, "I wouldn't do that." But then I went on to explain, "It means, 'behold the most glorious, beautiful thing that you've ever seen in your life!'" If that's what it meant, would it not be an appropriate thing to say? If that's what we thought it meant, it would be the most grand, great thing that you ever heard. And it would be the most honoring thing that you could ever tell a woman - "Behold the glory!"

So the first word in the Book of Revelation is apocalypse - unveiling. Now, here's what it presumes, by the way. What it presumes is that we're not seeing something as clearly as we ought. The reason you write an apocalypse is because something that should be seen is not being seen like it ought to be seen. It needs to be unveiled. It needs to be clarified for people. So the question is, What is it that the Book of Revelation clarifies? Well, the answer is right there: It's Jesus. It's Jesus Christ. Did you notice what it didn't say? The text doesn't say, "The Revelation of the end times, or the Revelation of the end of the world, or the Revelation, or the apocalypse, or the unveiling of everything you ever wanted to know about Apache helicopters and how they play into the European Union – everything unveiled before your eyes. Did you notice it didn't say that? It says, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" It's even bigger than that, because the first three words of the Book of Revelation are the [Greek] words: *apokalypsis Iesou Christou*. There is no preposition in there; it doesn't say "the Revelation of Jesus Christ." The intention is that you would provide that; we do that in our own language sometimes as well. So the interesting thing is that you can put a number of different prepositions in there, and they are all appropriate, but they all do one thing in this book. So if we say it's the Revelation of Jesus Christ, that's one way to put it; that means it's an unveiling of Jesus and all He is – that for some reason we don't see Jesus as clearly as we ought to see Him.

In fact, if we saw Jesus like we ought to see Him, maybe our lives would be completely different; maybe there would be a lot more suffering and struggle; maybe there would be a lot more joy; maybe there would be a lot more of both. You see, if you're here, and you're really fearful of change, Revelation is going to be a struggle for you. If you're here, and all you want to do is change, it's going to be a struggle for you as well. Guess who it's going to be a struggle for? Everybody! Because the more and more you see Jesus for who He is, the more you see yourself for who you are. And I can only tell you that for me, it's a struggle sometimes. So it's the Revelation of Jesus Christ, or it could be the Revelation by Jesus Christ. In other words, it's going to unveil who He is, or it's Him doing the unveiling, but it's coming from Him. And we see that Jesus is the One who gives this information. Finally, it could be the Revelation about Jesus Christ. So the bottom line is this: When you read the word "apocalypse" in Revelation, what you should think is when someone asks you, "So what's the Book of Revelation about?" The answer is *not*, "The Book of Revelation is about end times." Do you know what other book in the Bible is about the end times? The Book of Genesis. Do you know what other book? Exodus. Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Romans. Get the idea? Every single book in the Bible is about the end of the world. But also every single book in the Bible is about Jesus. So the point of the Book of Revelation—the last book in the Bible—is almost as if God is saying, "If you haven't gotten it up to this point, let me pull back the curtain to show you exactly what you should have been getting for the past 65 books, and that is that this whole gig is about Jesus; it's of Him, it's by Him, it's about Him. And that kind of language should sound familiar to you, because that's also the language that Paul uses in Colossians – that all of creation was created through Him, by Him, for Him and to Him. The whole Book of Revelation, at the end of the day, is primarily about the Person and work of Jesus.

So that leads us to the next point, which is basically that John also says that this is a prophecy. And the question you have to ask yourself is maybe if I understood the word "apocalypse" incorrectly, do I understand the word "prophecy" correctly, at least from a biblical point of view. From a biblical point of view, again what is the primary purpose of prophecy? Generally speaking, if you ever watch religious television, we tend to think the primary purpose of prophecy is to predict the future, is it not? It's to tell you how to invest your stocks, and it's to tell you to make sure you've got enough food stored, and all these things; it's about prediction. There are prophecy sections in the Bible, Old Testament and New, that are about predicting things a little bit. But the vast majority of prophecy in the Bible is about one thing, and it's to make a point, and that point is almost always moral. In other words, the prophecy that's given in the Bible, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, primarily is given to elicit some change in behavior in the hearer; it's trying to persuade you. So if you look at the prophets in the Old Testament, they didn't just show up and start predicting things willy-nilly; they came to Israel and said, "You have sinned against the Lord our God, and now you need to repent." Sometimes they didn't get it very well, so they had to draw really colorful pictures for Israel to get it. And sometimes they still didn't get it! So the point is that the prophets are always trying to persuade Israel to either repent from their sins, or to have faith in God, or to be encouraged in their faith in God. Prophecy, at the end of the day, is always about being persuaded to make some moral decision, some change in your life. Prediction – sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't, but prophets, at the end of the day, want you to change behavior. So to this point in the Book of Revelation, in the first verses, we have an unveiling of Jesus. The whole thing is about Jesus. And the next thing that we need to consider in the book is that the book wants us to make some kind of change in our life, or some kind of ongoing change, or some kind of moral decision that the book is going to take us to. So that leads to the last part of this, which is the fact that it's an epistle, or a letter. In verse 4, John says:

