

Revelation – Ch 1 v 19

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Alright, folks, let's get started. I know y'all enjoy being with each other and that's a wonderful problem. If y'all just kind of make it back to your seats at some level, so to speak. Tonight I want to turn our attention again to the book of Revelation 1. For those of you that were with us last time, you'll remember that there was a vision of the person of Jesus Christ of which John the apostle had never seen. There in chapter 1 it says he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and he saw the Lord Jesus very differently than he saw him in the Gospels, even differently than he saw him in his resurrection body for we saw that his feet were as brass with judgment; there was a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth; his eyes were a flame of fire. And the Apostle John responded exactly like every one of us should respond in a situation like that, the Bible says he fell at his feet as if dead. Remember what Jesus said to him, he said, "Fear not for I have the keys to death and hell." And tonight we pick up the book of Revelation in verse 19 of chapter 1. It could possibly be one of the most significant verses in all of the book of Revelation and it has nothing to do with the seals; it has nothing to do with the antichrist; it has nothing to do with the judgment for in verse 19, the Lord gives a very simple instruction for what he wants the Apostle John to do. I mean, after all, the Apostle John, if you'll remember, he's on the island of Patmos according to Revelation 1 for the testimony of Jesus Christ and for the word of prophecy. He was actually marginalized or literally martyred for his faith though they did not end his life. He was put on the island of Patmos for his life to quickly wear out. There he is because of his faithfulness to the truth of Jesus Christ and the word of God, there he sees this vision. The only thing that the Lord asked him to do is in verse 19. That's it, and the Lord comes to him and he real succinctly says, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

Now, I know that there are many of you here tonight who, I'm sure, at some point in your life have studied the book of Revelation or been part of a study where you see all kinds of charts and, you know, things with lines and boxes and almost like Excel spreadsheets everywhere. Tonight's really not so much going to be a chart that is before you, but I want us to try to take a 30,000 foot view, kind of a bird's eye view of Revelation 1:19 because the Lord has instructed the Apostle John on what he is to do. He is to communicate the things that were, the things that are, and the things that are to come. So in other words, just in simplest language: the thing that which was, that which is, and that which is to come. Now, what we need to do or what we have the opportunity of doing tonight is discerning what is the past, what is the present, and what is the future because the Lord has made it very clear. He is to communicate something that he has seen,

something that he currently is seeing, and something that shall be hereafter and the Bible makes it very clear in 2 Timothy 2:15 that we are to rightly divide the word of truth. So therefore when we come to the book of Revelation, I believe it is very critical to understanding the totality of the book of Revelation to understand how did the Lord communicate the message and what is the past, what is the present, and what is the future.

Now, before we get to the divisions, probably the easiest way or the most natural way to address the book of Revelation in totality is to see it from the perspective of how the majority of people view this book of the Bible. The reason I put a box here, this is chapter 20, verses 1 through 7. I'm going to put a big "M" in this box and it stands for millennium. That is a Latin word which means a thousand years. Almost every single individual who has a view, a perspective or a theology about the book of Revelation labels themselves or allows themselves to be labeled in reference to this millennium time period. You say, "Well, what is this millennium time period in chapter 20 of the book of Revelation?" It begins in chapter 20 by stating that there will be a time where whom we know as the devil and Satan is bound for a thousand years. In these seven verses, it describes Jesus Christ descending, the chapter earlier, to the earth and physically reigning and it alludes to what is mentioned in Psalm 110:1, sitting upon the throne of David for a thousand years. Back in chapter 1, verse 10, to chapter 5, it alludes to those of us who are believers in Jesus Christ that we will reign with him and we will be kings and priests with him. Almost every single perspective of the book of Revelation is somehow tied to and based to this time period known as the millennium.

Now, I want to share these with you tonight because once we see kind of the viewpoint, then we can kind of see how the book of Revelation is divided. One of the theories that is out there is called post-millennialism. Now, post-millennialism, obviously the word "post" stands for "after." Post-millennialism is the belief that Jesus Christ will personally touch down on planet earth again after the thousand year millennium. This belief, in essence, states that the church of which Jesus gave instructions to, remember in Acts 1:8, he said go in Jerusalem, go to Judea, go to Samaria, go to the uttermost parts of the earth, that that commission that we often call the Great Commission, that the church of Jesus Christ will be so impactful that it will be so effective that there will actually come a point where there is literally a perfection on planet earth. Sin has been eradicated and after humanity lives a thousand years in that blissful state, then Jesus returns. Believe it or not, this was actually a very well-adopted and embraced theory a couple hundred years ago.

