

"The Wrath of the Lamb"

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, church. It's good to be back with you all. Thank you for your prayers for me and for Beth and our family while we were away on sabbatical.

Our time was full of good rest and refreshment and good times of connection with one another and with God. So we're very grateful for your prayers and for your support of us. And we've been excited to hear, now that we're back, all that God has been up to over the past three months.

As we've heard stories of new members joining and new services being pioneered, like the testimony service around Thanksgiving and new ministry opportunities being developed by the care team and others, it's just been a great reminder that the work of God's kingdom is His work.

And that God has blessed this church with a great group of faithful elders and deacons and staff and ministry leaders and members. What a good reminder that the work of ministry is our work, right?

Together, as members, every one of us. So it's been a real joy to hear all the stories of how God's been at work through you while we've been away. And I'm sure we'll hear more of them in the coming weeks.

[1 : 0 7] We look forward to that. Well, let me invite you to turn with me to the book of Revelation. We will be looking at page 968 in the Pew Bible. Go ahead and turn there with me.

Revelation chapter 6. We're going to walk through Revelation chapter 6 today. But before we walk through Revelation chapter 6, let me invite you to go on an imaginary walk with me.

Walk with me in your mind through an art gallery. And this wing of the art gallery, in this wing, the curators have gathered all their depictions of the crucifixion.

If you've walked through, say, the Yale Art Gallery on Chapel Street, you'll know that most art museums have multiple works on the cross. But now, take a look at those pieces with me. Imagine a piece by an unnamed medieval artist.

It's very two-dimensional, and the faces are blank, almost forlorn. Now, take a look at a modern piece by Salvador Dali, the great surrealist.

[2 : 1 4] And you see Christ on a perfectly geometrical cross, almost soaring over the earth. Last, take a look at the 16th century piece by Grunewald.

And beside the wounded Christ, you can't help but see John the Baptist with his finger just pointing, pointing. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Now, each of these pieces is about the same thing, right? The same event in history, the death of Christ. But each one shows it from a unique perspective.

Each painting draws out something important and meaningful that the others don't. And what I want to suggest this morning is that the book of Revelation functions very similarly.

Starting in chapter 6, John is going to relay to us, his audience, a series of visions that God gives him.

[3 : 18] Most of these visions are structured around the number 7. Seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, and so on. But each of these visions is giving us a portrait of the same thing.

They're telling the same story over and over again from a fresh angle, drawing out something new and important each time. And I'd like to suggest that the event or the story that each of these visions is telling in its own way is the story of the church age, up to and including the return of Christ.

As we saw way back in chapter 1, this book of Revelation is about what's to come. What was to come from the first century when John was writing all the way to the return of Christ at the end of history?

What can the church expect as it lives through this age? What will life be like as followers of Jesus? And what will his glorious return mean for us in the world? Now, one clue that this is what's going on in the book of Revelation, that is that we have multiple visions, multiple perspectives of the same thing, is that as you read through Revelation, you start to realize that the return of Christ in glory to save and to judge is described multiple times.

If you have a Bible open, you can kind of flip with me. In the vision of the seven seals in chapters 6 through 7, we see the return of Christ depicted and described.

[4 : 54] In chapter 6, verses 12 through 17. And then as we go into the vision of the seven trumpets in chapters 8 through 11, we see the return of Christ and his return in judgment described in chapter 11, verses 15 through 19.

And then in the vision of the sort of seven symbolic figures that we have in chapters 12 through 14, we see the return of Christ described yet again in chapter 14, verses 14 through 20.

And so on and so on. So as we read these visions, we're asking, what does God want us to know about living faithfully in this age, this last great age of redemptive history that we live in between Christ's first and second coming, these last days, as the New Testament calls it?

How do we live faithfully and in hope in this age as we look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus in glory? Now, perhaps you've heard different approaches to the book of Revelation.

As Matt mentioned, we're going to have a Sunday school class coming up where we kind of talk about different approaches and where, you know, we've kind of come up with this one. You know, this approach that will take a trinity over the next few months is one that many faithful Christians have taken throughout church history.

[6 : 14] So it's not just something we've kind of like made up because it seems nice. But if you're interested in learning more, you can come to Sunday school and we'll take a look at that starting on February 4th. But I hope that you'll see that as we walk through the rest of the book of Revelation, no matter which interpretive approach you take, many of the spiritual lessons for us are the same today.

