The Battle Of Armageddon — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 16:10–21 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, May 22, 2022 · *The Day of the Lord*

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If you're here this morning and you came to hear a very simple sermon that's very encouraging and light hearted, you came to the wrong church on the wrong day. I had somebody reach me in the hall just a second ago and said, My friend brought a friend to church today, and when they got the sermon notes, it said Battle of Armageddon, and I went, Oh no. But then he said, Well, it's actually pretty good. So if you're a guest today: Battle of Armageddon, what kind of church did I go into?

Is this a cult? No, it's not a cult. We are going through the book of the Revelation in our church. Typically in our church, we pick a book of the Bible and we work our way through it line by line, chapter by chapter. Hard stuff, easy stuff, all the stuff, we cover it. And we've been doing that in the book of the Revelation and we are in a section of the book of the Revelation that's talking about this thing called the day of the Lord. And it's the big day, the final day, the great day, sometimes the Bible calls it.

And it's this day where Jesus comes again and God judges the earth. And if there's one thing that's easy to question about the Lord, it's his timing. Can I get an amen on that? Have you ever questioned why God's timing is what it is sometimes? You think to yourself, why not sooner? Why not later? Why not here? Why not there? Why not then? It's very easy to question God's timing. We just sang that song "Always," and that song says, my God will not delay. But sometimes we think to ourselves, sure feels like he's delaying.

And when it comes to this world and the brokenness of this world and all the hardships and crazy things that are going on, it's very easy to think, how long, Lord? How long are you

going to let people get away with this? How long will these injustices go on in the earth? And one of the answers— the Bible doesn't give us the total answer to that question, but one of the answers to that question— is because he's waiting for people to come to a saving knowledge of the truth. Second Peter[1] says God's not willing that anybody would perish, but that everybody would come to repentance.

And so there's this sense in which God is waiting for the gospel to go to the ends of the earth and for every person to hear and to respond and for every tribe, tongue, and nation to be reached. That's why as a church we're committed to things like world missions and evangelism and all of those things. God has, for whatever reason, decided to create us with freedom to choose. He didn't make us robots. Some suggest the reason he didn't make us robots is because robots can't love. Otherwise, love doesn't have much of a meaning to it.

And so he's given us choice, to love him or not love him, to believe on him or not, and with choice come consequences.

[A few words are unclear in the recording here.]

And if you're taking notes today, one of the things that the day of the Lord makes clear is that the freedom of choice does not equal freedom from consequences. God gave you a choice to choose him or to reject him, but that choice will have consequences, dramatic consequences, for good or for evil. And the day of the Lord you might think of as a day of consequence.

It is a day of reaping what has been sown. It is a day of whatever choice you made bearing fruit in your life, either for deliverance as someone who's believed on the Lord and chosen him and loved him, or a day of judgment for those who reject him. And it is an epic day. It is unbelievable. I don't know if you've ever seen somebody go through horrendous suffering and thought to yourself, Well, they had it coming. Anybody ever thought that before? And then maybe you saw someone go through something really, really terrible and you thought to yourself, Well, that seems a little extreme.

You know, it was a slight offense. Why do they have to go through that much hardship for such a slight offense? And then someone else comes around behind you and says, Well, you don't even know. You don't know the beginning of the things that they've done. If you knew what I knew, then that's light punishment for what they have actually gone through. If that's true at a very human level from our perspective, how much more so is that going to be true on that final day, that day of the Lord, where God who is perfect in his knowledge, who knows the secret motivations of our hearts, who knows why we do the things that we do, and all the things that we do in the secret place that we think nobody else knows about— he knows about it.

He sees it. And when he comes in judgment on that day, knowing those things that he knows, that day of judgment is going to be epic. It is going to be severe. It is going to be universal. And it is going to be complete. Freedom of choice does not mean freedom from consequences, and on the day of the Lord those consequences will be reaped. And so it's a heavy idea. It is not a popular idea in our culture to talk about judgment, but what is popular in our culture is to talk about justice.

What is popular is that there's this sense in which people go, It ain't right. Things that are going on today should not be the way that they are. There's a deep longing in us for things to be made right again. And that longing comes from God, and that longing is pointing towards this day that we've been talking about in the book. So with that said, let's turn to Revelation chapter 16. We're looking at the final three bowl judgments, which is the final set of judgments in the book of the Revelation.