Y'all remember the industrial revolution? You remember those great missionary campaigns where we saw back in the late 1700s and 1800s where literally entire cities and countries for a huge portion of people were becoming believers in Jesus Christ. There were revivals, in fact, there was one we called the Global Revival. And so people began to believe that what is happening is that everything is getting better; that sin is being eradicated; the church is expanding its impact and one day we're going to do it so good that Jesus is going to come back physically and celebrate it. Do y'all want to know what ruined this idea for most people? WWI. When WWI came and the tragedy and the destruction that was left in its path, it left a bad taste in people's mouth about this whole

idea of the impact of the church and actually the church overtaking sin in the world. Do you know what the final nail in the coffin of it was? WWII. When WWII came and we saw the events such as the holocaust, we knew that sin was rampant; we knew that there would never be a time of "sinlessness" apart from the person of Jesus Christ. The thing you need to understand about post-millennialism is that it takes a perspective, if you'll allow me to do so, that everything is getting better. It just keeps getting better and better and better and finally it's so good that Jesus cannot help but come back and celebrate.

There is another view that's called amillennialism. You say, "A, literally the word 'a.'" The word "a" and I'm just going to put it right here just for the sake of illustration, when you use the word "a" in the Greek language, it literally means "no." The idea behind this theory is that there is no millennium; that this what is spoken of in chapter 20 is allegorical, it's parabolic; it's just a story; it really should not be taken literally. Remember, the Bible said that if the Lord says it twice pay attention, three times you can lock it down, right? Do you know in the book of Revelation chapters 1 through 7 the word "reign or that he will reign for a thousand years" is used six times in seven verses, but yet those who subscribe to an amillennial perspective do not believe that there's going to be a literal thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. What they believe is that Jesus Christ is coming back but rather than things getting better, they believe that there's just going to kind of be this ebb and flow up and down and that the story of the book of Revelation is not so much about identifying who the two witnesses may be or trying to discuss what's the fifth seal really going to look like, but it's more of a parable; it's more of a story to tell us there's good times and there's bad times; there's times of persecution, there's times of prosperity; there are times where it looks like the Gospel is advancing, and it looks like there are times that it is in retreat but eventually one day, the Lord will return and he will take his children home.

So the first view says that everything is getting better; the second view says don't take absolutely literally what you read, it's more of a figurative notion. And then there's one of probably which the majority of you may be familiar with, we call it pre-millennialism. "Pre" obviously, the idea that it comes before. The concept of pre-millennialism says Jesus doesn't come back after the thousand years, the thousand years isn't figurative or allegorical, but that Jesus actually returns before the thousand years occurs and that rather than the world getting better and sin being eradicated, a pre-millennialist will tell you that things are actually getting worse. Now, you can imagine this has become very popular in the last 100 years or so. Why? Remember WWI and WWII and the many other conflicts that have arisen. But, you know, the most convincing evidence in the book of Revelation that one would want to subscribe to that perspective isn't WWI or WWII, isn't are we having ebbs and flows, it isn't how many times is the word "thousand years" used in seven verses, but this millennium, this thousand years takes place in chapter 20. Y'all know what happens in chapter 19? Jesus comes back and so this perspective or this view isn't so much one's perspective on things getting better or things getting worse as much as it says, "Let's look at the book of Revelation, let's look how God has given it to us, let's see how it is laid out and let's take the events as they are described." So one who would subscribe to a pre-millennial perspective believes that all that we see in the book of Revelation, all the things known as the Great Tribulation that we'll talk about in just a

moment, that all those things precede the return of Christ and ultimately what a pre-millennialist believes is that things get so bad and so horrible on planet earth that the only person who came redeem it and the only person who can interject and fix what is broken is Jesus Christ himself. So that is the message that his return is in chapter 19, the millennium is in chapter 20, and he is the only one who can solve the issues of sin that has run rampant.