God wants us to know what to expect as we follow him faithfully in this world. God wants us to know what spiritual dynamics are at work as we make this heavenly pilgrimage as his church.

And God wants us to know what future he has in store for us and for all of creation. So let's pick up then in chapter 6 as the first of these visions begins.

Now remember, John has just been swept up to see the heavenly throne room and the scroll of God's plan to deliver and to judge and to bring about his kingdom once and for all was brought forth, but it was sealed with seven seals.

And the only one worthy to open that scroll was the Lamb who was slain, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is worthy. And the Lord Jesus took the scroll in chapter 5 and all of heaven rejoiced.

[7 : 28] And then John shows us this in chapter 6, verse 1. Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals.

And I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, Come. And I looked and behold a white horse. And its rider had a bow and a crown was given to it.

And he came out conquering and to conquer. When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come. And out came another horse, bright red.

And it said, its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth so that people would slay one another. And he was given a great sword. When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come.

And I looked and behold a black horse. And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A quart of wheat for a denarius.

[8 : 27] And three quarts of barley for a denarius. And do not harm the oil and wine. When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, Come. And I looked and behold a pale horse.

And its rider's name was Death. And Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence.

And by wild beasts of the earth. 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 witness they had borne.

They cried out with a loud voice, O sovereign Lord, holy and true. How long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell in the earth?

And they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

[9 : 31] When he opened the sixth seal, I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake. And the sun became black as sackcloth. And the full moon became like blood. And the stars of the sky fell to the earth.

As the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up. And every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of their wrath has come. And who can stand? So as the Lord Jesus opens the seals, what do we see?

Well, it's unsettling, isn't it? For what we see is the unfolding of God's wrath.

[10 : 47] That is, God's just anger against sin and evil and idolatry. Now for most of us, I'm guessing, the idea of a wrathful God makes us uncomfortable.

Isn't God a God of love, we say? And yes, God is a God of love. There is no part of God, no attribute of God, that isn't saturated with his eternal, triune love.

But imagine for a moment with me a God that wasn't also a God of wrath. What if God wasn't a God who stood firmly opposed to sin, to evil, to injustice, to idolatry?

What sort of God would it be who didn't hate sin? What if God saw murder and racism and exploitation and was simply indifferent?

That wouldn't be a God worthy of trust, would it? Let alone worship. In fact, that God wouldn't even be worthy of the name of love.

[12 : 08] If you see your child being harmed or your friend being harmed, you feel rightly angry and opposed to that, right? You feel wrath. You want it to end. Why? Because you love them. No one would question in that moment if you were a loving parent or not, if you were a loving friend or not.

No, they would see your opposition to sin and evil. They would see it as the proper response of your love, right? So it is, friends, with God, but to an infinite degree.

For God to be worthy of the name God, He must be a God who's rightly opposed to sin and to evil. He must be a God, yes, of wrath.

So it is unsettling, this picture. But it is God as God truly is and must be. Well, let's see then what this vision tells us about God's wrath.

First, in verses 1 through 8, we're told that God's wrath is underway now. The first four seals pick up two threads of Old Testament imagery.

[13 : 25] The first is from Zechariah, chapters 1 and 6. In chapter 1 of the prophet Zechariah, he sees a vision of four groups of horses of different color commissioned by God to patrol the earth.

And in that Old Testament vision, these patrols that go out, these four different colored horses find that the world is at rest. The world is comfortable, even though these nations have trampled on God's people and have despised God's name.

Then in chapter 6 of Zechariah, four chariots are sent forth, pulled by four teams, again, of horses of different color. And presumably, those horses are sent forth as symbols of God's judgment.

So that's the first Old Testament thread that we see here in the first four seals. That's where John's picking up this theme of different colored horses going forth. And it tells us that these four seals, these first four seals are expressions of God's judgment against the world.

Now, the second Old Testament thread we see is at the end of verse 8 in Revelation 6. And there, John summarizes these first four seals.

[14 : 40] He summarizes all first four of them like this. He says, Now, that list of terrible judgments, sword, famine, pestilence, wild beasts, that was the common way that the Old Testament would summarize the terrible penalty for breaking God's covenant.

