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Series: For the Time is Near
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May 15, 2016

Time's Up!

Revelation 15

We are in Revelation, Chapter 15. It is a shorter chapter than many of the others that we've gone through. It's only eight verses, but it's packed with great truth, things that will happen at some point in the near future. This is the time that we can say is the fulfillment of the history of mankind as we know it. Time is up!

There will be a time when there is no more to say, no more to do—the last bell has rung, time is up, it's all complete. In fact, as we look through Scripture, we understand that the number seven is the number of completion, perfection, and wholeness. We see this with the seven trumpets, the seven angels, the seven bowls of wrath. This now comes to a completion, a fulfillment of prophecy, and that is noted and punctuated with judgment.

In a game, believe it or not, not everyone gets a trophy. There are winners and there are losers. Reality is that there are times when there isn't much left, but the very end. There is an end to a rope; there is an end to a movie (sometimes we thank God that there is an end to a movie); there is an end to a journey; an end to a life; and even an end to an opportunity.

This is what we come to in Revelation, Chapter 15, the very end. As Christians, we look at the Bible and we say all prophecy has been fulfilled in that there is nothing restraining Jesus from coming back for His church, for the Rapture to take place. That is true. I know that there have been people saying for a long time, "Jesus is coming soon!" Let me tell you that as you look through Scripture you need to understand one thing—nothing that has been prophesied that was supposed to take place up to this point, has been false. Nothing! Think about it. Everything has been fulfilled. That to me, speaks of God's faithfulness, that what He said is true and it will come to pass. Jesus IS coming back soon. We need to be very mindful of that.

We need to be sober-minded, but at the same time we need to understand that the enemy, Satan, is not sleeping. That he is first and foremost coming after you. He is trying to deceive you into thinking that all is well, and to think of yourself above all else. That can't be further from the truth.

Revelation 15 talks about the fulfillment of time. God's time has been completed as He had said it in order to give mankind an opportunity to repent and to come to know salvation personally. It is time for judgment to be handed down.

There are many people who have hardened their hearts who will continue to harden their hearts as they have done in the time of Pharaoh, and in the time of Cain and Abel, and even to the time of Adam and Eve. There was a hardening of the heart and sin came into mankind.

But this chapter gives us a glimpse of the time when the Israelites were in Egyptian bondage, and ultimately delivered from that bondage. We see this parallel in the Song of Moses, and the Song of the Lamb of God right before us. Many people are hardening their hearts even today, just like Pharaoh did toward God and he perished in the Red Sea along with the rest of his army. For them, their time was up.

We really do not know who will truly harden their heart, though. We don't know who will accept the gospel of Jesus Christ and surrender their lives to Him. Here's the good news: Our hearts are beating inside our chest right now, we are breathing, God has given us breath, He has given us an understanding of who He is and an opportunity to receive grace through His Son, Jesus Christ. For that reason, as we look at prophecy as we look at the fulfillment of time we need to keep one thing in mind, and that is that salvation is here today and it is offered to everyone. We need to respond in living our lives unto His glory regardless of the circumstances that we find ourselves in, because life is full of surprises.

As far as salvation is concerned people you probably thought would never come to the Lord, have done just that. I'm sure I'm a surprise to many people. Growing up in Colton and going to Colton High, taking part in the "great" activities that I participated in, the things that we did that I did to "benefit" society, I'm sure that many of my good friends are surprised that I came to know the Lord and I'm walking with Him. I say that, tongue in cheek. C'mon guys, I'm being sarcastic, of course. I did participate in community groups, they just weren't the kind that were beneficial. I think you're going to be surprised when you reach eternity and you see some people in heaven and you're like, *Man, I never thought I'd see you here!* They're probably going to say the same about you.

My point here is that there is a purpose to knowing what is coming. In that knowledge, we are to pray and seek God, to live to His glory and to do the work of an evangelist. That sometimes scares us away. *I'm not an evangelist. I'm not Greg Laurie.* That's good that you're not Greg Laurie, or Billy Graham. You're you and God can use you. The Bible tells us to do the *work* of an evangelist. Do you know what that means? That means you just live your life out as God has laid out how to respond to His love for us.