The reason that I've shared this with you tonight is that about 99.9% of all people who look at or study the book of Revelation find themselves in one of those three positions. Are there others? Absolutely, but I told you we were going to do this in 45 minutes, not 4 hours and 50 minutes, so those are what we call the big three. What's important to note, though, is that the post-millennial does not take things chronologically, the amillennial does not take things chronologically, but the pre-millennial does. It just simply says how is the book of Revelation laid out?

That brings us back to chapter 1, verse 19. The Lord says, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." I believe the Lord makes it very clear that the book of Revelation can be divided into three sections: that which has been; that which is; and that which is to come. And so tonight I thought we'd begin this section with probably where we have the most agreement, at least in Christendom, and that is the things that are to come. I mentioned to you in chapter 20, verses 1 through 7, we have an incident, we have a thing mentioned known as the millennium, the thousand year reign of Christ. We can say beyond a shadow of a doubt today nobody would argue who subscribes to any of these views that this time period is future and that everything in the last two chapters or the last two and a half chapters of the book of Revelation are at some point in the future, so tonight, for the sake of ease, let's start on that side of the board.

The Bible says that after this thousand years, it says that Satan will be loosed for a little season. It says that there are those, and this is a discussion for another time, that are once again tempted by him. It says the Lord doesn't descend him into hell for a thousand years. It says that fire and brimstone literally comes down and destroys them. But this battle is famously called the battle of Gog and Magog. You say, "Why do we call it Gog and Magog?" Because that's where it takes place, a place in the Bible labeled as Gog and Magog. Immediately after this famous battle where Satan, for lack of better terms, has the gleanings of his temptation, we have an event take place in chapter 20 that we often call the Great White Throne Judgment. This is what often people will refer to when they say the Great Final Judgment. This is that scene in Revelation 20, beginning in verse 10 where it says that heaven and earth were fled away at the presence of the Lord, a fulfillment of the prophecy in 2 Peter 3 that says one point in the future with a great ball of fire, what we know as the physical matter of earth and the universe will be dissolved. You know, we sing that song, "Amazing Grace," when it has that line that says, "it shall dissolve like snow," it's describing this passage in the Bible. It says that the Lord is upon his throne. It says there that all the dead, both small and great, free and slave, stand before him. It says the books of works are opened and the book of life. Those that were

not found written in the book of life, it says, they were cast into the lake of fire with the devil and his minions.

When we get to chapter 21 of the book of Revelation, we find ourselves in chapter 21 and 22, in a section that is very critical for at this point, eternity begins. Now, I know technically by definition you're in eternity because eternity is without time, there always has and there always will be, but for our finite minds, understand that everything leading up to the last two chapters of the book of Revelation deal with interactions either in heaven, on earth, or so between the two. Once we get to the end of chapter 20, heaven and earth as we know it has been dissolved like snow. It says that the devil, his minions and all those who reject the truth of Jesus Christ, they are in the lake of fire for all of eternity and remember what John 3:16 taught us, "For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should have," what kind of life? "Everlasting life." That everlasting life that is without end. I know that technically as a believer in Jesus, I possess that right now; it will be realized in Revelation 21 because in Revelation 21 we get new. We get a new heaven. We get a new earth. And we get a new Jerusalem. You've already got your new body when this event takes place, but in Revelation 21 and 22, we have the description of the new heaven, the new earth, the new Jerusalem, and eternity as we can best grasp it has been realized. For those who believe in Jesus, it is a time of everlasting life, for those who do not, a time of everlasting torment.

The reason I started with the last three chapters of the book of Revelation is that's where we have the most synthesis; that's where we have the most agreement. Even people who have varying views of how the book of Revelation is laid out, it is in those last three chapters that we have these events that are so far out in the future, they're so far in the distance, we're just kind of specifically vague and we say, "Okay, this is how everything is laid out." It is leading up to chapter 20, the first 19 chapters of the book of Revelation, where there is great discussion. Before we get to the time period known as the millennium, there is a space that we often call the Great Tribulation. Now, remember, how you view the book of Revelation determines how you view the tribulation. If you believe that the book of Revelation is just allegorical and it's just a metaphor, then the time period that is given as seven years is allegorical as well, true? That tribulation is just a time period of ebbs and flows. But both the post and the pre-millennialist say, "Oh, no, no, there is a time period that is very strictly defined as seven years that we call the Great Tribulation, this seven year time period." You say, "Well, where do we get this idea or this phrase 'the Great Tribulation'?" Jesus Christ himself in Matthew 24 when describing this event said it would be tribulation greater than any time since the creation of the earth. So Matthew 24 is one of the key passages from the mouth of Jesus of this time period known as the Great Tribulation.