<sup>4</sup> *John to the seven churches that are in Asia.*

That makes it a letter, and it's just common epistolary form in the Bible. In my experience, the reason that a lot of people don't get out of Revelation all they might otherwise get out of Revelation is because they look at it through the lens of apocalypse, and they look at it through the lens of prophecy, but they forget that it is also a letter. By the way, the whole thing is a letter – the whole thing. It is one letter, actually, to seven churches. That's important as well. Some people treat the Book of Revelation as seven different letters. In fact, I was reading the introduction in my ESV (English Standard Version) this morning. You know how it has a little three-sentence introduction to a book, and here's what it said; it broke my heart. It said: "Revelation begins with letters from Christ Himself to these churches, letters that include commendation, criticism and comfort. Then comes a long series of visions of judgment." In other words, the point it's making is that it begins with letters, but it ends as prophecy, but that is not the case whatsoever; it begins as a letter. Revelation 1:4 says this: "*John, to the seven churches that are in Asia.*" And do you know what the last verse of this book says? Revelation 22:21 says:

<sup>22:21</sup> *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.*

When John did that, he took a significant arrow out of the quiver of people that think it's only about the future. In other words, I heard someone on the radio this week say that. He said that the first four chapters are about churches, and the rest of the book is all about the future, and has nothing to do with right now. Well, John expected that the churches that received this letter would receive it as a letter, and that the whole thing would be applied from beginning to end, so that all of the chapters, from 4 all the way to 22, are also part of the letter that they were to receive.

Now, the question is, What is the purpose of a letter? And the purpose is just this: It is written to a specific church to address specific problems with an application of the finished work of Jesus Christ. In other words, if you read the Book of Romans, or you read the Book of Colossians, one of Paul's writings, what does he do? He usually spends the first half of the book teaching them the gospel: What did Jesus accomplish on the cross? What did He accomplish by His resurrection? Then in the second half of the book, he says, "Now here's how that applies to your marriage, or here's how that applies to church discipline, or here's how it applies to conflict." So what John is doing here is he writes one letter to seven churches, which, by the way, means he expected that all seven churches would be reading each other's mail. That's true. He didn't say, "I'm going to send this part to Ephesus, and this part to Sardis, and this part to Pergamum." He sent one letter to seven churches, and he expected them all to read every one of the letters, and apparently he expected them all to be able to apply the last chapters of the Book of Revelation. In other words, he didn't say, "The letters are done now; the rest of the stuff – God only knows, but it's what I saw." He doesn't say that. He says, "This is part of the letter too. What is in chapters 4 through 22 is part of the finished work of Jesus being applied to your lives." So, very quickly just to give you some background on what was going on then (showing a map), you've got Asia Minor to your right, and Asia Minor is modern-day Turkey right now. Then you have Greece there to your left, which is modern-day Greece. And right down there—you probably can't even see it from where you're sitting—there's a little white dot in the midst of the blue, and that's the Island of Patmos, where John wrote this letter. Then, who received the letter? It's this ring of churches right here: Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. I'm just giving you that to orient you geographically. So all of those churches were basically in the same area. If you traveled east, you'd be in Galatians territory; if you traveled a little bit further down, you'd be in other places. But the bottom line is that everything you see on the map—and this is really important—including everything that's not in red that I've given you, at the time of the writing of this letter, was part of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire basically extended throughout most of the known world at the time, and that becomes part of what informs this book. One of the things that makes Revelation more difficult to study, because it creates a lot more literature to study, but makes it more profitable to study, is the fact that we have a lot of extra-biblical sources that were writing at that time that gave us history – people like Eusebius, Josephus, Pliny the Younger. So you have the seven churches. The question is, What was the "sit rep"? That's the Army way of asking, What was the situation report? What's going on here? So you've got these seven churches that are part of the Roman Empire, and what was going on that would persuade John to write such a letter that was also prophecy that was also an apocalypse? What was going on that was so bad? I'm going to have to set things up for you.