We see that in a number of places, like Leviticus 26 or Ezekiel 14. It's throughout the Old Testament. Whenever it would speak of the consequences of breaking God's covenant, these were the terrible things that would come crashing down on God's people.

And what ultimately was it in the Old Testament that broke the covenant with God? What was the great thing that broke the people's faith and allegiance with Him?

It was idolatry. Worshiping a God other than the true God. Turning away from God to worship and serve a created thing.

That was the ultimate breaking of the covenant with God. So these two Old Testament threads suggest that what these four horsemen represent are the unfolding of worldwide judgment upon idolatry.

[16 : 11] And friends, you don't have to be a scholar of history or a current events buff to realize that these terrible consequences have been happening throughout the church age.

The second horse represents war and civil strife. You know, just as Jesus said in Matthew 24, there would be wars and rumors of wars the world over as we awaited His return.

The third horse represents famine and inequity. Verse 6 mentions a denarius, which was a typical day's wage for a typical day laborer.

And a quart of wheat was just enough for one person for one day. So a denarius for a quart of wheat was basically just enough to get by for one person for one day.

Three quarts of barley were sort of a cheaper grain, but that was enough for kind of one family for one day. So what's being described here as this horseman symbolically holds scales in its hand is that because of famine or exorbitant inflation or both, these verses are speaking of people being forced to live at a level that's barely subsisting.

[17 : 25] It's barely sustainable. Sadly, this verse also mentions oil and wine. Now, oil and wine, unlike wheat or barley, would have been products that only the rich could afford.

Most people didn't do oil and wine. They did wheat and barley. Only the rich could afford those things. But notice, the rich aren't affected. In other words, this is a description of deep economic inequity.

The poor can barely survive. The rich seem unaffected. Doesn't that sound like a lot of human history? And the fourth horse, representing death, is sort of a pale color.

Probably, that word meant something like a pale green, like a sickly color. And many think that this horse represents pestilence and plague. But friends, notice that there's a bit of a progression here, isn't there?

You know, warfare in the ancient world, if there was war, if there was civil strife, you know, that would often destroy a lot of the local environment. The crops would be destroyed. They would be burned.

[18 : 37] They would be ravaged. So war would lead to famine and inequity and inflation. And then in that status of war and famine, often that was sort of the breeding ground for disease and for death.

But where does this progression start? It starts with the first horseman. And the first horseman at first looks kind of promising, doesn't he?

He's riding a white horse. He's wearing a crown. He's holding a bow. So promising does this first rider look that some commentators on Revelation have wondered if this might be a picture of Christ riding forth to triumph.

But friends, it's not so. That is not what we have here. All four judgments are from God and the Lamb, but this one's the most telling.

You know, all of us seem to recoil at the thought of famine and war and disease and death. But this first rider promises to conquer. He promises to come and end all our earthly problems, to win our battles, to help our side triumph.

[19 : 53] But what comes in his wake? War and famine and disease and death. When the lust for power and control, when the desire to conquer drives us, then we find that sooner or later, the rest of these disasters follow in its wake.

Strife, inequity, and death. And the terrible thing about the first seal, this first horseman, friends, is this spiritual reality.

Most often in this life, God's just wrath against sin and idolatry is expressed by God giving us over to the very thing we want.

We see this in Romans 1. How is God's wrath being revealed from heaven at the present time? The Apostle Paul says that because we've exchanged the worship of God for a created thing, God's wrath is being expressed by giving us over to the very thing we say we want.

He lets us go. And that's exactly what we see here in Revelation 6, 1 through 8. As humans, we want to conquer.

[21 : 26] We want to end all our problems through power and victory. We want to see our side win. So we exalt leaders or programs or policies that will serve that conquering end.

But what's the result? War and famine and death. Now why does God hand us over in this way?

Why does God give us what we want when the consequences are so terrible? Why does He allow us to experience all these things?

Well, there are a number of things the Bible has to say about that. But one reason God in His justice allows us to experience the consequences of our own idolatry at times is so that we might lose our confidence in those false saviors and turn to Him in repentance.

And notice that the effects of these first four seals are divinely limited. They were given authority over a fourth of the earth, verse 8 says.

