

Rev 26-01-18a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It's the 18th of January, 2026. Happens to be my sister's birthday.

Happy birthday, Denise. We continue our study in the book of Revelation. We are looking at the inception of the formal judgments of God as they are revealed through the Lord Jesus, the Lamb, as it had been slain, breaking the seals on the scroll that has come from the hand of God.

And we have seen the six seals as they have unfolded and released judgments. We're going to talk a little bit about the nature of these as we move forward into the trumpet judgments that occur in chapter eight. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin.

Father, it is a wonderful reassurance to know that it is not by might nor by power, but by your spirit that we are enabled to live in a way that pleases you, to reflect divine standards of righteousness, to lay hold of that righteousness by faith, to transform the mundane and the temporal and the ephemeral nature of this life into something that has lasting value, that builds into the eternal future, and most of all, that reflects your glory and credit on the Lord Jesus, our Savior. We thank you for him. We thank you for his faithfulness, his example, both past, present, and future.

And we pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, the Holy Spirit will help each of us to see not only what it means and what it portends, but how it should affect us as we expend the time that you have given us as a stewardship so that we make the most of the opportunities that are ours in this life as we prepare for the next. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We have seen that there is a symmetry, there is a purpose in the way God unfolds these judgments, and it begins with the earthly perspective. These judgments are initiated by the Lamb as it had been slain. It's easy to simply take these metaphorical pictures and just move forward without really stopping to think why they are the way they are.

Why is it not the glorified Jesus that speaks to John about the churches in Patmos that opens these seals? Why is the one who has found worthy to open the seals and to unroll the scroll, specifically the Lamb as it had been slain? The clue that we have was given to us back in chapter six, these souls that are under the altar that we see when the fifth seal is opened. And remember, there is a pattern of four followed by three. After the seals open, which release the horsemen of judgment, when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

This is during their earthly lives. They evidently perished as martyrs or they expended their lives in the service of that testimony and that representation of the word of God. That is how they invested their lives.

Hopefully this is us. We aren't anxious to become physical martyrs in the sense of being executed as a result of our faith. But the idea here is what Jesus said to the church in front of being faithful unto death.

If it requires that, we will be faithful right up to that point. But you have an echo here of the Lord Jesus himself who tells Pilate on the night of his arrest and trial that for this reason he was born and for this cause he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to represent and embody the word of God and to give testimony to the grace that comes from our creator father God almighty in heaven that has been made available to deliver us from our fallen nature, from the corruption and evil that is in the world, from the necessary death that follows separation from God. God makes it possible for us to be united with him.

In the broad sense, we come to faith in Christ and we are granted eternal life. In the daily sense, as we invest each minute and each hour in fellowship and connection and relationship to God the Father, looking at our lives the way he looks at it, wanting to fulfill the purposes for which he made us and positioned us at this place, at this time, with these relationships, these opportunities, each of us is unique and God has a unique purpose for your life and for my life. And the fulfillment of that purpose is accomplished when we bear witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Many times this is costly. Losing your life is representative of the ultimate price one can pay for that witness and that testimony. There are smaller costs, there are sacrifices, there are things that we lose, there are things that fall behind and away as we endeavor to live the life to which God has called us.

These martyrs represent that. Paul says in Romans 12, 1 and 2, that we should present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is our reasonable service.

These individuals are pictured at the opening of the fifth seal as those who have been slain on the altar. It has cost them, it has cost them their lives at the hands of those who seem to have prevailed, who seem to have overcome them. We are called to be overcomers.

Sometimes we feel like we have been overcome. God will allow setback, adversity, hardship, persecution. You look at those who have been martyred for the faith across the centuries and even in the modern day, even as we speak around the world, there are those who are literally losing their lives for the word of God and the testimony of the Lord Jesus which they hold.

That's what this represents. Now, think about being worthy to open the seals. The Lord Jesus is a lamb as it had been slain.