How do we get the idea that it is seven years in length other than the fact that as you're reading chapter 6 through 19 of the book of Revelation it tells you a certain amount of days pass and you can kind of put the dates together and get seven years? What we have in the book of Jeremiah 30, we have a passage that talks about Jacob's trouble. Why is this so significant? Jacob was of Jewish descent: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Jeremiah 30:7, it describes this time period as Jacob's trouble. Now, once again, we haven't gotten

to the dating so much of this as we've got Jesus saying this is worse than any other time period known to man; we've got Jeremiah saying this is a time period that is very strategically laid out for the people of whom we know as the Israelites; but it is the book of Daniel 9, the book of Daniel 9 is the key passage when it's described as Daniel's Seventieth Week. As you go through the book of Daniel and studying other passages in the Old Testament, we know that the people of God, the Israelites, were in such rebellion to God that God allowed them to go into captivity; God allowed them to go into exile; and God even put dates and time periods on how long they would be there and how long the punishment would last. In the book of Daniel, the Lord makes it very clear that for 70 weeks or a total of 490 years, that the punishment or the "wrath of God" will be on his people for the rejection and rebellion against him. If we were to go into the book of Daniel 9 and obviously we don't have the time to do it this evening, it lays out how this is going to work. It talks about from the time that it is pronounced to the time the Messiah comes, from the time the Messiah is cut off and it describes that there is one final week. That passage in the book of Jeremiah talks about these weeks being years; that there is a seven year time period; there is a seven year experience known as this Great Tribulation.

Now, when you begin to read about the Great Tribulation, most people when describing this event in the book of Revelation begin in chapter 6. So you've got chapter 6 here all the way to the end of chapter 19. What's interesting is in chapter 6 of the book of Revelation, there is this famous seven sealed book that is opened. Anybody remember who opens the seven sealed book? Jesus does and when we talk about the wrath of God, when we talk about the "punishment of God," doesn't it just make sense that it's God himself that is actually opening this famous book? Beginning in chapter 6 of the book of Revelation, I apologize if this sounds crass, but what we see is literally hell on earth before us all. This is where we have the famous seven seals; the trumpets; the vials. This is where we see the picture and the person of the antichrist. This is where the two witnesses come. This is where Mystery Babylon rises and falls. This is where we see the minions of the devil wreaking havoc on the planet. We see water turning again into blood. We see hailstones coming out of heaven. We see water turned to what the Bible calls wormwood. It's a horrific event.

Speaking of the tribulation, there are three sets of judgments. I find it interesting that it's seven years in length and there are three sets of seven judgments. The first one is the famous seals; we know them as the seven seals. Then we have the trumpets. Then we have the vials. Now, there are actually two different perspectives on these judgments of God that come in the book or in the time period known as the Great Tribulation. One of these perspectives states that, well, you've got seven judgments laid out by God described three different ways. In other words, he describes the first one as the seals; he describes them again as the trumpets; and again as the vials. In other words, every time you read about the judgments of God in this middle part of the book of Revelation, he's going into more and more detail of what the first seal was, the first trumpet just gives more detail, and then the first vial gives more detail to the first trumpet and to the first seal. That the idea of concept or angle 1.

Angle or approach 2 is that the seventh seal actually unlocks the trumpet judgments and that the seventh trumpet unlocks the seven vials. Now, when we get to this section in our study of the book of Revelation, we'll go into more detail about these different theories and the specific trumpets and seals and vials etc. But does it not just make sense that you see an escalation of the events in this tribulation time period, doesn't it just make sense that if the seventh seal opens the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet opens the seven vials, then you actually see the judgment of God in exponential form as we approach chapter 19 and the return of Jesus Christ?

