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We are only one month away from yet another Atlantic storm season. For the last 6 years I have tried to find interesting and useful topics to bring the importance of preparedness to your attention. This month I have decided to help you be aware of a rescue plan for the ultimate disaster. Like other major events, we have evidence that it is coming and how we need to prepare. Unlike natural disasters we have no idea as to when it will occur or even imagine the magnitude of its unfolding. To ease our minds we are told of the unfolding of this event and the outcome, however it's a plan that we, in general, cannot easily comprehend and even scholars are sharply divided on its meaning and time line. The plan I have been building up is the unfolding of the last days, the end of times, the Day of the Lord, the coming of the New Jerusalem and New earth and new heaven. What I am referring to is the last book in the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ [as told to John the Apostle].

When you hear the word Revelation what do you think of? Armageddon, the Tribulation, the Four Horsemen? These are strong images that we intellectually think we understand, but there is a much deeper undercurrent throughout. I have been attending a Monday night Bible study group for the past 15 years, give or take. Each year a different topic is covered; originally 7 topics but now totals 9. Revelation is the newest of these studies. When it was announced almost 3 years ago that this study would be inserted into the cycle there was a very great show of enthusiasm; so much so that the enrollment in the study increased by more than 50% - from about 250 to around 400. I can finally understand both the interest in and fear of this daunting writing. If you are to go into this message headlong without any preparation you may miss its full blessing. John, the last of the surviving Apostles, had decades to relive the time he spent with Jesus. He would have recalled the lessons, the miracles, the interactions of the people with him and Christ and would have reflected and thought on all of this as no other witness could have.

It is a misconception thinking that this was a vision of John. In fact, the first two verses of the book states "This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John, ²who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." John was careful to preserve his "visions" but these are difficult to impossible for us to understand. In the beginning of our study we learned that John's style of writing contained several layers. He would write something with a factual meaning but might also contain a more figurative meaning or spiritual meaning. For instance, the New Jerusalem was described, in part, as being 1400 miles long, wide, AND high. I have been told that this is comparable in volume to our moon. Literally, this is an enormous city. Figuratively, it could mean simply that there will be enough room for all believers. Either way you interpret it, the image is of a massive space.

The Book of Revelation is not simply a preview of disaster on a Biblical scale, literally. If you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, this book is a tale of disaster. For the believers, it is a preview of the grace and magnificence of God and His ultimate plan. If you decide that you want to delve into a study of Revelation, either on your own or as part of a group, prepare yourselves by getting an understanding of John's intentions and reasons for writing in the style that he chose. Good luck and God bless.