Inevitably, this is pictured by the blood which represents the life being shed, his blood being shed, the blood of Jesus Christ, his son was shed on our behalf. It cleanses us from all sin. So these individuals enter into and share that willingness to put the plan and purpose of God first, knowing that there is joy ahead.

The Lord Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and gave no credit to the shame. He despised the shame and now he is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is at the throne as John sees him here.

But he's not pictured as the glorified Lord Jesus from the Mount of Transfiguration. He's not pictured as the glorified Lord Jesus from Revelation chapter one. He is specifically identified as the lamb as it had been slain.

And there is the clear picture of recompense, of balancing the scales. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. God's judgment is just.

It is fair. It is done in measure. It targets exactly the right people for exactly the right reason.

It is not excessive. It is not belligerent. It isn't fueled by emotion and blind fury.

It is measured. It is calculated. It is timed.

And in its early phases, there is the possibility for repentance. Turn you at my reproof, God says. Why will you die, O house of Israel? Judgment can take the form of persuasive communication, endeavors to explain what is wrong, why it is wrong, what God requires.

What is it that God requires, O man, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Those who reject that way will find communication coming from God. Something's not right.

You need to wake up. There needs to be a change of mind, repentance. And there is the possibility of repentance before judgment.

Think of Noah building the ark. There is a coming judgment that requires a deliverance. And this deliverance comes by following God's instructions.

He tells Noah all kinds of specifics on how to build this piece of deliverance. Those who mock it, who ignore it, who are unmoved by the prediction of God's judgment will necessarily suffer that judgment. So notice the connection between the Lamb as it had been slain, who is opening these seals.

It explains why these seals are being opened. And it isn't to reflect glory through destruction. This is justice at work.

If you shed man's blood, by man, your blood should be shed. Go back all the way back to Genesis after the flood, when God is speaking to Noah in chapter nine. If we do not follow the paths of God's guidance by way of justice, of fairness, then God is going to bring it in His own way and in His own time.

And we can either be a part of it or we can be crushed under it. So these souls under the altar are clearly identified with the Lord Jesus Himself. They were slain as He was slain, and more will

be slain.

And so they are comforted that they need to wait a little while longer until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, is completed. God allows this. And it is one of the more mysterious expressions of God's plan and purpose that God, in a number of biblical cases and in cases right down to the modern day, allows people to express the fullness of what is in their heart.

And it will often cost God's people something. The rejection and the rebellion of Israel gave evidence and was fully expressed in the Lord Jesus coming to His own and His own receiving Him not. He was slain by His own brethren.

He came to save them, and He was taken to the cross at their behest. And we need to see the lengths to which corruption will go in its expression, how serious sin is. And so God will allow for a short time His own people, His own son, to be sacrificed so that we can see how vile sin is and how necessary it is that it be fully expunged from the universe.

So God allows believers in earlier ages up to the present to be slain at the hands of evil men. And this is witness. This is testimony.

This is evidence that they are unreachable and they are incorrigible. And there is nothing short of destruction that can cure the malignancy that they represent. So the Lamb as it had been slain, and He comforts and encourages those who have been slain after the manner of, following the pattern of, that unjust, unfair, sacrificial offering that they represent.

Wait. God will make all things right. He will make all things new.

Even at the point of death, your momentary light affliction is working an eternal weight of glory. So we see this as the seals break. And this is on the earth.

The agents of destruction are earthly. They ride horses. They carry swords and bows.

They bring scales. And these are not just scales. And there is inequality and hardship for some.

Others are still able to obtain oil and wine. And this unfolds in a pattern of four and then three. So last time we were looking at other examples of this four plus three scenario, such as the feasts of Israel.

You have this pattern. And over these recent weeks, we've seen that prophecy isn't just predictive. It communicates to us patterns in the Old Testament, patterns in the New Testament that help us understand the way God's mind works.