There is one other factor about this Great Tribulation that one must understand to see a total picture of the book of Revelation: this seven years is divided right down the middle. You say, "Where do we find that division?" It's in the book of Daniel, again, chapter 9, verses 24 through 27. The picture that we are given, what is told of us by God through the prophet Daniel, is that the people known as the Israelites will make a covenant with the person known as the antichrist. Now, that opens up a whole other study of how the antichrist will be so deceptive. He will be such a Messiah type figure that even God's chosen people will be deceived by what he does. When you get into chapter 11 and chapter 13 of the book of Revelation it says that the antichrist does signs and wonders; it literally says he has a deadly wound which he is healed from. Is that not what the religious leaders came to Jesus with in Matthew 12? They said, "Give us a sign." Remember what Jesus said? "I'll give you one sign, as Jonah was in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights, so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." They said, "No, we want a sign." Guess what the antichrist does? He gives them exactly what they want. He gives them sign after sign after sign.

But according to the book of Daniel 9 describing this Seventieth Week, this final time period of seven years of the judgment of God on sin on planet earth, it says that this covenant is broken. What is significant is we oftentimes call this the Abomination of Desolation found in Matthew 24:15. It's mentioned in Daniel 9 but in Matthew 24, Jesus there just east of what we know as the Temple Mount, not in the Garden of Gethsemane but on the Mount of Olives, has gathered his disciples together and they've asked him very strategically that, "When are these things going to happen? What is going to be the sign of your coming?" And as he begins to teach them in verse 15 of Matthew 24, he says, "But when you see the abomination of desolation," do you remember what Jesus says? "Run." That's literally what he says. Now, the book of Daniel pictures this with an historical figure by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes. He's an ancient historical figure who went into the Jewish temple before the time of Christ and he literally slaughtered a pig on the altar. Could there not be a more disgraceful thing to do to the chosen people of God? Why? Because that is the most vile animal in the dietary supplement. He took a pig where the blood was to cover from the lamb and he placed that pig on the Mercy Seat. That horrific event foreshadows what the antichrist is going to do one day because according to 2 Thessalonians 2, it says that one day when the antichrist comes, he will literally go into what we know as the temple and he will declare he is God. That is the middle point; that is the partition; that is the place that really determines this period known as the Great Tribulation.

Now, it's interesting as you look at this from the big picture, you've got seven seals, you've got seven trumpets, you've got these vials, you've got a seven year time period divided in half by a covenant that the Israelites make with the antichrist that is broken when the antichrist goes into the temple and declares that he alone is God. Now, the terms that I'm about to use are not the best terms available but they're the best I've got. When you look at the tribulation, the first half is bad and the second half is really bad. You say, "Well, why didn't you use more specific terms than that?" The reason is and we'll get more into this as we walk through the book of Revelation verse by verse and step by step, is one of the most difficult things to do in the book of Revelation is to line up these judgments within these seven years. Do they begin even though the first seal is opened in chapter 6, verse 1, do they go systematically? Is it not real bad here and then all of a sudden it escalates here? It's very difficult to decide where exactly does that trumpet sound? What part in the seven year period are we? But we do know this: that in the first half of the seven year period known as the Great Tribulation, when the mark of the beast has been distributed to all and according to the Bible, no one can buy and no one can sell lest they have the mark, we know the antichrist has wooed the world, in particular the Israelites. We know that they actually allow him to go onto the temple property and believe that he is a fabulous individual that is giving them hope at some level. What we see is in the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation, no matter what of these events have taken place, we know that it's not good but at least there is this image that it's not as bad as people thought it could be or might be. But as soon as he shows his true colors, as soon as the Abomination of Desolation begins, not only did Jesus say in verse 16 of Matthew 24, "Head for the hills," but Revelation 12 gives us the picture that the Israelites go into the wilderness for 3 ½ years where they are supernaturally fed by God again because they are on the run for their lives. So we see that in the first 3 ½, it's bad but it's not near as bad as the second 3 ½ years. The best description that I can give you for this 3 ½ year time period is literally a hell on earth.

So as we look at the book of Revelation, I know I'm working from the back to the front. There is not a whole lot of controversy over here because this is all about glory and everlasting life and eternity. This time period known as the Great Tribulation, anybody who takes a literal perspective of it rather than an allegorical, sees the trumpets and sees the seals and sees the time period in the book of Daniel. But before we get to the tribulation, beginning in chapter 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation, we have what we call the messages to the churches. It is these messages where we see the church at Ephesus being told that they have great doctrine and they have great teaching, but they've lost their first love. We have the church of Pergamos and Thyatira basically saying that they're seated in Satan's seat and Jezebel has taken over. We see the church of Philadelphia as one that is going forth that wherever the word of God goes forth, the door will never be shut. Then we have that final church, the church at Laodicea that is described as lukewarm; making the Lord sick at his stomach. He says, "You need to buy eye salve from me. You need to buy stuff from me. Quit getting involved so much in the world." And it is pictured in verse 20 of chapter 3, Jesus standing at the door knocking, almost as if they're having church without Jesus. These seven churches are described in chapters 2 and 3.

