

Rev 25-12-07a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning service at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 7th of December 2025, Pearl Harbor Day.

I was somewhat chagrined that when I first turned my computer on this morning, the offering from Microsoft Bing was not that this is Pearl Harbor Day, but that this is the anniversary of when Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer was first broadcast on TV back in 1964. When I investigated further, this is also the anniversary of Instant Replay, which was first accomplished during an Army-Navy game on this date a few years before Rudolph. But December 7th has receded into just being one of a number of mildly interesting historical events, which is a shame.

I subscribe to the notion that the generation that fought and won World War II established a foundation in our nation that has been blessed by God. And we honor those who served, those who lost their lives, those who survived and went on to raise the next few generations in this country to build its economy and its culture through the 1950s and early 1960s in a way unprecedented in human history. And I will not let the date pass without giving full credit and appreciation to that occasion, this anniversary.

We are going to continue this morning our study in the book of Revelation. We're starting a new chapter here. There is a door open for us in heaven at chapter 4, verse 1. We will ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and then we'll begin.

Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the many blessings that you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the country in which we live, the freedom that we enjoy, the opportunity that we have as a result to pursue our relationship with you, with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

We pray that as we look at your word this morning together, that God the Holy Spirit will bless us as we endeavor to understand it and see its pertinence and application in our lives. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We pray these things in his name.

Amen. By way of quick summary, we have now completed our investigation of chapters 1 through 3 of the Revelation. The Lord Jesus Christ was introduced in chapter 1 in divine, glorious terms.

He begins speaking to John in the vicinity of chapter 1, verse 18, and continues to speak for the rest of that chapter and into the chapters that contain the seven letters. We have seen these in detail. And the takeaway, if you think back on that very detailed study, is that every one of those letters is pertinent to me, myself, and I. We should look closely.

We should review them regularly to see what Jesus says to these churches and figure out where it has traction in our own lives. Have we been like the Ephesians, losing sight of the love we

should have for the Lord Jesus and for one another, for God the Father, a love that should characterize us and should balance us when we tend to become invested in other issues? You can remember the content well of the rest of those letters. You go to Smyrna.

You go to Pergamos. You go to Thyatira. You go to Sardis.

You go to Philadelphia. You go to Laodicea. Each of them has criticisms as well as commendations.

And we should not be afraid to recognize that there are portions of our life, our spiritual life in particular, that are functioning well, that we are able to function in our spiritual gift. We are able to be blessed and be a blessing within the circle of fellow believers, the one and others, as well as those who are our neighbors, those who are outside, and even our enemies. Some who have made themselves our enemies, others who are by definition enemies because of decisions and choices they have made, positions that they hold and are invested in, and become antithetical and oppositional and antagonistic to our faith.

They are our enemies. We still love them with enemy love, which is a different quality and kind than you have in the inner circles of love. But it is nevertheless possible and commanded for us to do good to those who hate us and to pray for those who use us spitefully.

But these characteristics of positive, your works, your faith, identifying and separating from error and from those who commit error, the difference between hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans and hating the Nicolaitans themselves is an important distinction, which some noted scholars fail to make. Noting those who abuse religious practice and turn it into a synagogue of Satan is not the same as noting those who practice a different religion. There are religions, and then there are those who have animus and great desire to crush and extinguish Christianity.

And those who become a synagogue of Satan are those who attack and are actively opposing us as believers and our faith. So we've noted this in detail, and we want to remember. We don't want to leave the seven churches and the Lord Jesus' words to them without remembering that if we have an ear, we are to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

And when the Lord Jesus speaks, it is in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that we receive it, understand it, and endeavor to reflect on it, see how it pertains, how it applies, and then put it into practice, make effective change, repent where we are needed. Four churches are told to repent and change their ways. And we get the idea that if you divided our lives into seven parts, there would be more than half of them where we would need a change of mind, even as those who have heard the word, and in some cases for many years.

So it is healthy. It is important to review the last words that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke on this earth in the hearing of an apostle with the direct intention of communicating to you and me to heed those words and to value them, to revisit them, and to examine ourselves and the faith.

