

Lamb's Book | Chapter 8 | Four Living Creatures and Four Deadly Judgments

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“Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’ ” (Revelation 4:8)

Throughout the centuries, Christians have generally believed that Jesus began breaking the seals shortly after He ascended to Heaven. This idea has been perpetuated, but it is faulty because there is nothing within Revelation 4-6 indicating that Jesus was found worthy to receive the book sealed with [seven seals](#) shortly after He returned to Heaven. Revelation 5 does indicate that Jesus had been slain, (Revelation 5:6) but this is not particularly helpful because Revelation 13:8 describes Jesus as **“the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”** The timing of the convocation in Revelation 4-6 was not revealed in the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel (which indicates the timing) was sealed until the time of the end! Early Christians did not have access to the rules governing the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy or Daniel’s matrix, so they tried to understand Revelation 4-6 by *assuming* that Jesus was found worthy to receive the book shortly after He returned to Heaven.

This assumption, like the assumption that Earth stood still and the Sun orbited around Earth, has been harmless, but it has introduced more confusion than it resolved. In the sixteenth century, before Copernicus proved that Earth orbited the Sun, the orbits of heavenly bodies were very difficult to calculate. However, once astronomers understood that Earth traveled around a stationary Sun, they could determine the orbits of heavenly bodies much more easily. The timing of Revelation 4-6 works the same way. When a person understands the timing of Revelation 4-6, the purpose of the Father’s book and the meaning of the [seven seals](#) will make sense just as the Bible reads. I do not believe that Jesus began breaking the seals shortly after He ascended to Heaven.

Apocalyptic prophecy is written in a way that it will only make sense when we use valid rules of interpretation. If we do not use valid rules, private interpretations will flourish. (A private interpretation is an interpretation which people cannot discover on their own. A private interpretation requires that an external authority serve as interpreter.) Even though we have not yet examined the meaning of the [seven seals](#), a short discussion on the fourth seal will demonstrate how the seven seals have been distorted for many centuries.

Consider the fourth seal: **“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the Earth.”** (Revelation 6:7,8)

A person does not have to be a Bible scholar to understand that when the fourth seal is broken,

the Bible gives us a big hint that the result will be extremely deadly. The rider's name on the horse is "Death" and the grave (Greek: *Hades*), like an accompanying vulture, follows close behind to consume the dead. The Bible says Death will have power to kill 25% of Earth's population. How does Death kill 25% of the Earth? Even more, why would Jesus kill 25% of Earth's population? These are reasonable questions even though they border on fantasy because killing 25% of Earth's population (presently 7.3 billion people) is unimaginable!

You might be surprised to learn that the rider on the horse will use the *same* deadly judgments which God has used since Bible times. These judgments are sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. (Compare Leviticus 26:12-39 with Ezekiel 14:12-21) Two selections from the Old Testament reveal that God previously described His four judgments and justified their use. The first passage is a selection of verses from "The Song of Moses." The Israelites were required to memorize and sing this song. (Incidentally, the redeemed will also sing this song in Heaven! See Revelation 15:3.) God gave the second declaration to Ezekiel just before King Nebuchadnezzar was sent to plunder and destroy Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Take a few moments to absorb these divine declarations because when the fourth seal is broken approximately two billion people will die.

Statement 1: The Song of Moses 1437 B.C.

"Jeshurun [a poetic name of endearment given to Israel. God used this name to indicate His affection for Israel, as though His people were His pet.] *grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek. He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior. They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God, gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. . . . I will heap calamities upon them and spend my arrows against them. I will send wasting *famine* against them, consuming pestilence and deadly *plague*; I will send against them the fangs of *wild beasts*, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. In the street the *sword* will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign. Young men and young women will perish, infants and gray-haired men.*" (Selections from Deuteronomy 32:15-25, insertion and italics mine)

Statement 2: Concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem 586 B.C.

"The word of the Lord came to me: 'Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send *famine* upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness,' declares the Sovereign Lord. 'Or if I send *wild beasts* through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts, as surely as I live,' declares the Sovereign Lord, 'even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land

would be desolate.’ Or if I bring a *sword* against that country and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the land,’ and I kill its men and their animals, as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘even if these three men were in it, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.’ ‘Or if I send a *plague* into that land and pour out my wrath upon it through bloodshed, killing its men and their animals, as surely as I live,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness.’ For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments: *sword and famine and wild beasts and plague* to kill its men and their animals!’ ” (Selections from Ezekiel 14:12-21, italics mine)