[22 : 41] Only a fourth. God in His kindness limits what human idolatry and the lust for power and wealth would wreck upon His creation.

He limits it to only one-fourth the effect. Imagine if it were otherwise. Can you imagine a world with a 75% increase in famine and in inequity and in disease and death?

Only God's undeserved kindness keeps this world from falling into utter horror. And His kindness, friends, is meant to lead us to repentance.

The rich, the powerful, the boastful, the ones who ride forth conquering and to conquer, they look shiny and promising and full of hope. And a dark part of our hearts might even want to be like them and join them in their seeming triumph, whether it's social triumph or economic triumph or political triumph.

But friend, there's no life to be found there. The only real life to be found is not in the path of the conquering ones, but in the path of the crucified one who came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

[24 : 23] Jesus said, it's only those who lose their life who will find it. So, church, let me ask this. Are you tempted to chase after the world's power and the glitz and the glam and the promises of wealth and power of ease and security?

I know at times I am. But what if God gave you what you wanted? At the end of the day, would it be life or would it be death?

The Christians of John's day would have been tempted, I think, to look at the Roman Empire and believe the lie that the Roman Emperor and Empire was the one who could secure lasting peace and prosperity.

They'd be so tempted to feel that allegiance to Rome with all its apparent power and wealth would lead to an eternal day for all of humanity. But friends, that was a lie.

And John was trying to wake them up with this passage to not believe it. There was only one worthy of our affections and our allegiance.

[25 : 40] There's only one, the Lord Jesus. And these first four seals show us a vivid picture of God's wrath unfolding as human idolatry leads us to ruin.

And they warn us to turn to God from idols and serve the Lord Jesus. Now, turning to the fifth seal, John's vision takes us from earth back to heaven, back up to the throne room.

In the midst of all this political, economic, and social strife, brought about by God handing us over to our idolatry, we see the kind of next step of John's vision here and the second point I want to cover.

We see in verses 6 through 11 that in the midst of all of this, the church is not promised physical protection from evil in this age.

We see there in those verses that Christians are not immune from the devastating effects of war and famine and disease that run rampant in a fallen world. In fact, more than not, Christians become the explicit target of the world's satanic lust for conquering violence.

- [26 : 57] You know, you can visit a site like Voice of the Martyrs and see how this wasn't just a reality in John's day as Roman persecution began to rise against the church.
- It's been a reality in every era of the church and particularly in our own. You know, in the West, we may not feel the full brunt of this violence, but our brothers and sisters in the global church do.
- I just got an email from Christianity Today this week citing some statistics from a study that was done in the last year saying almost 5,000 Christians were killed for their faith last year and almost 4,000 were abducted.
- Nearly 15,000 churches were attacked or closed and more than 295,000 Christians were forcibly displaced from their homes because of their faith.
- That article goes on to say just shocking statistics about the number of Christians globally that live in areas of heavy persecution.
- [28 : 03] In some places it's like 1 in 5. So brothers and sisters, let's not pretend that following Christ is a ticket to our best life now.
- Especially if by best life you mean being wealthy and powerful and free of earthly cares. Jesus promised us the opposite. In this world you will have trouble, he said.
- You will experience sickness and trials and hardship and death. Take up your cross. and follow me. You see friends, the world wants to conquer.
- But ours is the path of the martyr. As we are united to Jesus, this is how we truly overcome. We witness through suffering.
- That's what the word martyr literally means. A witness. One who testifies to something so good that it's better than life itself.
- [29 : 09] And notice that God says really surprisingly that this age won't end until the full number of martyrs is complete. God strikes us as very odd, doesn't it?
- We expect God to avenge his people, to make the violence stop, to rescue his church, his beloved, and bring her to safety. And friends, he will. But until then, there is a path for us to walk, to bear witness through suffering, to join our life to the life of Christ, and to walk the way of the cross that he walked.
- To hold up to the world how worthy Jesus is by clinging to him, by trusting in him, by obeying him, even if the world seeks to end our life.
- You see, the cross and the resurrection of Jesus changes everything. If I am united to the crucified and risen Jesus, then losing this physical life doesn't steal the most important and valuable thing I have.
- My life is hid with Christ and God. He promises that you and I will share in his resurrection. Ultimately, friends, the world doesn't hold the power of death and the grave.
- [30 : 29] Though they try to wield it, they don't hold the keys to it. Do you remember the vision in Revelation chapter 1? Who is it that holds the keys to death and the grave?
- It's the risen Lord Jesus. And if we belong to him, not even death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- And look what John sees in verses 9 through 11. while the martyrs await the final resurrection and the new heavens and new earth, where are they? They're under the altar, John says, right there where the incense of the heavenly temple rises with the prayers of the saints.
- Again, John's using heavily symbolic language to describe heavenly realities. In other words, these saints are right there in God's presence and they're given a white robe.