And the way He communicates to us is elegant. It is structured. And in many cases, it is understandable because it is predictable.

So we saw the first four seals reflecting the first four feasts in Israel in that they are grouped.

They are connected. One follows another.

You look at the Passover and unleavened bread and first fruits and Pentecost. They are interrelated. Then you have a gap, an interval through the summer, followed by the fall feasts, which are the feast of trumpets, the day of atonement and the feast of tabernacle or booths, Sukkot.

So Passover, unleavened bread, first fruits and Pentecost. And notice how these feasts in Israel reflect God's grace. Passover, God delivering from death and delivering from judgment, going back to that awful night in Egypt with the death of the firstborn.

There is a necessary judgment for rejection of God's word and God's purpose. And Israel, if they fail to put the blood on the doorpost, will suffer the same fate as allegedly God's people with the Egyptians who reject God. And so the blood of the Passover lamb, He is slain.

They are delivered by and through that blood. When you come to these four seals, this is man's solution. Man wants to ride forth on a white horse and dominate and subjugate and use His way and His rule, conquering and to conquer.

This is the way we'll deal with sin. We will control it. We will use our means and our effort to deal with sin.

And so the bow, this is the threat of impending penalty or cost if you don't conform to the one on the white horse. But it doesn't work. And man can't persuade and cajole and psychologize people into good behavior because we are corrupt.

We are all as an unclean thing. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We fade like a leaf.

Our iniquities like the wind carry us away. So here comes the red horse and there is bloody conflict. Here comes the black horse and an effort to control people with economic means, with sanctions, with tariffs, with leverage of an economic nature.

But all it does is create more famine. I'm not making a comment on current events. I'm saying that in this period, this is what it represents.

This is man's alternative to God's way and God's plan. This is the Antichristos, the instead of Christ and an instead of program. We're not going to do it God's way.

We'll do it our way. We don't need God. We can manage the sinfulness of man.

We can manage life and death. We can manage economic hardship, famine, and hunger. We can fix it ourselves.

And the pale horse of death and Hades plague, we will develop a vaccine. We will develop treatments. We will radiate.

We will give you injections. And again, we have wonderful medical opportunities for intervention and for healing. I love it when they set bones and fix things that are broken or dysfunctional.

By many, many means in this presentation, these are obvious substitutes for looking to God. God can work through communication, through using leverage of an economic nature, or even using captivity for his own people. When it is of God and its aim is to bring us into closer relationship and fellowship, these same tools can be good.

In God's hands, a sharp blade is a wonderful thing. In the hands of people with their plans and their limited wisdom, it becomes destructive. So you then had the fifth seal, which we've already discussed, followed by the sixth seal.

And at the opening of the sixth seal, you have a presentation that encompasses pretty much the entirety of the last half of the 70th week. So when we saw this in verse 12, when he opened the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth of hair.

The moon became like blood. The stars of heaven fell to the earth, fig tree dropping its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. In translating this into modern times currently, you look at the number of satellites that we have in the sky and the dependence that we have on those for communication, for internet, for geographical location purposes.

And this is wonderful. It's great technology, but you could imagine that in a disaster scenario, if something disturbs the system, these things could start falling to earth and they will look exactly like meteors and meteorites descending through the atmosphere. You can see these at night.

I have laid out on the roof more than once. And if you watch long enough, you'll see these linear, very dim lights that go directly across. We have others that are in geosynchronous orbit and they're like stars in that they don't move because they're directly over a spot on the earth.

But again, these stars falling can have multiple significances. The Bible uses stars to represent angels and the fallen angel power and intervention during this period is going to be broken. And those who think that they are going to accomplish Satan's purpose via the first and second beasts via this world government attempt, their power will be broken and they will fall much as the third of the stars that fall from heaven.