That being said, this is application on earth.

This is the calling that we have, the mission that we have, the purpose, our goals, and our values, and our priorities should be centered on doing our best to represent the Lord Jesus and to hear and heed his words. That is here on earth. We have seen, and I think it is often overlooked, I cannot tell you how many commentaries I continue to find new ones, and I read at least what they say about the first four chapters.

I cannot get through all 22 chapters in all of them yet. But it is astonishing to me that interpreters over and over again want to look back at the situation in the first century and say, well, John had concerns, and John wrote to these churches because John thought that they were being co-opted by empire and they were being seduced into idolatry and the practices and culture and civil life of their communities, and they needed fixing. And this idea that Jesus says, behold, I come quickly, they were thinking that Jesus would return in their generation, and Paul thought this, and John thought this, and that the church age, as we call it now, wouldn't be an age, it would just be a few decades, Jesus would be back, and things would move forward into the kingdoms.

And there have been untold millions and millions of believers from the days of the Lord Jesus forward that have been commissioned, have been called, we are the called, we are the justified, we are those who are in union with Christ and have opportunities, and when there are references to the return of the Lord, people say, well, that really only counts for the rapture generation, and everyone else, if they thought they were the generation and they weren't, well, they had a wrong priority, and this is a terrible misapprehension. Every generation is the rapture generation. Every single believer in the Lord Jesus Christ from the day of Pentecost to this very moment is in the rapture generation.

Think about it. Are there any of them that will not rise to meet the Lord in the air? Not a one. It isn't, will it happen while I'm still breathing? That is a minor detail.

The emphasis, the focus, the pleading of the Lord Jesus Christ with His outstretched, open, nail-scarred hands is, be ready when I return. That's what the Lord Jesus makes appeal, both in His first advent, in His training of the Apostle Paul, in His last words communicated through the Apostle John. He pleads with us, keep in mind that this life is short and eternity is long.

Be ready for the rapture. It is fun. It is interesting.

I am in the forefront of those who love to watch the unfolding of world events and see how close we might be to the end of this age. But that should not change one iota of our motivation and our desire to redeem the time, to invest ourselves in the understanding that will enable us to be overcomers in all of these different areas. It is so important to catch the flame, to catch the fire of our opportunity and to exploit it and make the most of it.

That is here on earth. Now in chapter four, we are going to leave this earth and travel with John

to heaven. Chapter four of the Revelation.

After these things, John says, this is the very same phrase that Jesus gave to John in chapter one, verse 19, write the things which you have seen, the things which are and the things which will take place after this, after this. So not insignificantly in chapter four, after these things, we don't know how long after there could have been a space of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months. John could have said, well, you know, Jesus said, write the things which you have seen.

I'd better get the gospel of John authored and get that out. And once that was complete, he then enters into a new vision. His first vision is described in chapter one and the Lord Jesus begins speaking in that chapter and continues for another two and a half chapters.

After these things, some indefinite period of time after. I looked, this is a wonderful phrase that occurs time and again in the Revelation and is significant because John is looking. He is observing how often do things happen? And we're not really looking.

There has been, as I've mentioned before, some criticism of the Greek of the book of Revelation. You see it in chapter one, in the description of the Lord Jesus himself and God, the father in the greeting of chapter one, verse four, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come. The case there is bad Greek grammar because even in English, him is the objective case, right? It's the object of a preposition, to him be glory, right? But properly, this should be he who is, he who was, he who is, he is would be proper construction.

And I like the King James and New King James that have preserved the shift in Greek. It's not that John didn't know how to write Greek. This is a marker.

It slows you down and forces you to think about the identity of God who is unique in all experience, in all understanding as him, to him be glory and honor, power, so on. We're going to see this in chapter four, but there is intention here. It isn't sloppy.

It's not ignorant. It isn't, you see people who just delight in pointing out, there's a professor who gave his students an assignment, find all of the Greek grammar mistakes in chapter one of the revelation. That individual is going to be intensely embarrassed to discover that that the hypocrisy of finding fault with the text, instead of letting the text find fault with us, so that we can correct it and repent and do better, is going to create great consternation at the judgment.