We glorify Him in our lives; there's a separation, a distinction about a Christian. There's an aroma that comes to those who know salvation, and oh, it's a sweet-smelling aroma, it's encouragement. For others, when you walk in it's not a good aroma. But whether it reeks or it's pleasing, it's still an aroma of a Christian that either leads people to Christ; or causes them to harden their hearts a little bit more; or to sometimes lay the seed down that will later come to fruition. After we've demonstrated God's love by the way that we live, we are to open up our mouths and tell them about Jesus Christ, about His grace. The point is, don't give up on people. Never give up on anyone around you because you never know.

We're studying this morning how time is up. This is truly the last curtain call. But today, I'm going to remind you that we still have a chance as long as we have breath in our lungs and a heartbeat in our chest, we can still tell others the Good News of grace and eternal life with the Father through Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a brief summary of Revelation, Chapter 15. We'll see this amazing sign in heaven. What John sees is seven angels who are given seven bowls of God's wrath. We see the saints that have made it through The Tribulation, that were standing with the Lamb of God on Mount Zion and are now standing by what appears to be to John this sea of glass mingled with fire, and they are ready to sing a song of thankfulness to the Lord.

This is in preparation for the last judgment, the last seven judgments to come upon the earth. It's one of the four living creatures that comes out of the tabernacle of God in heaven and gives the seven angels the seven bowls of wrath.

Let's start out by reading Chapter 15:

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

² And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

O King of the nations!

⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord,

and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come

and worship you,

for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

⁵ After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶ and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, ⁸ and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Father, as we come to this time, in Your timeline in history, it's complete. This will be fulfilled. Lord, may we see that a sense of urgency is what we need today, that we should be sober-minded and mindful of You in our lives, that it would prompt us to not only to live pure and holy lives before You. But if we don't know You, I pray that we would understand that there's only one way to be forgiven of our sins. There's only one way to know eternity with You, and that's through Your Son Jesus Christ. I pray that You would give us this sense of urgency in knowing these things, to communicate and proclaim Your truth to this world. Father, I pray that You would teach us this morning, that You would open up our eyes to Your truth and may we be stirred up and encouraged to walk with You even closer. We thank You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Seven Angels and Seven Plagues (v. 1)

Let's begin by taking a look at the seven angels and they have the seven plagues, as it says here in verse one.

So far what we've seen is the Lamb breaks the seven seals taken from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. The seven seals were on the scroll in Revelation, Chapter 5. We've also seen an angel with a golden censer that contained the prayers of the saints. The angel then threw down the censer and cast it down to the earth. It was at that time that **"peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake"** took place. Then in Chapter 8 the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to blow the trumpets in judgment. They did blow those trumpets and judgment came in Chapter 8 and 9.

There are two great signs. John points to the fact that he saw **"...another sign in heaven..."** in verse one. That implies that there were other great signs in heaven, which we did go over previously.

The first was in reference to Israel in Revelation 12:1:

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

Then we also see a reference to the devil, Satan himself, the Red Dragon in Revelation 12:3:

...a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.

Then we come to this other great sign, an amazing sign that John saw in heaven: The seven angels with the seven bowls of wrath. God's wrath is going to be poured out on earth. It is the moment that the saints have been waiting for. Remember they were praying for vengeance, asking the Lord to step in on their behalf. This was already prescribed. It was already something that was going to take place and now all of heaven is going to be called to put their attention on what's happening on earth. There is literally no more time, except the brief moment when the saints will sing a song of praise to God.

We saw in Revelation 14:10 how the world will **"drink the wine of God's wrath, poured out full strength into the cup of His anger."** At that point, that's exactly what the wicked world is going to experience without any reservation. There will come a time when God says, *That's enough! All has been satisfied. It is now time to close. All opportunity has been given to repent. It is judgment time.*

The Song of the Saints (vv. 2-4)

But, like I said, there is this short interlude that we have here. It's an interlude of blessing that will take place before the bowls of God's wrath are poured out on the earth -- The Song of the Saints. It's important as we go through these verses that we understand the encouragement to us today in this song because it's a song of victory. Verses 2-4 point to that Song of the Saints:

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

"Great and amazing are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

O King of the nations!

⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord,

***and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."***

John describes what to him was absolutely amazing -- "***a sea of glass mingled with fire***" and standing next to that sea of glass, were the saints that endured the Tribulation Period. They are victorious; they kept God's commandments; and they remained steadfast in being faithful to Jesus Christ. These saints are no longer on earth enduring the Tribulation; no longer on Mt. Zion with the Lamb. Fire speaks of purity. All things you know in heaven are pure; they're perfect. They went through the fire, so to speak.

They have in hand these harps. Perhaps that's how we get our illustrations that we'll be sitting on puffs of clouds that look like cotton and playing our harps. They are with harps in hand ready to sing a song, the Song of Moses, and the Song of the Lamb; a song of victory.

This song would be a source of encouragement for any believer that is enduring the world's system. We're supposed to be in the world, but not of the world. Sometimes we look at the system of the world and all the ideologies, and all the philosophies that takes place -- don't be fooled! You are and have been affected in your thinking by it.

We need to understand something. This process of sanctification is happening each and every day. I see so much of the world infiltrating and impacting the church as I have not seen before. We have this way of thinking that is of the world. I tell you, we need to continually just shower and bathe in the Word of God in order for us to get to a point to where we are humbly receiving it, allowing it to impact and affect the way we think, the way we live our lives to His glory. Sometimes it just doesn't feel too good. So that's why I'm telling you that this is a song of victory that should serve as a source of encouragement to you and me, the people that make up the body of Christ.

This whole scene resembles that of Israel following the Exodus from Egypt. The nation had been delivered from Egypt by the blood of the Lamb. They were to sacrifice the lambs and smear the blood of the lambs on their doorposts so that the Angel of Death would pass over all of their homes and not kill their firstborn, but for the Egyptians, the Angel of Death killed *all* of their firstborns. The only thing that covered them was the blood of the Lamb.

After they were delivered, they came to this place called the Red Sea. As they were there the Egyptian army came and cornered them and they thought there was nowhere to go...*We're cornered and basically just led to the slaughter.* But God made a way for them through the Red Sea. He opened it up and allowed them safe passage across as if on dry ground. Then that same sea came together and swallowed up the armies of Pharaoh;

all of the Egyptian army was consumed. And then, what did the Israelites do on the other side of the shore? They sang a song. It's covered in Exodus Chapter 15. It's the Song of Moses, a song of victory and thankfulness.

Now we see the saints standing next to this sea of glass, mingled with fire, with harps in hands ready to sing another song of thanksgiving toward God.

Something that is interesting is that in Chapter 8 we see the presence of the *prayers* of the saints participating and triggering a series of judgments that will come at the blowing of trumpets. And now we have the presence of the saints *themselves* participating in the triggering of this series of judgments that will come at the pouring out of bowls filled with God's wrath on earth. Both times.

So, the question is why? What's the common thread? God can do whatever He wants, but oftentimes He puts it before us so we can see what is common, and what it is about this that makes it so special. Well, whether it be the prayers of Revelation Chapter 8; the deaths of Revelation Chapter 14; or the redeemed lives of the saints singing, they are all regarded as sacrifices unto the glory of God.

When we come together in this time of worship, it is not entertainment that we're producing at the beginning of service. Getting into the Word of God isn't where we start. It's actually the moment when we start with song. As we're singing, we're offering sacrifices to God. It's for Him; and to Him it's beautiful! It comes into His very presence. He enjoys that! It's what He sees and what He deems as being a sacrifice of the heart. That's what common between them all. Prayers, death, redeemed lives, all sing of the victory of God in our lives. Singing is part of it.

We're going to be doing a lot of singing in heaven so you better get used to it. Clap, shout, sing, drop down on your face, whatever it is, but we're going to be doing a lot of it and we will not ever grow tired. Can you imagine that?

Do you feel tired?

No, what's tired?

I can't wait until that point because sometimes I feel tired at the crack of noon and it's time for a nap!

These saints will have persevered and not compromised, standing with the Lord without wavering. Here's what the apostle Paul said to the Romans, and the Lord urges and commands us to respond to God's demonstrated love toward us in this same manner today. He says:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Some translations say, "***reasonable service***" and it means it's a proper response. He's demonstrated His love towards us in while we were still sinners Christ died for us on the cross. We wouldn't do that for anyone else.

