

Rev 26-01-04a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. It is a privilege to assemble together with you on this Sunday morning, the 4th of January, 2026. We continue our study in the book of Revelation and I hope you've got plenty of paper and a fresh pen or whatever other method you use to take things down.

We have a lot to cover this morning. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of study and fellowship and we'll begin. Father, what a blessing and what a privilege it is to spend time together, to be edified and encouraged and have our enthusiasm renewed as we spend time together and recognize the opportunities that you give us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for Him. We thank you for His sacrificial work on the cross, His coming as the Lamb of Passover to bear our sins, to enable us to be cleansed, to be qualified to come into your presence as we do this morning with our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, our sins confessed, our lifestyle dedicated to faith, hope and love. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together and the parallel passages that connect to it, that your Holy Spirit will enliven and enable us in our souls to grasp not only the truth and what it means, but also how we should then live.

We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen. We are at the threshold of the next major section of the book. We have spent a significant amount of time looking at the introduction in chapter one, the letters to the seven churches in chapters two and three, one of the things that is inescapable as you look at those three chapters is the perfection represented by the seven fold witness, the seven spirits that are before God's throne, the seven churches that are represented by seven lampstands and receive seven letters from the Lord Jesus Christ personally Himself.

And we know those letters are addressed to us. Every letter applies to us either by way of warning, by way of commendation, by way of encouragement. These letters offer us a clear view of what is possible, what the overcomers can inherit and receive as an eternal blessing through diligence, remembering who we are and why we're here.

We have now come to see in chapters four and five, John transported to the heavens and the heavenly throne room where he sees the throne of God. And significantly after you see the indescribable, ineffable, impossible to view directly glory of God as He sits on His throne in heaven, we see the cherubim in verse six. This is critically important for chapter six.

I think this is an often overlooked introductory piece that is essential as we will see this morning to understanding what is going on as the seals break. Verse six of chapter four, before the throne, there was a sea of glass like crystal in the midst of the throne and around the throne four living creatures. We've looked at them in detail.

You remember the faces, the first living creature was like a lion. Ezekiel describes these in chapter one of his prophecy as their faces. Here it says they are like something.

So the first living creature in verse seven is like a lion. The second living creature is like a calf or an ox. The third living creature had a face like a man and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle, was like a flying eagle.

The four living creatures, each having six wings are full of eyes around and within, and they do not cease day or night, glorifying God, holy, holy, holy. Keep that in mind. In chapter five, John sees in the right hand of the enthroned presence of almighty God, a scroll.

The scroll is in God's right hand and a strong angel proclaims, who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals, to lift its seals. And John wept much. I am fascinated by this because I've never understood why with this heavenly vision and so much going on, John, when he sees that no one is qualified to open the scroll, he begins to weep.

And it's not just a little tear going down his cheek. It says he wept greatly. He wept much.

He is deeply and inconsolably sorrowful about the fact that this scroll cannot be opened. And I've always kind of wondered, did he know what was in the scroll and wanted it to happen? Did anyone else around him weep? John sees it and John weeps. We're not told that anybody else wept, but John does.

And he weeps a lot. He is crying. And if you've ever had a significant reason to cry and it is a hard sobbing sorrow being expressed, you know what this kind of crying is like.

And I ask myself why. I would suggest to you, John, as we know him from the gospel, as we know him from his epistles, as we know him from chapter one, he is exiled to Patmos for the testimony of the Lord Jesus, the truth that has been revealed by God, that he has seen and handled and witnessed firsthand. He has seen not only the incarnate glory, he has seen the revealed eternal glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

So here is the word of God. This scroll represents the word of God. John loves the word of God, both its expression of truth and its incarnation.

He is the disciple whom Jesus loved. He loves the Lord Jesus. And when he sees that there is a word from God, but it is sealed up and no one can open it, no one can reveal it, it breaks his heart.