A white robe is a symbol for Christ's righteousness that they have. That though the world condemned them, though the world hated them and clothed them in black, God overturns the world's full verdict and they're clothed in white, pure and without spot.

[31 : 44] And notice what they pray. They pray, O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell in the earth?

They call out for God to come in perfect justice and make things right. Now, pause there on their prayer and consider, friends.

You know, you read that prayer for the first time and at first it sounds harsh, right? It sounds even pretty violent. It sounds like they're thirsting for revenge. But that's not actually what they're saying.

They aren't asking God, God, when will I get to go judge and get revenge? No. They're entrusting all judgment to God.

God, when will you judge and avenge? Friends, if you believe in a God who really does oppose sin and evil, if you believe in a God of wrath who will one day judge with perfect judgment, it actually releases you from the burden of having to get your own revenge.

[33 : 05] You know, sometimes we think, we think, man, how can you believe in a God of wrath and live a life of peace? How can you forgive your enemies if you think that one day God will judge everyone? But friends, don't you see, that's the only way that you can live a life of real peace and forgiveness, especially if you've experienced real wrong.

If there's no God, if there's no divine wrath, if there's no perfect justice to come, then it's up to you to judge and to make things right. you have to balance the scales, you have to redress the wrong.

But of course, as humans, we can't possibly do that with perfect justice. We always end up paying back more, we always end up exacting more pain, thinking that that's going to finally stop the cycle of violence.

But it doesn't. It does just the opposite. It increases it. And round and round it goes, hurting and being hurt, killing and being killed. the only thing that can get our hearts off the cycle of revenge is a full belief in the perfect justice of God to come.

Friends, He will settle the scales. We don't have to. He will see that every wrong is made right. He will see that every wound is healed. He will see that sins are forgiven.

[34 : 34] I know it sounds counterintuitive, but it's the only real way. If you're going to live a life of peace in this world, you have to believe in a God of perfect justice.

Yes, you have to believe in a God of wrath. And that's where our passage ends. In the first four seals, we see the outworking of God's wrath in this age as idolatry kind of takes its effect.

In the fifth seal, we see that the church is not protected from evil in this age. And then the sixth seal, we see, third and last, that one day God's wrath will be poured out on rebellious humanity once and for all.

In verses 12 through 14, John sees the created universe starting to come undone. earth. The earthquake is a common biblical image for the arrival of God.

When God showed up on Mount Sinai, the earth shook. And when the Creator at last, once and for all, steps into His creation, it's as if the seams of being begin to crack.

[35 : 52] The holiness of God and the Lamb are so great, the weight of God's glory is so immense that the earth can no longer bear up.

And everything that we've trusted in in this life, our status, our wealth, our power, our health, our jobs, our friends, everything that we use to try to prop up our existence, to keep ourselves distracted, to think ourselves good, it all melts away.

and the seams give way. Before the unbearable holiness of God, friends, none of that will matter.

And just as the creation will be undone, so will all of humanity. In verse 15, John lists seven types of people.

Many of them are powerful and wealthy, but not all of them. Seven, the judgment of God is the great leveler of humanity. Seven, of course, is a number symbolizing completeness and totality.

[37 : 05] John sees that everyone will stand before their creator on the last day, and no amount of power or prestige or wealth and no amount of religion or good works will matter.

You know, it's funny, sometimes in our cynicism we say, you know, if God wanted us to believe in Him, He could just show up and make it a little easier. But what if God did show up?

What if the sovereign Lord, holy and true, did show up? in the presence of such blinding holiness, do you know how we would experience God showing up?

How would we as sinners who've lived our life, who've lived more of our life chasing idols than giving God the thanks and praise that He deserves, how would we experience just the very holiness of His presence?