God has used four deadly judgments on many occasions to punish people and to cauterize the growth of sin. Of course, a God of love is reluctant to implement these judgments, but He is moved by divine justice (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24) when extended mercy has no redeeming effect. (For a study of the “Full Cup Principle,” please see Chapter 2 in my book *Warning! Revelation is about to be fulfilled.*) The Bible says that God destroyed the world in Noah’s day because man’s thoughts were constantly evil. (Genesis 6:5) The Bible indicates that God destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah, and Jerusalem because of degenerate behavior. (Genesis 18,19; Ezekiel 5) God destroyed His own people in A.D. 70 because of arrogance and decadence. God’s patience with sin and sinners has a limit. God even cast Lucifer and his followers out of Heaven when the limit of God’s patience was reached. God destroys people, cities, and nations when extended mercy cannot produce repentance and reformation. (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18; Colossians 3:5,6; Revelation 18 and 20)

Unfortunately, Christians do not hear much about God’s wrath and this silence has led many people to diminish the reality of God and our accountability to Him. Several texts in the Bible highlight God’s four dreadful judgments and these judgments were *a/ways* exercised within the context of corporate punishment. (Please review Leviticus 26, 1 Chronicles 21; Jeremiah 14; 27; 44; Ezekiel 6.) This means that sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts were “group punishments.” With this background information, we return to the issue of Christians attempting to interpret and identify the correct timing of the fourth seal.

History Cannot Produce a Fulfillment of the Fourth Seal

For twenty centuries, Christian expositors have made various claims of fulfillment for the fourth seal, but no one has presented a convincing solution. The problem is the scope of destruction is so huge (25% of Earth’s population) that it should be very easy to identify the evidence of God’s wrath if indeed this seal has been broken! Additionally, the fourth seal has to occur between the breaking of the third seal and the fifth seal. The chronological timing of the fourth seal creates issues which negate the argument that the fourth seal has been broken previously. Bible students who believe the fourth seal has been fulfilled should be more concerned about the absence of a clear and convincing fulfillment, but alas, it is human nature to distort prophetic details that are not understood and/or to dismiss events in the book of Revelation as mysterious symbols.

If the fourth seal was broken previously, no student can identify the year it occurred or show when Jesus punished the *whole* world by killing only a quarter of it. A few Christians have argued the bubonic plague which swept through Europe in the sixth, fourteenth, and seventeenth centuries could be a fulfillment of the fourth seal. These epidemics were horrible, but they were limited to Europe. Even if the bubonic plague killed 25% of Europe's population, this event did not fulfill the specification of the fourth seal. The death that occurs during the fourth seal represents death for 25% of the whole world. There was nothing supernatural about the bubonic plague and obviously, it was not God's punitive judgment on the whole world. It was self-inflicted; a consequence of poor sanitation and standing filth.

Because the Protestant reformation grew out of persecution, many reformers in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries claimed the fourth seal covered a period of a thousand years when the Church of Rome persecuted all who refused to obey its laws. The total number of martyrs during the Dark Ages (around A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500) has been estimated to be as low as ten million and as high as fifty million. No student of Protestant history doubts the saints were persecuted horribly during the Dark Ages, but this interpretation cannot satisfy the specifications given in the fourth seal for two reasons. First, the Bible indicates that God's four judgments, sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts, are punitive and corporate. This means they are *always* directed at nations who have filled their cup of iniquity. Therefore, Bible students cannot apply the fourth seal to the saints who were burned at the stake or imprisoned for their faith during the Dark Ages. Second, the Bible says that when the fourth seal is broken, 25% of Earth's population dies. Even if the Catholic Church did put fifty million saints to death, this does not meet the specifications of the fourth seal. The scope of destruction involves the whole world and the breaking of the fourth seal will harm every nation.

A few Christians (grasping at straws) have suggested the fourth seal was broken about 1918, when at the height of its deadly grip, the world's worst outbreak of influenza killed twenty-five million people in a single year! Between 1914 and 1918, nine million people died from World War I. The influenza outbreak was horrible and it followed on the heels of a horrible war, but both events did not come close to killing 25% of the world's population.

History cannot produce a single fulfillment for the fourth seal because the scope of the fourth seal is so large that nothing in the past measures up. A fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy occurs only when all of the specifications of the prophecy are met. There is no event in history that meets the specifications of the fourth seal because the fourth seal is in the future, not the past.