You'll notice that I very purposely left off two chapters: chapters 4 and 5. Chapters 4 and 5 in the book of Revelation are very different compared to all the other chapters. The scene is heaven; more specifically, it is the throne room of God. There are no judgments taking place, in fact, we see the cherubim and we see the elders gathered around singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was, who is, who is to come." We get that famous passage where it says that they tossed or they threw their crowns at the feet of Jesus. Everything that happens in chapter 4 and chapter 5 of the book of Revelation is in the throne room of God. The judgments aren't being pronounced; havoc is not happening on planet earth. It's almost as if for a brief moment in all the action of the book of Revelation we are transported out of the struggles or life into the presence of the Lord and for two chapters we get to bask in it. You'd better enjoy the basking because by the time you get to chapter 6, what happens? The first seal is opened and by most estimations and we'll study this more in detail later, the first entity that comes with the first seal is the person of the antichrist himself.

Now, this is what the Lord told John to write. He told him to communicate all these things because everything you see in the book of Revelation is not just what John heard, but it is what he saw. And with the exception of chapter 10, we have everything that John saw. You say, "Well, what happened in chapter 10?" The Lord gave John a message, then told him not to share it with us. We have no idea what he gave us in chapter 10 of the book of Revelation because the Lord said, "I'm giving it to you. I want you to know it, John, but don't write it down." Other than that, we've got everything he told us that we needed.

Back to chapter 1, verse 19. So looking at this board from your perspective, what is the past, what is the present, and what is the future. As I shared with you, there are all kinds of different ways and perspectives and philosophies but I believe in the KISS method. Y'all know what the KISS method is, right? Keep it simple, stupid. I need the KISS method in my life because I think one of the great difficulties in life, but particularly the book of Revelation, is we make it so complex and we make it so difficult we can't see the forest for the trees, and oftentimes we begin to go in and we're picking at it and dissecting it, we get so intricate sometimes we lose ourselves in the message. Could it be tonight that the Lord has laid it out in such simplistic fashion that when we see what he's done, it's almost as if it's just unveiling and we go, "Ahhh." So that's how we look at the book of Revelation.

Chapter 1, verse 19, he says, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." I want you to fast forward to the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation and I want to show you something very intriguing and interesting. Now, remember, the Apostle John was on the island of Patmos. It says that on the Lord's day he was in the Spirit and while in the Spirit he saw the Lord. Notice what happens in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. It says, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew you things which must be hereafter." And so we know right then and there that whatever came before must be the before. Why? Because he says they are events that are coming hereafter so when he said,

"Write the things that were or was and the things which is and the things to come," well, none of the things in chapter 2 and 3 can be the things to come, can they? They can't be because he says, "I will show you the things that are hereafter." And the picture that we get in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, of the book of Revelation is exactly as it is written. There is a door that opens up in heaven and somebody, John in particular, is taken up. Correct?

Alright, now let's fast forward to chapter 19 of the book of Revelation. In chapter 19, beginning in verse 11, we have what is commonly known as the passage involving the physical return of Jesus Christ to engage at a battle that we most commonly know as Armageddon. Beginning in verse 11, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." This is the picture of Jesus and his return. Now, I don't want to be overly simplistic but if we've got three divisions, that means in order to have three parts, you have to have two lines, is that correct? In other words, if we're going to make three equal parts, we have to use two lines to make the three divisions. Could it be that God has laid it out so simply that the first division is when somebody goes up, and the second one is when somebody comes down? Why? Because it's the only places where the doors of heaven are open. If that is the case, then in chapter 4, verse 1, we would create our first division and in chapter 19, verse 11, we would create our second division, thus segmenting the book of Revelation into three parts of discussion. Now remember, what did chapter 1, verse 19, say? What did the Lord commission the Apostle John to do? Write the things that were, the thing that was, thing that is, and that which is to come.