First of all, we wouldn't have knowledge of those we didn't know. He has perfect knowledge of everyone. But secondly, we'd think *I'm not dying for that person*. He took the fall for all of us, and our response should be to live as sacrifices unto Him.

They gave their all; they gave their lives. These saints who are standing beside this sea of glass mingled with fire. They were *all* victorious, just as God said they would be.

This whole scene should be of great encouragement, offering assurance and endurance to any believer that is suffering in Christ. Anyone here suffering or dealing with things that just try you? We all are to some extent and I'm sorry to say that if you're not, stand fast because it's coming. Some are greater than others, but what we need to understand is that all of this, God's faithfulness should encourage us, should strengthen us, should help us understand that God will be with you and will never leave or forsake you. What lies ahead in all of eternity with Him, far outweighs anything that we're going through today.

As I was running through the neighborhoods I was observing the different houses and how they're built. One of things that I noticed was their mailboxes. It was profound. Some have boxes that look like little houses made out of wood. Others, like us, just run down to Home Depot and bought one of those metal ones. *Hey, it's up. Deliver my mail and we're good*. Still others have ones that are a little bit stronger and are made out of nice, rugged, plastic with a lock in the front so no one can steal your mail. Most of which you would rather not get, right?

Then I saw one that was all stone. It was like a monument almost. Within it, the mailbox was packed in. It stood tall and wide, all rock and concrete. Whatever is delivered is not coming out of there. Nothing! You're going to have to have the key to open up that mailbox and remove it. Unless you have C4 or some kind of explosive, it's just not opening up.

Listen, the Word of God should be like that in our hearts and in our lives. Not taken flippantly or lightly. As God's Word is given to us, we should receive it just like that. The only way that it's going to come out is by the One who orders it to come out, the One who has the key to our hearts. To whom have we given the key to order our words and how we think? The Lord Jesus Christ. ***"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."*** [Zechariah 4:6] We should be mindful of that.

That's why as we see these saints, notice that they've gone through the Tribulation, they have persevered and endured. They have done that very thing. They have been sober-minded, aware, they understand where these battles can come from and they stood on God's truth. The whole scene should be of great encouragement.

It screams of the fact that it is possible to be victorious over the world system. You don't have to yield and compromise to get by and "tolerate" this life. You don't have to take the mark of the beast if you're going through the Tribulation Period. The blood of the Lamb is sufficient. Jesus' work on the cross is enough to provide the way of escape and then we, too, can sing a song of victory and thankfulness unto God.

One day we will be there and singing in all of God's glory! Talk about amazing! Talk about just overwhelming greatness right before us—God's glory, beyond what you can think or imagine! God offers us a way of escape through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. Don't ever forget that.

I remember the first time I heard the gospel, I don't remember anything but this: Forgiveness; I can be forgiven. And I knew that somehow that I *needed* to be forgiven. Why? Because I understood that I had offended a righteous and holy God. Forgiven! I *knew* He was the source of forgiveness. I *knew* He was grace as the Spirit was drawing me unto Himself.

The Last Curtain Call (vv. 5-8)

⁵ After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶ and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, ⁸ and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

It was in Revelation 11:19 that John last saw God's temple in heaven opened. This was when the seventh angel blew his trumpet and just before John saw the "great signs in heaven", which were the sign of the Israel/woman, and the sign of the devil. This temple that John is referring to here is NOT the one that was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, nor was it the temple that Solomon built.

It was more like the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, that was described when the children of Israel went through the wilderness, when they experienced the glory of the Lord as they traveled in the desert. It was where Moses would meet with the Lord. When the smoke filled the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, no one was able to stand or enter in. This was the place where the testimony of the covenant was contained; the ark of the covenant.

This is the very place that the seven angels come out of; from the presence of God's throne comes one of the four living creatures and hands the seven golden bowls of wrath to the seven angels to pour out on earth.