The first thing you've got to realize is that around AD 95, the statue that you see (picture shown) is the statue that I guess the Roman Emperor had commissioned for himself of the Emperor Domitian. And in the Ancient Near East, especially the first century, apparently Roman emperors, generally speaking, were particularly narcissistic, some much more than others, and he, apparently, was one of those. So while everyone sort of had the idea throughout Roman history that the emperor is deity, or the emperor is God, every now and then someone would come along and say, "No, seriously, I am." So when you go into a religious temple, you need to take a pinch of incense and throw it on the fire, or whatever their thing was, and say, "Caesar is Lord." And there is no evidence that Domitian actually went around on horseback persecuting Christians. But if you didn't render what was due him, then you could end up being fed to the lions, or whatever the issue was. So you had an emperor who was a little bit on the wacky side, and then you had pagan trade guilds. Now this is important too, because in the Roman

Empire, much like in the United States now, there are some areas where you can't work, or it's not in your best interest to work if you're not a part of a union or a guild. And it was the same way in the Roman Empire. So here you have an emperor who says, "Worship me." And then you have trade guilds who say, "How do you think we could curry favor with the emperor? What if we threw parties for the emperor?" And every time they came together, they would hear that Local 101 of the statue makers worship Caesar all the time; maybe Caesar will cut them some slack; maybe they won't receive as many taxes. Maybe something like this is going on. So Christians were part of the trade guilds, because if they wanted to work, they had to be part of a guild just like anyone else. So up to this point—this is recorded by Pliny—basically, say they went to a big feast for their guild, and everyone said, "Okay, now is the time when we take a pinch and throw it up in the air and say, 'Caesar is Lord.'" The Christians could sort of shrug their shoulders and say, "Hey, Jesus was Jewish, you know, just saying." Why would they say that? Well because Jews were the only religion in the Roman Empire that were not required to bow down to Caesar; they were given religious preference. Much like today, you're going to see the church in the United States; we're given religious preference as well. There are always rumors and scuttlebutt like, "What if the government takes away the church's tax-exempt status." It's similar to what was going on then. So the Jews at the time were exempt from having to bow to Caesar, at least to say, "Caesar is Lord." And Christians, up to this point, were basically seen as a sect of Judaism. That's why if a guy turned around and said to a Christian, "Hey, are you going to worship Caesar?" They could say, "You know, I'm sort of Jewish. Jesus was Jewish." A lot of this is, people think, because of the missionary journeys of the apostles, and the Jewish leaders got tired of it. So let's say there's a guy named Joe, and he says, "I'm not really going to worship Caesar; because Jesus was Jewish, I'm sort of Jewish." Then the Jewish guy would say, "No, no, no, no, he's not Jewish; Christians are totally different. They followed this guy named Jesus." So what that did is put Christians in a pinch basically. It put them in a position where they now had to decide what they're going to do. And Pliny says that basically they made three different decisions. One decision that a lot of Christians made was that they just renounced Jesus. They were told, "If you're going to be thrown to the lions, or you're going to be burned at the stake, or at least you're going to be kicked out of our guild, it's probably more likely if you don't worship Caesar." And some people said, "Okay, Jesus is out, Caesar is in." Simple as that. On the other hand, other people, apparently, compromised and rationalized. What do I mean? They are at home talking to their wife—you know, you've had these conversations—"So I throw a pinch up there and say, 'Caesar is Lord,' but Jesus knows I really trust Him; Jesus knows I'm really a Christian." They end up rationalizing and compromising with the world around them, and eventually make no difference at all. And some people said, "I can't do that; I'm a Christian," and they paid the price for it.

So what is the point that John is making here? You see, he wrote to seven churches in Asia. Two of the churches that he wrote to were basically done. In other words, they were about to go out of business. If you're a pastor, in a Presbyterian church at least, every now and then a church will shut its doors and close down, and it's always a sad time. Two of the churches in the Book of Revelation are right at that point. Two of the churches in the Book of Revelation are not particularly healthy, but they're doing okay. And three of the churches in the Book of Revelation could go either way. You know what's interesting? When you look at the Book of Revelation, when you look at the seven churches that are in Revelation, you know what church they remind me of? They remind me of this church. They remind me not just of this church; they remind me of every church I've ever been in. Because you know what one of the big struggles is with these churches? At the end of the day, we're going to see that it boils down to something that you, I know, have heard before (I hope you've heard before). The churches basically were failing to be gospel driven and outwardly faced. In other words, how did they respond to just the threat of persecution? There weren't people going through killing Christians; it was just this threat like, "Life is going to be really hard if we go, and we have to do the whole pagan thing, so why don't we just avoid it? Why don't we just stay in here by ourselves? As long as it's just us in church, there won't be any problems, right?" Everyone said that except, of course, the pastor, or the elders.