Friends, we would experience it as nothing but wrath. Have you ever walked outside from a dark room when the curtains are drawn, you know, you kind of step outside and come right into the sun?

[38 : 26] For a moment it's blinding, isn't it? The sun's just too bright for your eyes, right? Until they adjust. But what if not just your eyes, but your whole life was exposed to the God who made you?

What if your heart was opened bare before the God who burns brighter than a thousand suns? Would we all not cry out like those in verse 16 and 17?

Hide us. Hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of the wrath has come and who can stand?

Who can stand? Of course, the answer is no one can stand. Not you, not me.

It doesn't matter if you've grown up in church or this is the first time you've ever been to one of these gatherings. No one can stand. There's no escape from God and the Lamb.

[39 : 35] How could there be any escape? God created you. He upholds you in being every second. You are completely and utterly dependent on Him for everything.

Friends, there is no you apart from Him and apart from His choice to keep you and me existing every second. There is no escape from Him.

There is no hiding from Him. There is no refuge from Him. But here's the good news. And it's the only good news that matters.

There is no refuge from Him. But there is refuge in Him. The only hiding place from the wrath of the Lamb is the blood of the Lamb.

There's one more Old Testament echo in Revelation 6 that's worth pointing out. And it's actually right there in verse 16 where all of humanity is calling out hide us. And that same cry hide us goes all the way back in human history back, back, back to the very first humans, to our very first parents in the Garden of Eden.

[40 : 53] Adam and Eve having sinned against God, torn up inside and out with guilt and shame. they hear God coming and they try to hide us.

And what does God do? To their fears, He gives them a promise. And for their nakedness, He makes a sacrifice.

In the midst of their fear, He promises that one day, from Eve, a child would be born that would deal with Satan and sin and death once and for all. And to their nakedness, He gives a sacrifice.

He makes a sacrifice to cover them. And He gives them a picture of how that conquest would happen. Another would die so that they could be covered, so that their sin and death could be paid.

And friends, when the Lord Jesus came and when He healed the sick and when He raised the dead and when He calmed the seas, at the end of His perfect life, He went to the cross.

[42 : 03] And then that ancient promise was fulfilled and the sacrifice was made. Jesus, the Lamb of God, went into the darkness of God's wrath for you.

He went into the fullness of that wrath, except He was the one human who didn't call out, hide me. For you, He said, take me.

He didn't call for the rocks to cover Him. He was torn and broken. He bore it all. Why? So that His death might cover you.

So that all who trust in Him in this age might be safe when the day of perfect justice comes. How about you, friend?

when it all comes to light, when the trappings of this world fall away and you stand before your Creator, what will be your hiding place?

[43 : 08] Take Christ now. Bow before Him now. There's coming a day when every knee will bow, whether we like it or not.

But God says, bow now, take me now. Come find shelter, Jesus says. Come find shelter in the Lamb who was slain for you.

In the next chapter, chapter 7, John will talk about all the blessings that come to those who trust in Christ, their spiritual safety and security, their peace and home with God, their protection through all the trials of this life.

And then after that interlude of chapter 7, the vision returns to the seventh and final seal. You can skip ahead to chapter 8, verse 1 if you want to see it there. And when that final seventh seal is opened in 8, verse 1, what happens?

There's silence. A perfect, silent awe. Awe and reverence before a holy God, just and perfect in all His ways, perfect in love, perfect in judgment.

[44 : 20] friend, where will you be in that silence? Will you be near to God in love and peace, having found shelter in the blood of the Lamb?

Or will you be cast out from God, having found no shelter from the wrath of the Lamb? There's no third option. The great day of God's wrath will come.

The Creator will give His final no to rebellion and idolatry and sin. He will redeem His creation. He will rescue His people. So don't let that day find you anywhere else than in the arms of Christ, who died for you.

Let's pray together. Father, we pause in silent reverence before You.

Lord, we confess that we don't like to think about justice when it's aimed at ourselves.

[45 : 32] God, we want justice for the world. We want to see things made right and healed. Lord, what hope is there for the world without perfect justice? hope is there for me when it comes?

Thank You that in Christ You've made a provision for justice to be satisfied and for us to be forgiven. Lord, increase our love and our trust in Christ as we go forth this week.

in Jesus' name, amen.