But my suggestion, my point of application here is how deeply committed are we to understanding the truth of God and coming to know the revelation of that word? If we couldn't do Bible study, would we be sorrowful enough to weep over it? If we knew that there was something that God had by way of revelation for us and it was not obtainable, would it create this level of sorrow? How much do we love the word of God? Not just bibliolatry, not just the page and the words thereon, but the God it reveals, the Lord Jesus as our savior and Lord, that it reflects and glorifies. That's reflected here in John's sorrow that it is something that God has, it is obviously written down to be read and to be unfolded in the heavens and in the earth, and it can't be executed, it can't be accomplished. So John weeps out of his love for the word of God.

And we hope that we have a similar enthusiasm to understand. And of course, that's why we are gathered this morning is to gain a better understanding of this particular revelation. And I think we will.

But the lamb as it had been slain is then revealed. And we've covered this in detail. I just want to review one particular aspect of this.

The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and its seven seals. He has prevailed. His previous accomplishment in fulfilling the will of God, accomplishing salvation for us qualifies him.

He has prevailed. He has taken captivity captive. He has conquered sin and death.

That victory qualifies him to open these seals that we are going to look at this morning. And as John looks at him in verse six of chapter five, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes. We've covered all of this in detail, but I want to point out once again that the lamb is characterized by seven horns and seven eyes.

Chapter six. Now, I saw when the lamb opened one of the seals and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, come and see. And I looked and behold a white horse.

He who sat on it had a bow and a crown was given to him and he went out conquering and to conquer. We will have additional horses and horsemen unfolding, but there is a key of interpretation and of understanding here that greatly illuminates this unfolding of the scroll, this unrolling of the scroll that is made possible by the breaking of these seals, the lifting of these seals. And the key is in verse one.

And occasionally when I see differences, corruptions, omissions, changes to a biblical text, they don't seem particularly significant. I was reading the fifth verse of chapter five. Do not weep.

The lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has prevailed to open this seal and to loose. And that's a textual difference, to loose its seven seals. I don't think it's part of the original.

I have it scratched out in my Bible. So he has prevailed to open the scroll and its seals, its seven seals. That particular textual difference doesn't matter a lot, frankly, but in verse one of chapter six, there is an eye-opening correction to be made and needs to be made and throws great light on everything that is to follow here in chapter six.

So if you have something to write with, I normally say it's your option, whether or not you wanna write something in your Bible, you need to make this change. If you have ambitions of entering into the wonderful truth that is revealed here. And that is at the end of verse one.

Now, I saw when the lamb opened one of the seals and I heard one of the four living creatures

saying with a voice like thunder, it's gonna be pretty important. If this is one of the few times that we hear the cherubim that surround God's throne speak, and he's got a voice like thunder, it's important to know what he says. He says one word, come, scratch out and see.

It's not in the best text. It's in the majority of texts, but it's not in the best text and it doesn't belong. And we are going to see why this morning.

It is a canyon opposite wall division and difference, whether or not those last two words are there and they should not be there. And you will be convinced and persuaded beyond all doubt as we move forward. So one of the four living creatures says with a voice like thunder, come.

So our first point of observation this morning is that in chapter six, verse one, the living creature is not talking to John. He's talking to someone else. Notice the chain of custody that we were introduced to in chapter one, verse one and two.

God crafted a revelation, which he gave to the Lord Jesus Christ, which was given to an angel, which was given to John, right? And from John to the angels of the churches, to the churches themselves. It begins with God on his throne. It is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, who significantly and somewhat mysteriously, for many people, it's given to an angel, which is then given to John.

Notice here, because we have corrected the text, and this is not an if in my mind, it is now correct. God the Father has written a scroll, which he has given to the Lord Jesus, who has opened, lifted, broken the first seal. And now an angel is going to speak.

And he is speaking to horseman number one, come. Makes so much more sense. Why would you tell John to come and see when he's already been told in chapter four, verse one, come up here and you will see, you will be shown what's going to happen.

I cannot find an interpretive value or applicational benefit for the angel, one of the four living creatures to speak to John and say, well, come look at this. Why? He's already there. He can already see what's good.

What if he doesn't follow the command? Is he going to turn around and shut his eyes? He's been crying to see what this scroll reveals. Now the first seal has been lifted. Do you really need to tell John, come and see? Do you think he's not already looking in relief and joy that this scroll is going to be revealed? He doesn't need to be told, come and see.