I remember when Judy, my wife, and I first started attending this church. If you're visiting, I was a member before I came on staff. I forget the person that I talked to, but I asked a question—I'm a big question asker—about why we did something here. This was 10 years ago, and I don't even remember the issue, but I will remember the answer for the rest of my life. The person said, "Why would we not; it's just us." It's just us, and as long as it's just us, why would we think about changing anything? Why would we think about doing anything? Well, the interesting thing is that was the issue with the churches in the Book of Revelation. And what John is going to do is to get them, hopefully by shock and awe, if you will, to start turning and being outwardly faced – to start turning and engaging the world with the gospel. Do you know the picture—it's a very famous picture—of Jesus knocking on the door of someone's heart? Do you know the one I'm talking about? You could Google it. Besides horrible theology because it's about churches and all that kind of stuff, what we fail to understand is the whole point of the picture is that Jesus is knocking on the heart; are you going to open the door and let Him in? But what's not shown in the picture, but is true theologically, is that sometimes He sets a fire in the basement in order to drive you out of the house. And the whole Book of Revelation, in some sense, is Jesus setting a fire in your basement. Because you know what? It's not just us. When you get into the Book of Revelation, you find out that it's all of creation.

I drove here this morning, about 6:30 or 7, it was dark outside, and one of the things I don't think you know about me is that I absolutely loathe, with every fiber of my being, Canadian geese. Oh, I just cannot stand those things! And I pulled in here, and as soon as I got out of my truck, there was an overwhelming noise. It sounded like there were millions of them in the cow pond behind the church. But instead of being angry, I just put all my stuff down and listened. And I thought, "Tommy, today you are talking about *all* of creation singing out and crying out and praising Jesus. How do you know that's not what those geese are doing? Leave them alone." So, as we go into this, you have to consider what John's purpose of the book is, and this is a macro purpose, because there are lots of small ones. John's purpose in writing this book is basically this, and I'm going to end with this, is to remind the church that Jesus has done three things.

The first thing that He reminds us of is that Jesus has won. In other words, Jesus has achieved victory over sin and death definitively. He has won! Jesus has conquered, and He has ascended into heaven, and from there, He rules the world even now, so Jesus has won. There's nothing more for Him to accomplish. We're going to look at more things next week as far as intro material, but there's nothing you see in the Book of Revelation that you haven't already seen somewhere else in the rest of the Bible. So what we know is that Jesus, by virtue of His death and His resurrection, has won definitively over sin and death. But you also see in the Book of Revelation that Jesus will win – that there's coming a day when He will return, and He will make good. Everyone will know that He has won. Every eye shall behold Him. Verse 7 of chapter 1 says:

<sup>7</sup> *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.*

There is coming a day when, in all of His glory, Jesus will come back, and He will win - finally - over everything that is going on. The most important thing in the Book of Revelation, though, is that instead of telling us just that Jesus has won or that Jesus will win, the Book of Revelation teaches us more than anything else that Jesus is winning right now! In other words, if you're going to write a letter to encourage people to engage in the gospel, you don't tell them, "Hey, the world is going to hell in a hand basket. Let me show you for twenty chapters." Or you don't say, "All this stuff is going to happen in the future." So what you learn in the Book of Revelation is not just that Jesus *has* won, past tense, and that He *will* win, future tense, but it's that He *is* winning right now! That's going to be the hardest thing for us to grasp, because if you're a Christian, at least, you spend most of your life trying to remind yourself either that Jesus has won, He forgave my sins, He has justified me, He has sanctified me – all these things He has done in the past. Or you try and remind yourself that in the future things are going to get better. Sometime in the future it's going to be okay. He is eventually going to come back. The hardest thing to convince yourself of is the fact that *He is winning right now*. All the hard things you're going through in your life – guess whose fault that is ultimately? It's Jesus. If you think about it, how does Jesus win? Jesus wins by losing. Maybe that's what He's working in your life right now, but He is doing it right now. When you look around the world, Jesus is winning every tribe, tongue and nation to Himself right now. Jesus is winning the world to Himself. He is pressing in on the world, and the world doesn't like it oftentimes, but the fact is that this is happening right now. And the question for the church, for the seven churches, and ultimately for our church is, Are we going to be a part of that? Are we going to engage? Because really John is going to say that you either stay inside and go out of business, or you go outside and face the world, but you face the world with the gospel that is bigger and better and more glorious than anything you have ever seen. We'll cover more of that next week. Think about that. So from *The Wizard of Oz* - The End.

Father, I pray that You would continue to work in our hearts – not just that the right view of Revelation, or the right millennial view, or the right presupposition, but that You would work the right Savior into our hearts that we would see Jesus and behold Him in His glory and be changed as a result of it. In Christ's name we pray these things. Amen and amen.