If you're new to the book of the Revelation, it's basically just a story of Jesus' triumph over evil. He is presented in chapter one as this victorious reigning king. He is presented in chapters two and three as the shepherd of the church, encouraging his Christians to persevere and overcome. In chapters four and five, he's presented as the lion from the tribe of Judah and the lamb who was slain. He's the one, the only one, who's worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals, the scroll of God's judgment. Every time he breaks a seal, there are catastrophes that take place on the earth.

The seventh seal is broken in Revelation chapter 8, and these trumpets are blown, these trumpets announcing God's judgment is coming. And trumpet one hits the air— or trumpet one hits the earth, trumpet two hits the seawater, trumpet three hits the freshwater, trumpet four hits the sun, moon, and stars. It's this basic idea that all of the earth is preparing for the coming of the king and the judgment day of reaping what they've sown. Finally, after the seventh trumpet, there are these seven bowls of wrath. That's what this series has been about.

That's what Revelation 16 is about. Bowl number one was a bowl of judgment that hit the earth. Just like the trumpets, he goes earth seawater, fresh water, sun, moon, and stars. Well, with the bowls, same thing happened. It hits the earth, giving people who were God haters these boils or these severely painful sores. Bowl number two hit the seawater, which turned the ocean to blood. And again we'll talk about literal, figurative and all that stuff in a minute. But the ocean went bust; all the living creatures died. Then bowl number three hit the freshwater.

So the seawater's gone bad, the freshwater gone bad and then finally it hits the sun, and it begins to burn people, scorching them from the heat. That brings us to Revelation 16, verse 10. "The fifth poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast." Now, if you're new to Revelation, this beast figure, who is that? Sounds like something crazy. The beast in

Revelation chapter 13 stands for the head of a godless government. So you might think of him as a politician who hates God, wants nothing to do with God, and who has created a movement for people to join him in that God hating campaign.

So now God's judgment is pouring a bowl out on his administration, on his politics. And it's a bowl of darkness: "and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues because of their pain and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they did not repent of their works." Those pains and sores, of course, were from the first bowl of judgment. Could be literal boils that are severely painful associated with this mark of the beast, whatever that is. It could just describe the pain and agony that people who are under the rule of this antichrist.

Think of a nation that is submitted to the power of this figure. Now they're citizens that are in pain. And maybe it's just the economic pain or just the political pain that people feel when you're living in a country with a politician at the helm who doesn't know what they're doing or who does know what they're doing but they're intentionally inflicting suffering on their people. We already sense this a little bit, or we see this in our world today. When people come to power in different countries, or you may even say in our country, when you get a bad politician in there who doesn't know what they're doing, his governance creates pain in the citizenry.

That is what some people think this darkness represents. It is a darkness of misery, of shadiness, of a lack of truth, of injustice, and the people are gnawing their tongues because of the pain that they're experiencing under the rule of this godless government and this godless leader. Some say it's physical literal darkness that's over the geographical region of this antichrist figure. And people debate about it. It could be either one; I think it could be both. I think, if you're taking notes, the fifth bowl is a judgment on the kingdom of the beast, and the pain experienced by the people will likely place him under intense political pressure.

And I say this because of how the fifth bowl ties into the sixth bowl and the seventh bowl. Have you ever seen a politician really mess up, and as soon as he messed up, he goes in front of his citizenry and says, You know what? I take responsibility. Has anybody ever seen a politician do that? I admit I have chosen wrongly and that's my bad. And I step down from my position of power and authority and I hand the reins over to someone more qualified than me. Could you imagine? No one ever does that, no politician ever does that, and nor will this figure.

Now again I'm coming at the book of the Revelation assuming that these events are yet future. And I'm real careful not to get super particular, but basically Revelation 13 says at the end of days God's people will be crushed by a godless government, the beast, and a false prophet, which is the second beast from the sea.[2] So false teaching and bad governments is

going to be used by Satan to crush the people of God. And so this figure, this government, whatever it is, is not going to take responsibility for their failures.

Their citizenry is going to be in intense pain. And instead of saying, I messed up, he's going to say, It's their fault. It's not me, it's them. And who's he going to point the finger to? He's going to point the finger to the people of God. He's going to point the finger to the Christians, just like Hitler pointed to the Jews— he'll probably point to Jews too, but he'll point to anybody who worships this God who he is the antithesis of. So that's the political pressure. That's I believe his response to that pressure.