We'll see later swept by the tail of the dragon represents angelic failure and angelic displacement from a position of power. And so there can be both literal foretelling here of what will be physically observable. And more importantly, the spiritual understanding that even the things that seem fixed and immovable from a human perspective, like the stars, when God begins to judge the stars themselves are not safe.

These stars don't fall because they tripped. They fall because God is casting them to earth. He is taking them out of their heavenly position and they are down here with fallen, mortal, limited

mankind.

So that is the, uh, and, and if I find it interesting, don't you that in, in verse 13 of chapter six, it takes a half a verse to describe what the stars look like. It doesn't say they fall like, uh, apples. They fall, uh, like a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind, late figs shaken by a mighty wind.

Jesus went to a fig tree shortly before his arrest and the events of the crucifixion. He went to a fig tree looking for early figs and they weren't there. And he cursed the fig tree may no one ever eat from you again.

And they come by a day later and the thing is withered and dead supernaturally. So here you have a fig tree. What is the common association of fig trees in the Bible? This is Israel.

It's a representation of Israel. We know that this is the time of Jacob's trouble. And so it isn't any other tree or any other crop, uh, or piece of vegetation.

These are fig trees. And it says, it's like a fig tree, a single fig tree that drops its late figs. These figs should have been harvested when they were in their prime, but this tree has been neglected.

There was the opportunity to have a basket of healthy, edible, nutritious figs. Figs are not my favorite. I will occasionally eat a fig Newton, but, uh, figs by themselves are an acquired taste as far as I'm concerned, but this was a staple and you see the economic hardship from the earlier, uh, seals being broken and the black horse and the scales and famine and pestilence and so on.

But this specific image that the stars are falling, that which people rely upon for navigation, for, uh, encouragement. You think about, uh, David, uh, when I look up into the heavens and I see the stars and I think, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you visit him? Uh, it is a representation of God's handiwork and it should be something that draws us toward God. There is provision from God and it is ignored.

And so here's a tree and it's got these figs still available and they have not been harvested. People have not availed themselves of what is readily accessible. And now there is a wind shaking this tree and these late figs are falling to the ground.

They've been ignored. They have not been, uh, gathered, taken advantage of. Now the wind comes from God.

Uh, Jesus tells Nicodemus that, uh, the wind is like the Holy Spirit. It's, it's hard to tell where it's coming from or where it's going. And the wind comes and now these figs have fallen to the ground.

And once they get on the ground, they're no longer edible. They're going to quickly decay and rot and be eaten by other things. But the stars falling from heaven are compared to this and it's

not an accident.

There's a message there. Bible says regarding access accessibility of God, access to God, seek him early while he may yet be found. Call upon him while he is near.

There is a time of opportunity and if we miss it, that opportunity can be permanently lost. Once you die, your options are completed in this life. So then the sky recedes as a scroll when it is rolled up.

So from the very beginning, the earthquake, the sky, this is the culmination of judgments. And we're going to see these things more discreetly communicated later on with the trumpets and the bowls. But it is all wrapped up here because these seals are not so much happening as John watches them.

And this, this is kind of a difficult thing to explain, but what is actually going on here? There is the scroll. There is the lamb. He is breaking the seals.

You break the seals on a scroll so that it can be read. And as this scroll unrolls, and this is a metaphor, you don't have to be literal. And how can you see any of the scroll until you open all of the seals, but this is predictive.

So as you see the first four seals open, this explains, these seals have not yet been opened, if you will. John sees this in vision. And as the scroll of God's judgment is revealed, as it is unrolled, as it is read by the lamb who holds the scroll, these are events that will take place.

And it's not so much chronological as it is a conceptual. These are aspects of God's judgment. This is generally successive, but they can overlap.

They can be retrospective. And to read it strictly chronologically, that souls under the altar are not going to represent a plea for justice until the horsemen have ridden, would be to miss the point. These are aspects of the judgment, and some of them span the entirety of human history.