After these things, I looked and you should look. Whenever someone says behold, this is our colloquial use of the word look. When we say, look, here's something I need to tell you.

And look means pay attention, right? It doesn't mean literally see with your eyes. Although, as my great grandpa said, after pounding a shingle nail through his finger and attaching his hand to a roof in an ice storm, lookie there. There are times when it's a literal look.

My dad was fond of telling that story. It always made me smile. It's so typical in our family, both

to harm yourself and to be amused by it at the same time.

But John says, after these things, everything we've seen up to this point, I looked and you look. Behold, it do. This is the word Jesus used when he says, behold, I come quickly.

Pay attention. My return is imminent. People say, you don't understand the book of Revelation was all fulfilled in the first century.

All of that stuff that was going to happen quickly happened nearly 2000 years ago. It misses the understanding that I have just emphasized that the return of the Lord Jesus is near for some of us. It can be a single digit number of years, no more than a double digit number of years for every single person listening to the sound of my voice.

If you are alive and have an ear to hear, the Lord Jesus is coming back and we are going to meet him in the air in some number of years that only takes up two digits to express. No longer than that. If you are 10 years old, I would expect that within 80 years, you are going to be face-to-face with the Lord.

That's sort of an outside limit. If by reason of strength you do like some of my relatives and make it well into your 90s, God bless you, but it is near. A single or double digit number of years, this is going to take place.

So is it quick? Is it soon? Is it near? Should we be prepared? Should it be a motivating factor? We get motivated when we are expecting guests. Holiday season is upon us. People make visits.

You get ready. Let's clean the storage stuff out of the spare room. Let's lay in some food.

Let's figure out when we will do what. There is preparation made because there is an imminent visit about to take place. How much more so should we be prepared for the imminent return of the Lord Jesus to take us to Himself and hopefully present us before the Father's throne? Not all of us will be qualified.

There is a subset of church-age believers that will be confessed before the throne of the Father. Jesus said, If you confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father. If you deny me before men, and this is not verbal.

I don't know him like Peter at the fire on the night of the Lord's arrest. This is failing to reflect Him in our lives. Failing to acknowledge Him so that we don't blend like someone in camouflage or like the deer up in the woods.

When those deer don't move, you cannot see them. They are completely invisible. They blend perfectly.

They've got to move. We need to be moving spiritually so that we are not blending with the world. We are not indistinguishable from unbelievers and apathetic and indifferent Christians.

If we are not noticeably different, there is something wrong. And the Lord Jesus is going to come and fulfill some of the things He has just told these churches. So how do we do that? Well, the first thing is pay attention.

There is a door open in heaven. John says, I looked, and you need to look. I'm going to tell you what I saw, and you need to pay attention to it.

It's important. I looked, so you look. I looked, and behold, a door open in heaven.

We have seen several different kinds of doors. As we look at scripture, Jacob in Genesis chapter 28 saw the stairway. It's not like the bridge to nowhere that Governor Palin had in Alaska.

The stairway leads somewhere. There is a portal. There is an opening in heaven.

And when the angels ascend and descend, Jacob sees them. This is the stairway, Genesis 28, 17. Others have been given a view of God's celestial environment.

Isaiah in chapter 6, verse 1, in the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Ezekiel chapter 1, verse 26, Above the firmament over the heads of these creatures was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone. On the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it.

And when you get into heavenly realms, as you can see in Ezekiel, it strains language. It was like a throne, but more than a throne. It was like a sapphire stone, but beyond a sapphire stone.

On the likeness of the throne was the likeness with the appearance of a man. Two steps removed from being able to accurately describe the presence of God on the throne. And we're going to see this in John's vision.

He is very careful. When God told Israel, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Don't try to make a likeness of God.

Don't boil Him down to something recognizable and material. This has been true in many cases for those who have seen God in a heavenly context via a vision. They are very indistinct about details.

He's not an old, gray-bearded man with a wrinkly face, and behold, here's what he looked like. It is very indirect. You saw this in Daniel 7, verse 9, the vision of the Ancient of Days.

Daniel says, I watched until thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His garment was white as snow. The hair of his head was like pure wool.