Just like Nero did, just like Hitler did, just like every godless authoritarian does, rejects responsibility, points the finger. That brings us to the sixth bowl, which is in chapter 16, verse 12. "The sixth poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the east." Now, who are these kings of the east? There's all kinds of speculation on that. You need to basically understand this idea of the Euphrates, because that's the significance of this sixth judgment. This sixth judgment dries up the Euphrates River, which, if you don't know where that is, it's right next to the Tigris.

How many of you in, like, what was it, third grade? Geography? The Tigris and the Euphrates, the Fertile Crescent, this was the seedbed of early civilization. Well back in the first century and before that, the Euphrates, which starts up here in northern Turkey and goes all the way down through Syria and Iraq and bottoms out in the Persian Gulf, that acted like a buffer, a geographical buffer protecting Israel and the people of God from their eastern adversaries. And so when it says the kings of the east, it's talking about nation states east of Jerusalem or Zion, which in the book of Revelation represents the holy city, God's people.

And this river drying up is representative of their desire to crush the people of God being— I'm sorry, their desire to crush the people of God. It represents any barrier to that desire being removed. Some say, well, you don't need the river to dry up to go in war against Jerusalem. You just get in a plane. Fire a rocket. Phew. So is it literally drying up the Euphrates? Well, it could be a literal reference to literally drying up, or it could be symbolic of barriers to their desire to crush the people of God, barriers to that desire being removed.

And that's what I tend to think that it is. Now who are these kings of the east? Is it Syria? Is it Iran? Yeah, there's certainly a sense in which they want to destroy Israel, but I don't know, you've got to be careful of equating Israel with the people of God. In the book of Revelation, Jerusalem is the holy city. Jerusalem is the picture of the people of God, the remnant, those who reject the mark of the beast. And this desire that this godless government has to crush them, that barrier to that desire is now being removed.

So if you're taking notes, any barrier is being removed. And it really illustrates something really significant when it comes to the judgment of God. It would be tempting for you to look

at this and say, How is the barrier to their desire to destroy God's people— how is it that removing that barrier is a judgment? It doesn't sound like a judgment on the antichrist, it sounds like a judgment on the people of God. Because now they're no longer safe. And it's illustrative of something about God's punishment in our life. It's very tempting to assume that God's wrath is always active.

If God is going to judge me— some people think of God like this gray-haired dude up in the sky ready to throw lightning bolts at people. Ba-bam, you know, you're in trouble, bam-bam. And I don't think God has a beard, nor does he throw lightning bolts at people. But he does enact wrath that is active. Sometimes God will crush you, just like he allowed Job to be crushed, all those things. He does that. But sometimes the wrath of God, in fact the worst forms of God's wrath, are not active. They're passive.

The height of God's wrath in Romans 1, the epitome, when he gets to the very tippy top of saying, You're about to get it, looks like this: Thy will be done. He hands people over. If this is what you want, if you refuse to say to me, Thy will be done, then I will say to you, Thy will be done. And that's what the sixth judgment represents. It's God drying up the barrier, saying, Have at it. This is what you think you want. This is what you say you want. Go for it.

And in them pursuing their desires and them acting on their evil impulse, they're actually preparing themselves for their own destruction, which is what we see in the seventh bowl. Now what does this mean for our lives? I think this is very personally relevant for any of us who mistakenly believe that if God was really upset with what I was doing, then I wouldn't be enjoying it so much. If God really wanted me to stop, then He wouldn't be blessing me right now. If God really had a problem with me sleeping around or committing adultery or whatever the thing you're doing right now that's against God's will— Well, I haven't been struck by lightning, so I guess it's not that big of a deal.

And you've got to be very careful of that kind of thinking, because sometimes the height of God's judgment in your life is just that: it's handing you over. This is what you want. Here, have what you want. It's not going to produce what you think it's going to produce. There's a quote— I used to think it came from Tim Keller; it came from somebody else, some poet, author, I can't remember her name. I think it's in your notes if you're online. But the quote is the opposite of love is not hate, the opposite of love is indifference.

That's such a good quote. Hate is kind of a form of love if you think about it. That's why, to the person you love the most, you sometimes say, I hate you right now. I can't stand you. Because of that intense emotion, love drives you to sometimes get angry and resist and all those things. The opposite of love is not hate, the opposite of love is indifference. The opposite of love is, I couldn't care less. If I don't care, you're irrelevant to me. And that's the height of God's wrath. If this is what you want, then go for it.