A Mighty Display of Divine Authority

Now that we understand the specifications for the fourth seal and are aware of no evidence supporting that this seal was previously fulfilled, please consider the following explanation. I believe Jesus will soon break the fourth seal and when He does, four judgments will kill 25% of Earth's population and the [great tribulation](#) will begin. God's wrath will break out and come as an overwhelming surprise for billions of people. Unfortunately, Jesus will reveal His sovereign authority and everyone on Earth will experience it. Jesus must do this because humanity is so

arrogant, religiously diverse, and degenerate that a mighty display of divine authority is the only remaining solution. Earth's cup of iniquity is overflowing.

The Four Living Creatures

If you want to understand the first four seals, you have to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the first four seals. It is not coincidence that Revelation 4 and 5 include information about the four living creatures. They are intimately involved in the story of the [seven seals](#) because the Holy Spirit rides each of the four horses sent from Heaven's temple. I believe the four living creatures represent the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. (Note: Many Christians have not considered the composition and nature of the Godhead. The Bible teaches that the Father is not the Son, and Jesus is not the Holy Spirit. The Godhead consists of three separate deities and the Holy Spirit is a separate, coeternal, Deity just like Jesus and the Father. For an in depth study on this topic, please see Appendix A.)

I know that many people may not understand the four living creatures represent the Holy Spirit, but we will see that this is the only solution that will fulfill all of the specifications given for the four living creatures. Consider this rule of interpretation: "Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic or analogous. To reach the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy, the student must consider: (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language elsewhere in the Bible, and (c) relevant statements in the Bible which define the symbol if an element is thought to be symbolic."

If we follow and properly apply valid rules of interpretation, we will arrive at the intended meaning of apocalyptic prophecy. Therefore, to determine whom the living creatures represent, we have to consider all of the specifications which John provides:

1. John saw four living creatures surrounding God's throne.
2. Each creature had six wings.
3. Each creature was full of eyes.
4. Each creature had four faces: a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle.
5. The four creatures never rest from giving praise and glory to God.

Before we reach for a conclusion with these specifications, we need to also consider the use of parallel language in the Bible. Consider what Ezekiel wrote in Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10 because he, too, saw the four living creatures!

1. The four living creatures have the appearance of a man. (1:5)
2. Each living creature has four faces, four wings and four hands. (1:6,7)
3. Each living creature has the faces of a lion, ox, man, and eagle. (1:10)
4. The four living creatures appeared to be on fire. Lightning flashed from the four living creatures. (1:13)
5. The four living creatures traveled at the speed of light. (1:14)
6. Above the four living creatures was a great sparkling expanse that looked like a sheet of ice. (1:22)

7. A glorious throne rested above the four living creatures, in the middle of this sparkling expanse. (1:26)
8. The bodies of the four creatures were covered with eyes. (10:12)
9. Four whirling wheels of light were located beside each creature. (1:15,16;10:16)
10. The power within the four creatures came from the four wheels beside each creature. (1:20; 10:17)

Even though John and Ezekiel have slight variations in descriptions, there is no question that these two men saw the *same* four living creatures. God is able to expand our understanding of the topic by giving John and Ezekiel different descriptions of the living creatures. This is why there are four gospels! Matthew's perspective is not sufficient, so we need the other gospel writers' perspectives to better understand Jesus' ministry and teachings. Without Paul's additional perspective, Christianity would have been much different today.

When the idea is presented that the four living creatures represent the Holy Spirit, people wonder about the strange idea that the power within the four creatures was not within the creatures but inside the four wheels beside the creatures. Notice this passage:

“When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side. When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them.” (Ezekiel 10:16,17)

To help Ezekiel understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God represented the power within the four living creatures as separate from the four living creatures. This indicates that the Holy Spirit is not limited to any particular shape, being, person, or form. The Holy Spirit can assume any shape, at any time, at any place all at the same time. He can assume the shape of a dove (Matthew 3:16) or He can enable a donkey to speak (Numbers 22). The Holy Spirit can be deadly, too! Remember, He killed Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

When the fifteen specifications John and Ezekiel provided are consolidated, we can make the following conclusions:

1. The four living creatures are identical or, in other words, four clones of the same entity. They stand closest to God and His throne. This representation suggests there is an omnipresent being who can take any form and remain alive! They are called “the four living creatures” because the power to give life is within them. The 24 elders are not called, “the 24 living elders” and the angels are not called “the living angels.” The four living creatures are “living creatures” because the power of life is within them. Additionally, the four living creatures exist in the north, south, east, and west, the four points of a compass, all at the same time.
2. The four living creatures are covered with eyes. This indicates the Holy Spirit instantly sees everything occurring in the universe. The eyes, signifying the Holy Spirit's omnipresence, indicate Deity because the Holy Spirit serves as the eyes and ears of Jesus and the Father. The Holy Spirit sees everything in the universe instantly and reported in real time. The amount of data that flows from the Holy Spirit every

millisecond is unimaginable.