His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire. Descriptions of garments, descriptions of context, of what surrounds it, but very little detail because not only are the ways of God and the thoughts of God higher than ours, but we need a whole hardware upgrade to even begin to

understand and appreciate the true nature of the divine Almighty One. So there are many symbolic elements here.

The door is figurative, and when John looks through it, he is going to see someone sitting on the throne, and he doesn't say the Father, he doesn't say God, he doesn't say the Almighty or Elohim. In verse 2, one sat on the throne. In verse 3, he who sat there was like.

In verse 9 of this chapter, the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne. Notice that this is not a physical description. It is much more of a functional description because one who sits on a throne, what is the cardinal, fundamental, primary, definitional characteristic of someone who sits on a throne? What is the, what is the, I think it's the Burger King motto at the end of their commercials, you rule, right? I'm not sitting on a throne.

Cardboard crown from Burger King isn't going to get me anything. But the one who sits on the throne is referenced by his power to rule, to determine and decree the events, fates, futures, actions, blessings, judgments, authority to decide and determine everything related to creation resides with the Creator. So, he is constantly described.

Verse 2, verse 3, verse 9, verse 10, 24 elders fall down before him who sits on the throne. You don't realize until you realize it how many times God is referenced in this way. Both here, chapter 5, verse 1, in the right hand of him who sat on the throne is the seven scroll.

Verse 7, the lamb as it had been slain came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne. Verse 13, every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, all that are in them I heard saying, blessing and honor and glory and power to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb forever and ever. Him who sits on the throne.

God was introduced to John by the Lord Jesus personally as your father in heaven who knows what you need before you ask him. Over and over again, when you pray John and you other 11, pray this way, our father who art in heaven. Why the sudden shift to this very high, most high description of God as the one who sits on the throne? In the same way that we saw in chapter 1 that this is not the personal Jesus, he doesn't come down and say, hello, John.

It's been a few decades. Nice to see you again. Let's sit down as I will tell the people in Laodicea and let's share a meal.

And I'll tell you some things that are about to take place. How do we see the Lord Jesus in chapter 1? In the fullness of his divine theistic glory, he is the Lord God, Christ, right? Here, this is God in his functional role as ruler of the universe of all creation and beyond. And there's a reason for it.

There is a time when the spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And we say, Abba, father, when we pray, we have a familial love and means of approach. We can go

boldly before the throne to find grace to help in time of need in our earthly life.

We just left the earth. That was chapter 1 and chapter 2 and chapter 3. We are now in heaven. And if there's anything to make us appreciate the level of access that the Lord Jesus Christ has granted to us, we're not Levitical priests forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies upon pain of death.

We are not Uzzah who merely touches the Ark of the Covenant and dies from the contact. We are not those who are incinerated by flames coming forth from the altar of God in his holiness and his righteousness. Look at the level of access.

The God of Mount Sinai who speaks in thunder and lightning is going to be here viewed and portrayed once again. And it ought to be a reminder to us of, I love the words of the song. It's in the Baptist hymnal and several others called At Calvary.

Years I spent in vanity and pride, caring not the Lord was crucified, knowing not it was for me he died at Calvary. Mercy there was great and grace was free. Pardon there was given to me.

But one of the subsequent verses says, oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary. The distance from this God in heaven, the God of Mount Sinai, the God of judgment, the God that took the top off Mount Carmel is our father and lets us approach sprinkled with the blood of Christ. That's just like the high priest able to enter once a year to the Holy of Holies.

We have daily casual access to this throne room by the new and living way created by the torn flesh of the Lord Jesus. We should not take it for granted. It shouldn't be casual.

Jesus is not our buddy and God is not our daddy. We should respect what the Lord Jesus has given to us. He has given to us his own access to the father.

What a privilege, what an honor. And we should fear the Lord, our God, even as we love him and avail ourselves of his grace, mercy and peace. There is a balance.

You combine when you revere your elders, both deep love and respect. There is a way to be both close and intimate and deeply respectful. And those have to be combined in our approach to God.