So do not believe just because God isn't punishing you or resisting you or preventing you from doing something that He does not care. His judgment on your life may be giving you over to your lusts and desires. And what began as a good thing, what began as a satisfying thing, when God removes his restraining grace from your life, will end up becoming a living hell in your life. Because there's no moderation, there's no restraint. The thing that gave you pleasure is now creating slavery. The thing that once gave you freedom is making you a slave.

Revelation chapter 16, verses 13 and 14. That's enough of that, son. Thank you. Revelation chapter 16, starting in verse 13: he plays out in verses 13 and 14 how the judgment comes. So he hands them over, he dries up the Euphrates. Now we're going to see how the judgment of God falls. "Then I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming from the dragon's mouth, from the beast's mouth, and from the mouth of the false prophet." Now, if you weren't here during Revelation 13, that's the unholy trinity, all right? That's the antichrist, the false prophet.

And the devil himself. They have these frogs, John sees, coming out of their mouths. Now, again, not literal frogs, not their literal mouths. They're symbolic of, I believe, false teaching, toxic propaganda, a narrative building from this unholy trinity. What are they doing? Verse 14: "For they are demonic spirits performing signs, who travel to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for the battle on the great day of God, the Almighty." So I see this judgment, God basically saying barriers to destroying my people removed. The unholy trinity saying the barrier has been removed, let's go for it, let's create a campaign to get everybody else to hate God's people like we hate God's people.

And so these frogs, this false teaching comes out of their mouths and persuades the other rulers in the rest of the world to join these kings of the east to join them in their campaign to crush God's people. Now why does he use frogs? Well, frogs, for Jews, frogs were an unclean animal. And in fact frogs are unclean for everybody, unless you're from Louisiana, right? And then you're like, well, I love frogs. My dad always told me if you play with frogs, you'll get warts. Did anybody's dad ever tell them that?

Or toads or whatever. So I didn't mess with frogs. But frogs were unclean. So he uses frogs to say nasty, unclean, wrong, gross. The other reason I think he uses frogs paralleled with the darkness in the fifth bowl. Have you ever heard a frog chirp in the middle of the day? Anybody? Anyone? When do frogs come alive? At night. In fact, anytime I go hunting in our land, we got this little pond, it's got frogs in there. As soon as the sun sets, first thing you hear, coyotes. Second thing you hear: Bud.. weis...

And I'm not going to do it. But they go to town. And the darker it gets— Listen to me, the darker it gets, the louder they get, right? All of a sudden it's like, Bud.. weis.. er, and it's all over the place. Boom, louder and louder. And I couldn't resist. It gets louder and louder and louder. That is symbolic of this deception. Okay, first thing you've got to do if you want to

persuade people to destroy people, you've got to have a big lie. It's exactly what Hitler did in World War II, the big lie.

They call it the big lie. He persuaded people in Germany that the Jews, God's people, were some conspiracy— some conspiracy theories to suggest that the reason that they were suffering, the reason for their pain, wasn't the Führer, it was the Jews. And so let's go get 'em, let's crush them. It's so symbolic to what's going on in Revelation chapter sixteen. But for you to convince people to kill other people in mass extermination events like that, you've got to have a big, big lie. And for you to get people to believe a big, big lie, you've got to have little lies told long enough over a long enough period of time with enough people to believe them that the bigger lie seems plausible.

You even see this in our culture today where people are believing absolute nonsense. You think to yourself, surely you wouldn't believe that. It's clearly a violation of the laws of nature. And yet today, Well, that's my truth. Who are you to say I can't believe that? Who are you to say I can't be X, Y, or Z? I make my own truth. The foundations are being destroyed in our culture just like they were then, just like they will be during the end of days. And this unholy trinity is going to use that darkness and this deception to get people to justify immense evils.

Evils like you can't even begin to imagine. And the people who are going to be exterminated in Revelation 16 are the people of God. They're going to come after that remnant who refuses to bow the knee to antichrist, who refuses to do anything other than worship the Lord. How are God's people to respond? Well look at verse 15. This is Jesus speaking to his remnant. I've always said that I was pre-wrath, and so my view— and then certainly those who are pre-trib— do not believe that the church is still on the earth during this time, but a passage like this is a problem for those people.

Those of you who are post-trib, this makes much more sense in that view. I might have to shift mine a little bit. Revelation 16, verse 15, Jesus is speaking to that remnant. Now, those who think the church is gone, this is just to the Jews. This is just to that 144,000, that remnant in Jerusalem. But here's what he's saying. He's saying, "Look, I am coming like a thief." In other words, when I come, I'm going to come unexpectedly. So "blessed is the one who is alert and remains clothed so that he may not go around naked and people see his shame."