Now what's intriguing for each and every one of us today is that you and I are not experiencing this inner section right now. I know there's a lot of people who want to try to advocate that we are currently experiencing one of these judgments of God, however, we'll see later that we need to interpret the Bible as the Bible says and not interpret the headlines in light of the Bible. With that being said, we're not in this time period yet so you and I are living in the present, the problem is why did the Lord call it the "was"? I want you to think about this for a moment: when John was on the island of Patmos, it says he was caught up, is that correct? When he was caught up, where did he go? The throne room of God. Can I ask you an honest question? Is time there the same as time here? It's very different, is it not? In fact, the Bible says that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as if a day. Since Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, it's been just a long weekend to the Lord, but it's been over 2,000 years for us. Is it possible, church, that what we see here is the Apostle John taken up at this passage in the book of Revelation and all of these events that we know as the Great Tribulation, he has a front row seat, 50 yard line ticket, where he is given the picture of all of these end time events as they occur? Why would that be so significant for you and I today? If it is that John being caught up in chapter 4, that his perspective, now remember, this is 96 AD when it occurs, yet when he is taken up, he is shown things all the way to the new heaven and the new earth, so we cannot constrict him just to the first century AD, he is able to see time from God's perspective. What is so significant about just what I call naturally dividing the book of Revelation, do y'all find it interesting that the going up is the verse right after the last passage to the churches? In other words, we go through these seven churches and then all of a sudden there is a catching up. You know those famous

passages in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 that talk about this famous rapture type event? Do you know what that word literally means? To be caught up. What happens to the Apostle John here? He is caught up and so therefore if the divisions of the book of Revelation are when the door opens and when the door opens, then the picture that we're given is in 96 AD, while on the island of Patmos, somehow supernaturally, just like the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle John is supernaturally transported, teleported, whatever word you want to use, to the throne room of God and given a picture of history all the way back to the time of the crucifixion and all the way forward to when eternity as realized begins. If this is the case, and I believe the book of Revelation lays it out very simply in these two divisions, then you have the Apostle John living his life; he goes up with the Lord; does not have to experience this stuff and comes down at Armageddon.

Do you see a similarity there, church? That's the story of the church, that there is a time where we are caught up to be with the Lord and there is a time where we return with him because it says his armies are behind him. Who are his armies? That's you and that's me. But what we see in the book of Revelation is this horrific seven year time period, this horrific time period is a time period that the term "church" is never used. The twelve tribes are "resurrected" to their identity being known. The 144,000 are the faithful evangelists and the two witnesses are as Jewish as you can get: Moses and Elijah. In fact, the Bible said back in the book of Daniel and in Romans 11 that there is coming a time when the time of the Gentiles will end. What happens when you pick up the book of Revelation in chapter 6 through 19? You've got 12 tribes; you've got Jewish prophets; you've got a temple on a hill in Jerusalem. Everything taking place in this time period is very Jewish. You say, "Why is that significant?" What did Jeremiah call this time period? Jacob's trouble. Who was it that rebelled against God and received a 490 years of punishment? The Israelites did.

And so it just makes sense with this natural division that this time period that's reserved here is one of which whom we know as the Israelite people, even though there is a temple at some point in the future, even though they are in their 12 tribes, they're deceived by this one known as the antichrist and one day they flee for the hills. But who comes and redeems them? Remember a few weeks ago when we studied Hosea 1? Remember where the Lord said that he would redeem his people in Jezreel? Y'all know what the other name for Armageddon is? Jezreel. It's as if the Lord says, "At this very spot when I come back."

Now, again, the Bible says to the Apostle John, "Write the things that were, the things which are, and the things of which to come," from the perspective of John not the perspective of us. His perspective was being caught up in the air in chapter 4 which would give him a unique vantage point. If his being caught up here is that "famous rapture event" then we right now are a part of the past that he's looking back on. The tribulation is the present which he is viewing. And the glory in eternity is the future that lies before both of us.