3. Ezekiel and John saw the same four faces on each living creature. Each face describes certain challenges which the Holy Spirit “faces.” For example, the Holy Spirit has intelligence. He knows God’s ways and will as well as mankind’s thoughts, motives, words, and deeds (this ability is represented by the face of a man – Ecclesiastes 8:1). The Holy Spirit has divine strength (represented by the face of an ox – Numbers 23:22). The Holy Spirit is deadly and can destroy anything that has been created (represented by the prowess of a lion – Numbers 23:24). The Holy Spirit travels at warp speed, much faster than light (represented by six wings). When necessary, the Holy Spirit can swoop down and catch any prey wherever or whatever it may be (represented by the face of an eagle – Deuteronomy 28:49).
4. The Holy Spirit is as selfless and humble as Jesus and the Father. The Holy Spirit extolls the Father’s majesty, generosity, wisdom, love, goodness, and grace perpetually. The Holy Spirit’s highest work is to bond God’s children with the Father and Jesus in spirit and in truth. The Holy Spirit constantly brings glory to the Father and Jesus by exalting them. (John 16:14) The Holy Spirit also serves as a conduit between God and His children. He takes God’s happiness, joy, and goodness and shares it with everyone willing to receive it producing “the fruit of the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:22-24)

When we incorporate all the features that Ezekiel and John specify, the four living creatures point to one person, the Holy Spirit. The really cool thing about the Holy Spirit is if it wasn’t for His ministry, no one would ever know God! The Holy Spirit’s job is to reveal the other two Gods. He is perfect at this because He is just like them, a selfless member of Deity like the Father and Jesus.

The Unpardonable Sin

Because the Holy Spirit is a critical member of Deity, we need to understand that sinning against the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. Jesus said: **“And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”** (Matthew 12:31,32)

Jesus’ words resolve a very important issue. Many people believe and teach that the Holy Spirit is an *influence* that comes from the Father or Jesus. These people often deny that the Holy Spirit is a separate Deity, thinking this will avoid the issue of polytheism. However, the Bible does not teach polytheism. Instead, it teaches tritheism (three separate Gods bound together by love who are one in purpose, plan, and action).

If the Holy Spirit is just an influence, no one could sin against the Holy Spirit because a person cannot sin against an *influence*. For example, a person cannot sin against the influence of magnetism, a puff of cold air, or the tug of a river’s current, because these are inanimate influences. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is a living being who has authority, has eyes, can speak and hear, and can exert influence in the heart of anyone He wishes. (Luke 2:25-27; Ezra

1:1) The sinner, the Father, or Jesus does not determine or declare that a person has committed the unpardonable sin. The Holy Spirit Himself makes that determination. He alone can do this because He is Deity. When the Holy Spirit speaks to us, we can either submit to Him or reject Him because He is a God, a member of the Godhead.

If you would like to prove to yourself that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are separate, distinct, coeternal members of the Godhead, try this simple experiment. In mathematics, we say that if a, b, and c have the same value, we can substitute one of these three variables for another at any time. Using a similar approach, if we say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the same God (expressing Himself in three different ways), we should be able to go through the Bible and substitute any mention of God with any title for God and we should reach the same conclusion. Obviously, this approach does not make any sense.

Let us carry this concept to its logical conclusion (to avoid polytheism) and see what we find: "Jesus wrote a book and sealed it with [seven seals](#) before the world was created. At the appointed time, Jesus searched for someone to open His book, but He found that only Himself was worthy to receive the book from Himself. So, after passing the book from His right hand to His left hand, He proceeded to break the seals. Each time Jesus breaks open a seal, He reveals more of Himself to the universe. At the end of sin's drama, the Holy Spirit will open the book and prove that He foreknew everything that would happen and He never has done anything wrong. Then the Father will give back to Himself the sovereign authority which He gave to Himself in 1798 so that the Father might be all in all."

If this silly scenario was true, intelligent angels and the redeemed would have to conclude the Father has been deceitful. He wrote a book to exonerate Himself and after searching through the universe to find someone worthy to open it, it turns out that only He was worthy. Then, He concluded the sin problem according to His own wisdom and He exonerated Himself accordingly. After concluding the sin problem, He returned the authority which He had given to Himself so that He could be Almighty God again. Obviously, this is nonsense.

The book of Revelation will only make sense if a Bible student properly understands the separate and distinct roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Many verses in the Bible support the conclusion that the four living creatures represent the Holy Spirit. When we examine the four horsemen in Revelation 6, you will see what I mean.

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