Talking about spiritual nakedness, shamefulness. He's saying, if you're going to be a follower of Jesus, then be a follower of Jesus. Stop being desensitized and persuaded by this world and this unholy trinity. Stop buying into the lies. Wake up, sober up. Figure it out: I'm coming soon, so you've got to resist that temptation and that pull. It's the same thing that Jesus said in the Gospels in Matthew 24, verse 42: "Be alert"— why?— "since you don't know

what day your Lord is coming. But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into.

This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Again in Luke chapter 21, same thing. This is Jesus' Revelation, Matthew, Luke, it's all the same. "Be on your guard, so that your minds are not dulled from carousing, drunkenness, and worries of life, or that day will come on you unexpectedly like a trap"—unexpectedly, like a thief. "For it will come on all who live on the face of the whole earth." Instead, "be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man."

So Jesus is saying, I'm coming in judgment. When I come in judgment, no one's going to see it coming. They'll be saying, Peace, prosperity, everything's fine. Let's just get rid of these Christians and then everything will be back to normal. Everything will be better. And Jesus is saying just when they think everything's going to be put together, that's when I'm going to come in judgment. And so you be ready. Don't be misled. Don't be crushed. Don't be despairing. Don't be hopeless. Keep your head up. Don't be tied to this world.

Don't buy into the propaganda campaign. Stay awake. Stay sober. Because I'm coming like a thief. And that's the word for us today. Now, I don't know if Jesus is going to come in our lifetime. I'm not saying these kings of the east are China or Russia or Turkey or any of that. I'm not saying any of those things. You know, maybe a thousand years from today. But the things that are going to be true then are true today. There is a propaganda campaign against the people of God. There is a sense in which this unholy trinity is trying to lead us astray, to desensitize us.

There's a sense in which drunkenness and carousing and worries of life, desensitize us to the truth about God and to a life that is oriented towards him and loving him. And Jesus' words to us as his people is, Wake up, don't be desensitized. Don't allow yourself to be lulled to sleep because when I come, I'm coming suddenly and I'm coming unexpectedly. Now look what happens when he comes. Chapter 16, verse 16. This propaganda campaign is successful. It assembles the kings of the rest of the world. We don't know which ones.

I'm not getting into all that. But it assembles a campaign of people at the place in Hebrew that is called Armageddon. Now we don't have time to get into all the particulars of where this place is. But there, like most things in the book of Revelation, there is no agreement. People disagree. I'm just going to give you the top three and I'm going to let you decide. A lot of people say this word, Armageddon, it's Hebrew, it's actually Harmageddon, not Armageddon, because there's an aspirated breathing mark on the A. Harmageddon comes from *har*, which means hill or mountain, and then Megiddon or Megiddo, which is an ancient city in the Jezreel Valley, north of Jerusalem, probably about 50 miles.

I got a picture up here of the Jezreel Valley. The problem with thinking that this is the place for Armageddon is that Megiddo, which is right here, is not built on a mountain. At best it's like maybe built on a hill, but not really. So they say, well, it's not Mount Megiddo, it's Megiddo with the mountains that are surrounding it, Mount Gilboa, Mount Tabor. Mount Carmel, which is where Elijah showed off and shamed the prophets of Baal. So that's what some suggest. Others say, no, it's not Megiddo. Because the final battle is in Jerusalem.

And so it's mount of assembly, which the word Megiddon could also maybe sound kind of like, the word assembly in Hebrew. And so Jesus is on the mountain, Mount Zion, there in Jerusalem. He has his 144,000, his remnant, his people, and that's where this war is, this final great battle. And then others would say, no, it's not Megiddo, it's not Zion, it's the marauding mountain or the mountain of destruction, which is in Jeremiah 51, verse 25, a mountain of destruction, and everybody disagrees. And just when you think your view maybe finally doesn't have any holes anymore, you know, there are some holes for you.

So there is no perfect view. I probably lean this direction but kind of like the rapture, I'm always jumping in and out. I don't know where I'm at on some of that stuff. There's just no perfect view. The point is, regardless of where the location is, the point is the end of this battle, this great battle, this Armageddon battle, is the end of the unholy trinity. It brings an end to Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet. And it inaugurates the coming of the king, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, which we will see in Revelation 19, 20, and 21.