So look, John looked and when the door is open in heaven, he hears a voice like a trumpet speaking with him. Who's talking? Context, context, context. Go back to chapter one.

Verse 10. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. I heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet.

Trumpet voice belongs to the Lord Jesus. So who issues the following instruction to John in chapter four? Come up here. Personally, I think they messed up here in my red letter edition because there's no red ink in chapter four, verse one in my Bible and there ought to be.

It's a voice like a trumpet. There's only been one trumpet like voice in the whole book and that's

the Lord Jesus Christ who is going to call his church, his body, his sanctified ones to heaven after these things. And by the way, at the point of death, it's not a tunnel.

It isn't angels waving and grabbing you by the elbows and transporting you. You know what you're going to hear at the point of death? A shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ are going to rise at that voice.

That voice raises the dead, but the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who is going to call and my sheep hear my voice and they respond. Know the voice. How will we know the voice of the Lord Jesus? Dedicated time and attention spent to what he says.

You know who he is by what he says. How did Mary know that it was the Lord Jesus in the garden? It was the way he said her name. He says, Mary, she instantly knows that's not the gardener, that's the Lord.

That's how we will know. The more intimately familiar we are with the Lord Jesus, the more instantly we will recognize his voice. Keep in mind now, why isn't John carried into a familiar reunion with the Lord Jesus at this point? Because this is heaven.

This is the throne room of God. And when the Lord Jesus has come up here, not everyone is going to be brought to the throne room. Do you think the apostle John qualifies to be confessed before the father and presented before the throne? He absolutely does.

He was on Patmos for the faith and the testimony of the Lord Jesus. The voice was like a trumpet speaking with me saying, come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this. How do we know the I is the Lord Jesus? Not only is the voice like a trumpet, but chapter one, verse one, the revelation of Jesus Christ, God gave him to show his servants.

John is his servant. Jesus is going to show his servant, John, the things which must take place. Jesus will launch it.

I recently heard an audio book by a guy who wrote a commentary on revelation and it's audio. So he himself read the preface, read the introduction, but then some other guy slogged through the whole rest of the book. Terrible book.

I wouldn't recommend it. But he read the preface, but then he turned over the communication of the content to someone else. The Lord Jesus is going to introduce John to the heavenly realm.

And at that point there will be angels. There will be elders. There will be others who will interpret, who will guide.

The Lord Jesus is not going to be his personal guide because the Lord Jesus is in view as the lamb, as it had been slain. And Jesus can't both be accompanying John and be viewed in his heavenly operations. But the Lord Jesus initiates this introduction.

These letters ought to be read, R-E-D. Letters of two and three ought to be read, R-E-A-D. But this, come up here.

The words of the Lord, if they're going to be in red, they ought to be read in this verse because this is the Lord Jesus speaking like a trumpet. Come up here. I will show you what will take place.

Things which must take place after this. This verse begins and ends with after this. So we are about to embark on what is going to happen after this.

After we run our race, finish our course, breathe our last breath, think our last thought on this earth. We are pre-millennial, pre-tribulational rapture believers because that is what the Bible teaches. Don't throw history at me and tell me it's late.

Don't tell me the early church fathers didn't understand it. Look at the early church fathers. They're a bunch of Catholics and they got so many things wrong.

It's unbelievable. And to say, well, they didn't believe in the rapture. Therefore, the rapture can't be true.

Do you seriously want me to go back and detail all of the erroneous, bizarre things that the early church fathers believed and taught and didn't believe and didn't teach that are perfectly obvious to the casual observer? There are things that have been sealed until the time of the end, like the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation has been opaque to many people for a long time. And that's a tragedy. It is not sealed.

It's an open book. We are going to behold. We're going to heed the exhortation of John to take a look.

He is going to tell us what is revealed to him in this second vision, which is going to extend from here through the seven seals. This is all a single vision. It starts here in chapter four, extends through chapter six and into chapter seven.

One vision, the second vision. And what a privilege to be taken and to be shown. When Paul said someone was caught up to the third heaven, he heard and saw things that can't be spoken by man.

John does get to speak and we're going to listen. We'll see it when we come back from the break.