There have been martyrs who have died for the word of God and the testimony of the Lord Jesus, the testimony of God in the Old Testament days, all along, and their blood cries out from the altar. But there is an aspect of that fifth seal, and it's an aspect for you and me. We can be sacrificial.

We take parts of our lives, and we dedicate it at some personal cost to our spiritual identity. We forego certain pleasures. We forego fellowship with certain kinds of people or certain people themselves.

And it hurts. It's costly. But this fifth seal, as an example, represents the principle that God will vindicate.

Be patient. There are other people who are similarly suffering for the cause of Christ, denying

themselves, taking up their cross, and following Christ. Denial of one's own interest, specifically to be a good soldier of Christ, wearing the full armor of God, entering into the fray.

And it can be costly. But these souls, with their plea for justice, how long, O Lord? I don't see the upside of the sacrifice I am making or have made or will make. God says, be patient.

There are other people just like you, and this will be resolved. And your witness, your testimony will be respected. It will be honored.

It will accomplish its purpose. Be patient. You can't see the big picture.

You're under the altar. You can't see the place that your sacrificial life holds in the larger span of God's plan. So this sixth seal, it isn't that nothing got dark or nothing turned to blood until all of the other seals.

Each of these seals is a summary of events that can span a lot longer time. They can overlap. Some of them can even precede something that is earlier because they are conceptual.

They're not necessarily chronological. So that brought us to the angel standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. We just saw, and it's easy to miss, the wind that blows on the fig tree and shakes these figs loose that were not gathered, that were not harvested.

God provided them, and no one availed themselves of it. The wind shakes the tree. Now the figs are gone.

The stars are in heaven. People may be relying on them, but now they're gone. And this could be technology.

This could be the angelic influence. The fact that they fall makes me think this would be demonic rather than the unfallen angels. But these winds are held in abeyance until God's people are sealed.

And we've seen this again, figs associated with Israel. The lamb as it had been slain is the Passover lamb. That's the first feast in Israel.

All of this is conceptually tied to the age of Israel, and this is the last seven years of it. So 12,000 are sealed from each tribe. It fascinates me that it takes the space to list them one by one.

Why would God do that? Why doesn't He just say 12,000 from each tribe were sealed except for Dan, except for Ephraim, but count Joseph and count Manasseh and count Levi, and we'll get 12. They are detailed. Look at these verses from verse five through verse eight.

You have these tribes individually listed. This is a reminder that God looks at you and looks at me as an individual. There is no name overlooked.

There is no one who gets lost in the shuffle, whose record is somehow no longer tracked. It is specific by location, by affiliation, by name. We are known to God by name.

You are known to God. I am known to God, and He takes this seriously. So it is a reminder that God will only allow judgment up to a certain point, and when it is a severe judgment, these winds that are going to harm the earth and the sea and all the trees are suspended in this presentation until there is the seal of God, the same seal that sealed the scroll and ensured that righteous judgment is perpetrated on the enemies of God and the enemies of God's people, that same seal not only represents judgment but also salvation.

The Passover lamb represents judgment and salvation. What is our response? And it is a reminder that we can wonder why God allows certain things to happen, whether it's to us or to others. There is always a purpose.

It is measured. It is carefully dispensed, and God's people are always uppermost in God's mind, and He will not allow the righteous to be moved. I've never seen the righteous go hungry or His seed begging bread.

God is aware of each and every one of us. It's astonishing, given how many people there are, that He knows every detail. He knows the thoughts and intents of every heart, and He is careful and judicious.

He expresses His love and His faithfulness to us, even in the midst of judgment on others. God is aware. We are not collateral damage.

Nothing happens to us that God does not carefully consider. Jesus said, consider the sparrows. There's not one of them that falls that God doesn't know about.

You are worth more than many sparrows. What a comfort. What an encouragement.

Well, that catches us up on the seals. As we move through the trumpets and head for this interim period, we will see just how careful and how calculated God's judgments are. But we'll pause here and take our break.