We don't have time to unpack the battle, but chapters 17 and 18 really take this battle in the sixth trumpet[3] and extrapolate it. So this summer, when we get to that, we'll talk more about it. But just know that this sixth bowl is God basically saying, have it your way. They have it their way, and it brings about their destruction. After that great war is the seventh bowl, and the final thing we'll look at. Revelation 16, verse 17: "Then the seventh poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice"— God's voice— "came out of the temple from the throne, saying," *Tetelestai*,[4] it is finished.

"It is done!" "There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder." You see that in chapter 4, you see that at the end of the seventh seal. You see it at the end of the seventh trumpet. It's God's signature. This judgment is coming from heaven, it's coming from God Himself. So "there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder. And a severe earthquake occurred like no other since people have been on the earth"— the world's greatest earthquake— "so great was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.

Babylon the Great was remembered in God's presence; he gave her the cup filled with the wine of his fierce anger. Every island fled, and the mountains disappeared. Enormous hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell from the sky on people, and they blasphemed God for the plague of hail because that plague was extremely severe." There's so

much there we don't have time to go over all of it, but the seventh trumpet brings the seventh plague that was in Exodus, which is hail. And we're not talking, like, dime-size hail or quarter-size or golf-ball-size hail.

We're talking 100-pound hail. It's just dropping all over the world. Seems to be a global judgment. It's just crushing the earth. And it's remaking the earth, evidently, if this is to be understood literally, the mountains are going down, the islands, which I guess are just mountains underwater, are going away. The geographical makeup is being transformed over the earth. Some say this is not literal, this is just symbolic or metaphorical of the fact that there is no safe place. Mountains were safe places; you'd go hide in the mountains. Islands are where you would go do your naughty business.

Think Jeffrey Epstein on the island doing things he shouldn't be doing. There is no safe place anymore. There is no place you can hide, no place where you can sin, because God's judgment has gotten everybody. There's no escaping it. And the great city, some say that's Rome, some say that's Jerusalem. It's split into three parts. All the other cities fall. This campaign of Babylon the great, which we'll meet in Revelation 17 saying, we're invincible, we're unstoppable, join us, you'll have pleasure forevermore. Now they're drinking the wrath of God, now they're reaping what they've sown.

It's a day of judgment. It's a day in which the choices you have made bear their consequences. And we'll talk about it when we get to Revelation 17. But here's what we need to know today, because we're out of time. This day will come on every single person who lives on the earth. And in some ways this day will come to all of us, regardless of whether or not we're on the earth during this time. So the question you need to ask yourself this morning, if it's true that every choice has a consequence, what have you chosen to do with the Lord Jesus Christ?

Because that phrase, it is finished, that God says on the day of judgment, it's the same thing that Jesus said from the cross: *Tetelestai*. It is finished. And the same thing that happens on the seventh bowl is the same thing that happened at Calvary. The earth shook. The sky went black. All the signs that the day of the Lord is upon us, you got a foretaste of that at the cross of Jesus Christ. But on that day, the world wasn't bearing the wrath of God. Jesus was bearing the wrath of God.

On that day, it wasn't God's wrath unmixed on everyone who lives on the earth. It was only reserved for his son so that you and I could receive mercy. And the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom, basically suggesting your sinfulness, your unworthiness is no longer an obstacle to you being reconciled to God. Now Jesus has become for you what you would never be able to be. Jesus has absorbed God's wrath so that you wouldn't have to. He took the judgment so that you could escape it. But the only way you're going to be delivered from the coming day of wrath is if you repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it really does come down to a decision of what are you going to do with Jesus? What are you going to do with your guilt? I think all of us, if we're honest with ourselves, would say, you know, if I stood before God, who is perfect in his holiness, and he knew my secret motivations, and he knew all the stuff I don't ever tell anybody else, I'm condemned. I'm toast. And so what do you do with that guilt? Do you atone for it yourself eternally in a place called hell?

Or do you say, Jesus, I believe you atoned for my sin. I believe you paid the penalty. I repent of my sin and I put my trust in you. I don't have to worry about getting the most improved player award at church. It's not about me being more improved. It's about you, the perfect spotless lamb of God, doing for me what I could not do for myself. And if you've never made that decision, if you've never come to a point in your life where you surrendered, put your faith in Jesus, trusted in his faithfulness instead of your own faithfulness to God, then today's the day of salvation.