And he isn't. This is one of the four living creatures, the first of the four living creatures. And he is speaking because the Lord Jesus has lifted the first seal that unrolls the scroll of God Almighty in the very same way in the same order we saw in chapter one.

It is so powerful when you think of this because the role of the living creature is not incidental. John could have just heard a voice that said, come and see if he needed that encouragement, which he doesn't. But why would one of the four living creatures speak at this point? For the

same reason that there is a chain of custody and a cause and effect from the beginning of this revelation.

So look at it now, when the lamb opened, one of the seals, depending on which text, one of the seven seals. Again, we know how many there are. Seven coming or going in this text doesn't make an interpretive or applicational difference.

But who the living creature is talking to makes a world of difference. It unlocks this entire chapter. So one of the four living creatures, by implication, it would be the first that John saw with a voice like thunder says, come.

Why thunder? Thunder precedes words of righteousness and justice. There was thunder on Mount Sinai. There was thunder when the Lord Jesus was revealed.

There was thunder when John hears this voice. So John looked and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow and a crown was given to him.

And he went out conquering and to conquer. As we look at these unfolding seals, this word come is going to be issued in verse three, when the Lord Jesus, the lamb as it had been slain, opens the second seal, the second living creature says, come. Does John really need to look somewhere else? It's the same venue.

It's the same earth on which the consequences of the galloping horsemen are going to be observed. This is a summons issued by one of the living creatures to these horsemen. So having straightened that out, what does that tell us? Well, how do we know anything about the four living creatures? John doesn't introduce them freshly and newly in the revelation, does he? Where do we first encounter these living creatures? It's Ezekiel, Ezekiel chapter one.

Now, we have looked back as we first encountered the living creatures and their aspects, what they are like, as we reviewed a few minutes ago. But I would suggest to you, there is a correlation between their faces, what they are like and what happens here as the seals are lifted. And notice, John isn't called to come and see in the traditional understanding.

When you get to the fifth and the sixth and the seventh seals, it's only the first four seals where the horsemen ride, and it's only the first four seals where the living creature says, come, with a voice like thunder. So pop quiz here, what are the four living creatures like? In Ezekiel, they each have four faces. In revelation, each of them is turning a separate face to where it can be seen by John.

I think they always have the four faces, but there are times when we occupy and fulfill a role. At some times, you might be a son or a daughter. At other times, you might be a husband or a wife.

In other contexts and relationships, you are a brother or a sister. You might be a friend or a coworker. And in a context, there is one aspect of your identity or your character that will come

to the fore and be the primary aspect that is in view and is functioning at that time.

So I will say that biblically speaking, these are the very same four creatures that were seen hundreds of years earlier by Ezekiel. But in John, each of them is in a role where he fulfills one of those four faces in terms of its role, its function. So what do you remember about those four faces? What are the four faces or the four likenesses, what these creatures are like? You can just turn back a page to Revelation 4, verses 6 and 7. The first one is like a lion.

The second is like a calf or an ox. You have the lion, you have the ox, you have a face like a man and like an eagle. And we saw that these correspond, they map one-to-one to Ezekiel's revelatory vision in his chapter one.

So in Revelation 6, verses one through eight, these same four creatures, one at a time, call a horseman to come. So we're going to see, and you know these without us reading through it. The first horse is the white horse with someone going forth conquering and to conquer.

So the white horse represents conquest. What face, what living creature calls that horseman to come? It is the lion creature. There is a correspondence between the lion who conquers all comers and the white horse going forth conquering and to conquer.

The second beast, the second living creature, I'm sorry. The King James translates it beast and it's really a terrible mistranslation. These are glorious cherubim living creatures.

The second living creature says, come. What horse appears? It is the red horse of war and bloodshed. What is the correspondence between the ox or the young bull, the calf, and war and bloodshed? We will examine this in detail shortly, but I can tell you that in Israel, the whole burnt offering begins with an ox.

Chapter one of Leviticus, the whole burnt offering. And the issue is the blood of that sacrifice. And in short, in anticipation, if you do not accept the blood of the sacrifice that God provides as substitutionary atonement, then your blood will be shed.