Now, I know that is just a fire hydrant of information in a few moments or less and we can lay out the book of Revelation and there are people more sophisticated and smarter than me that would come up with charts that would wrap around this building seven times, but I want to leave you tonight with a very important thought and question. So what does this mean for you? I mean, what good is it to have all this information? What good is it to have all this knowledge? Even if everything on this board is exactly the way God has laid it out and by a miracle I have it right, what does that help me when I wake up tomorrow? How does that help a student going to school? How does that help an adult going to work? How does that help a family just trying to get through the struggles of life? Well, I think the best conclusion to this is that we are a part of the body of Christ. We are part of his church. Now, we're not technically worshiping in the church of Laodicea or the church of Sardis or Philadelphia, but this is our story. You do know that the church is the only thing that Jesus shed his blood for, right? It's the only thing. You remember what he told us at the end of Matthew 28, he said, "I will never leave you and I will never forsake you. I will be with you until the end of," what? "Until the end of the age." He said, "I will be with you. I will not allow you to be forsaken or to be abandoned." So it just makes sense to me that one who said he would not forsake us surely would not unleash the antichrist on us because that is who opens the seal, the person of Jesus.

The question that I've asked a bunch, I don't know if I've got a good answer for it but I'm going to give it my best tonight. The question I have is, "Okay, pastor, you laid all this out. You believe that the church of Jesus Christ bought by the blood of Christ will experience this supernatural event as described in 1 Thessalonians 4, will be in the heavenlies during all of this horrific Great Tribulation period, if that's really what you believe, then how bad is it going to get?" Church, I'll be honest with you, I don't know but can I also be honest and say it's not looking good? I've got a theory. I don't know if it's right. My theory is that the last day before the rapture may not look much different than the first day after it. You say, "Why do you believe that?" Because according to the book of 2 Thessalonians 2, the only thing keeping the antichrist from reigning on planet earth is the person of the Holy Spirit. That's the Restrainer. It's the only one. It says that when the Holy Spirit, when that Restrainer is released from restraining, then he wreaks havoc, then the seal is opened and all this begins. You remember these lines I drew at the very beginning going down and going up? If you believe things are going to get worse and worse and worse and I think that's the way the Bible lays it out, the question we need to ask ourselves is: how bad will it get before he comes for us? I don't have an answer, church, but I can tell you it's not looking good and the body of Christ has got to be willing to be strong in Christ in the hope of his return.

The last passage I want you to tonight is not in the book of Revelation, it's in the book of Titus 2 in what we call the pastoral epistles just to the left, the book of Titus 2. There is a very clear word about how we're to live in light of all that was shared. It says in verse 11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Does that not go hand-in-hand with the message this morning? We are not to be about swearing and lying and killing and blood against blood. No, no, we

are supposed to be honest and upright and righteous and sober. Look in verse 13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." So how are you to live in light of all the information that was shared? We're to live our lives looking for his return.

The best analogy that I've got, church, isn't mine, I wish it was. It's a story that many of you may have heard because the one whom it's about is a very famous pastor who's syndicated as much as any preacher on television. It tells the story of being a young man, growing up in a single home, single mom home; that they didn't have a whole lot as far as material possessions were concerned and the one thing that his mom often did for him that brought him great joy at the end of hard days were her homemade chocolate chip cookies. He loved her chocolate chip cookies and oftentimes he would come home from school when he was a young child and he could smell them as he was walking through the door, and he always wanted to go into the kitchen and get one. His mom always gave him very explicit instructions: not until I tell you so. One day he couldn't resist. The temptation was too much so he crawls up on a step stool, gets up on the counter. He puts his hand in the cookie jar at which his mom walks around the corner and according to the pastor, when he was a young child she said, "Son, is that really what you want to be doing when Jesus comes back for you?" Church, is what you're doing really what you want to be doing when Jesus calls you home? If what you're doing isn't what you should be doing, if it's not soberly in righteousness, then change. Repent and turn. You see, in light of all of this information, it means nothing if we're not in a right relationship to him. It means nothing if we're not living soberly and honestly and righteously. You can have all these knowledge in the world but it means nothing if you're in defiance and rebellion. Let me ask you a very simple question: is your hand in the cookie jar?

Let's pray.

Lord, tonight thank you that you have given us so much. God, and I know your word, it says that the contents of your word are unsearchable; there is no way we could exhaust it. And, Lord, just going to a bookstore is testimony to all the views and ideas of your book of Revelation. Lord, I pray that in the midst of all the lines and the charts and the identification, God, I pray that the message that we'll go home with isn't able to say I can draw it out, but that I'm ready to live it out. God, help us to look for your blessed appearing with a sober, righteous, holy, godly life. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.