Today's the day where you can receive the miracle of salvation into your life. And there's no magic words, there's no magic prayer. It's just a sincere recognition. I can't save myself. But I believe God can and will save me through the Lord Jesus. And so I put my trust in him. And if you're here this morning and God's stirring in your heart to make that decision, then today's an opportunity for you at the end of our service to come down to the front. And to say, you know what, I want to give my life to Jesus.

Or there will be a QR code up on the screen, and you can scan that QR code and say, I'm surrendering my life to Jesus as Lord this morning. For those of you who are Christians, I think the application is a little more nuanced. Maybe there's some of you here this morning who would say, you know what, I've been living in sin, justifying it, whitewashing it, thinking God doesn't really care because he hasn't been judging me for it. But now I recognize he's kind of given me over to this and it's actually going to cause my destruction if I don't repent.

I see now the trajectory that this rebellion in my life is going to result in. And so today I'm repenting of that. I'm surrendering my life back to the Lord and saying, I want your kingdom to come. I want your will to be done in my life. I can't ride the fence anymore. I can't be in the middle. And this morning would be a day of repentance for you, a day of choosing. Not this world or the things of this world, but the one who will come and remake the world, the one who created you and created this world.

And you say, Lord, I want to be someone who lives according to your design. And then finally, for those of us who are Christians, it's a reminder that this day is coming, but today is a day of salvation. Today, God is being patient, and he's being patient so you and I will go and tell. Go to the hard-to-reach places, go to the hard-to-reach people, say the hard-to-say things, knowing that choices have consequences. And a choice to reject God, a choice to persist in sin, a choice to say, I don't need salvation.

Is a choice that, when people make it, they can't come back from. After you die, you stand before God in judgment, and where you stand is where you'll stand forever. And so it motivates us as God's people to say, to plead with people, be reconciled to God. Today's the day. Don't wait any longer. Don't put it off. Whatever your excuses are, whatever your obstacles are, whatever hurdles you're having to jump, let me help you jump them. Let me help you find answers. Let me help you escape the coming judgment. To do so winsomely, to do so lovingly, to not do so with any kind of arrogance or haughtiness or pride.

But with the humble recognition, I'm saved, not because of what I've done, because of what Jesus has done. I'm not saying I'm better than you or more holy than you. I'm just showing you where salvation lies and to recommit ourselves to that mission and that vision for our lives individually and as a church. So let's respond to the Lord as Taylor leads us. Father in heaven, we thank you for this time. We thank you for your word. Even the crazy parts— the battle of Armageddon and all of this stuff seems so fanciful, seems so far-fetched.

And yet we can look back in our own history, just a couple hundred years ago, and see almost exactly the same thing. We're broken, we're sinful, we have a tendency in our brokenness to ruin it, to ruin everything, to ruin our lives, to destroy people, to justify incredible evil. We need a Savior. We need a deliverer. We need someone who can rescue us from our own depravity and our own brokenness. And so Jesus, would you open our eyes, Holy Spirit. Would you open our eyes to see Jesus as that perfect Savior, as that fulfillment of your promise to deliver us and to rescue us and to take us to the promised land?

Would you give us as your people endurance and wisdom as we live in this world to live as people of the light, not of the darkness, people of the truth, not of the lies, people who stand not on the left or not on the right or not even in the politics of this world, but people who stand firmly fixed in the kingdom of God, whose foundation is the Word of God, whose source of truth is not what any one man would say, but in what God has already spoken through his word.

Give us that conviction. Give us that distinctness as your church in this world. Help us to be a light in the darkness. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "First Peter"; "not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance" is 2 Peter 3:9. Source: 2 Peter 3:9 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: the second beast (the false prophet) comes "up out of the earth"; the first beast is the one from the sea (Revelation 13:1, 11). Wording left as spoken. Source: Revelation 13:1, 11 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "the sixth trumpet" here and "the seventh trumpet brings the seventh plague" below; in Revelation 16 these are the sixth and seventh bowls. The seventh plague in Exodus is hail (Exodus 9:13–35). Source: Revelation 16:12–21 and Exodus 9:18–26 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩

4. Transcript note: spoken as "Te telestai, it is finished"; *tetelestai* ("It is finished") is Jesus' word in John 19:30. The Greek in Revelation 16:17 is *gegonen*, "It is done." Source: John 19:30 (CSB), BibleGateway; Bible Hub Greek text of Revelation 16:17. ↩