And war and bloodshed are going to happen on the earth because the atoning sacrifice was not accepted. So there is a strong correspondence between the ox. You don't choose to honor and to accept and to be blessed by God's sacrifice.

It is what God told Noah as far back as the aftermath of the flood. From now on, if someone sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. And unless there is atonement, unless there is sacrificial intervention, that's the law.

The third living creature, remember, has a face like a man. The third horse is the black horse of famine and economic scarcity. Man's best efforts to solve world hunger, to care for the homeless and the ones who, for whatever reason, cannot support and sustain themselves, that fails.

The black horse specifically addresses man's insufficiency to provide for himself. In God's economy, your father knows what you need before you ask him. Take no thought for what you will eat or what you will drink or what you will wear.

Your father knows you have need of these. Look at the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin.

Yet they exceed Solomon in all of his glory. The black horse called by the living creature with a face like a man. Finally, the fourth living creature has a face like an eagle.

This is the opportunity to rise above the earthly, the temporal, the mundane, what Solomon decries in Qohelet as the vanity that defines life in this world, where no matter what you achieve and what you attain and what you acquire at death, it all goes to others. Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Paul writes in Romans. How can we rise above, soar into the heavenly realms? The pale horse called by the fourth living creature who is like a flying eagle is death.

What's gonna happen at death? And I will tell you now that I dispute the common appellation of this series of events as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Let's read our passage now with this in line. Understanding who the living creatures are talking to, now let's read our first few verses of chapter six.

When the Lamb opened one of the seals, I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, come. And I looked, and behold, here comes a white horse. In response to that command, he who sat on it had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer, called by the living creature who is like a lion, face like a lion.

Verse three, when he opened the second seal, he being the Lamb as it had been slain, notice God Almighty Creator has written this scroll, has held it in his right hand and has delivered it to the Lord Jesus. And when the Lord Jesus opens a seal, that prompts the living creature to issue the command to each horseman. So the Lord Jesus, Lamb opens the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, come.

Another horse, fiery red, went out, and it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another, and there was given to him a great sword. Instead of the knife of sacrifice for the ox, the submissive, serving aspect of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, now men are gonna sacrifice each other with swords instead of sacrificial knives. Verse five, when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, come.

So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. Which living creature has called this black horse? The one with a face like a man? Who operates measurement devices? Who invented and operates scales? This is for the conduct of commerce and trade, payment for goods and services. I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, a quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, but do

not harm the oil and the wine.

Notice that there is discernment. There is a measured amount of judgment. There are things that are decreed to become scarce, and others that are not.

It requires perception, judgment, discernment, human intervention in the execution of this particular judgmental phase. Then in verse seven, when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth. Notice one, two, three, four, there is an order.

It is the order that was given to us in chapter four. And so the fourth creature, calls the fourth come command. When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, come.

So I looked and behold a pale horse. Now four horsemen of the apocalypse, read your verse. And the name of him who sat on it was death and Hades followed with him.

So how many horsemen are there? There are five. The fourth horse evidently carries two riders. Either that or Hades is running really fast.

But there are two individuals, metaphorically speaking, that are in view here in chapter six, verse eight. The name of him who sat on the horse was death and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them.

I think whatever power they're gonna execute involves riding on this horse. I think this is a two seater. This is a double decker.

There are two horsemen on the fourth horse. Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth to kill with sword, with hunger, with death and by the beasts of the earth. This is by way of contrast.

If you are not going to rise, if you are not going to ascend, if you are not going to receive heavenly deliverance and a heavenly future, you are earthbound and you will be destroyed by the violence that exists on the earth. You are not delivered. You are not lifted.

You are not raised above. Even Noah in the ark during the judgment of the flood, the ark was raised up off of the earth and destruction took place below him. So after that, the fifth, sixth and seventh seals do not involve the four living creatures.

We are going to pause here and take our break and when we come back, we're going to use what we know about the four living creatures to analyze and parse what is going on on these judgments, why it is these specific judgments and what does that mean for you and me? When we look at the word of God and we come to understand it, we should always ask ourselves the question, how should I then live? This is fascinating. It's a revelation, but what does it do to me? How can I take what I have learned here and change how I think, how I act, how I speak, my representation of the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth? That's what we hope to do when we come

back from the break.