Now I want to bring your attention to this word "full", because It's not just full in the sense where you can fill it up, pour it out, and fill it back up again. It's not like that at all. This word speaks of something that we need to be aware of. It means complete; it means perfect; it means final. These bowls that we're speaking of are the seven golden bowls of God's wrath and they are poured out completely and quickly. There's no more.

At this point, all hands are on deck. All eyes are on the earth. This is the final curtain call. This is it. God is going to require all of heaven's full attention on what is taking place on earth. You notice that the Tabernacle is filled

with smoke and no one is to go in there. There's no entering into God's sanctuary until the seven bowls of God's wrath are poured out on earth, completely.

We also see here that the angels are clothed in pure, bright linen with golden sashes around their chest. At this point, they are not fighting villains. They're not like our superheroes that do the fighting against the enemy; it's just God that is going to be doing it on our behalf. When we talk about them being clothes in pure linen, we're talking about purity and righteousness.

And though at this point, no one will be able to enter God's sanctuary, it implies that at some point *after* the wrath of God is poured out that we are going to have access to the sanctuary in heaven. It's beyond what we can even think or imagine, but that's the truth.

Why are we to know these things? This is a time of completion. There will be no more opportunity once the bowl of God's wrath is poured out.

But, let me remind you, for anyone who is listening to this, there is still time as it is called *today*. There is an opportunity for us to understand what it is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ fully. Not with personal hindrance, because we can hinder our relationship with the Lord. We can be overwhelmed with the philosophies and the success of the world. There are many success gurus out there, but you need to get into the Word of God and apply *that* to your lives. Our success does not lie before men, it lies before God.

You have an opportunity today to have and know a relationship with Jesus Christ, to surrender to Him, and therefore have a relationship with the Father. You can know what it means to live for God's glory by His power. There's nothing like it. If you're struggling, this is a voice of encouragement having the example of the saints singing a song of victory from the very throne of heaven, having endured the Tribulation. It should be a voice of encouragement.

If you don't know salvation, this is a voice of rescue, the one that you've been longing for but never knew. This could be the time and place you can look back to and say: *That was the day I was saved and surrendered my life to Jesus Christ, and I haven't been the same since and I never want to be. I desire to walk with my Savior and live for Him and Him alone. I desire to be prepared for heaven.*

God's grace is available to all who are ready to surrender and receive life.

In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, ***"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."***

In John 16:33 Jesus said these words, ***"I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."***

That means we have victory in Him! Are you ready to live for the Lord? Have you been living for Him? Can you say without any reservation, *I've been living for the Lord up to this point and I have everything down, I'm good.*

Hopefully, no one can say that and we're all of a humble spirit and can say, *No, I don't have it down completely, but thank God that He is patient with me and can help me through.* He is truly long-suffering and He helps us.

Wherever you're at, God wants to meet you right there. He wants to speak into your life and pour His Spirit out upon you. He wants you to be a vessel that is used for His glory, for His purpose to fulfill His plans. Not just in your life, but in the lives of those people who you come in contact with.

Do you need more of God's Spirit? Do you need more of God in your life? Do you need to know more of God's truth so that you can come in line with it? I hope the answer to all those questions is yes! You can never receive more of God, so to speak. Once you come to know Him, you know His fullness, but to know more of His character, of His personality is joyful. Then you come in line with Him and you bring Him more glory. I tell you that you will have this peace which surpasses all understanding because you're living a life that is trusting in Him for everything.

If you don't know salvation in Jesus Christ, let me tell you that today you can. What does that take? First, it's recognizing that you're a sinner. Second, confessing not to man, but to Him the Father, that you have fallen short of His perfect standard, asking for forgiveness.

I have sinned and fallen short of Your perfect standard and I am sorry for that. I ask for Your forgiveness. I ask You, Lord Jesus, to be my Lord, to be my Savior, to come into my life and help me walk all the days of my life to Your glory. One day I look forward to being in Your presence forever.

It doesn't have to be those exact words, but you get the picture. It's something personal and between you and the Lord. When you do that with all sincerity and cry out to Him, He will come into your life and invade it in a good way. He'll exchange all your sins for eternal life and forgiveness. What an exchange! It is all made possible through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross.

O Father, we praise You for examples like we have before us. We thank you that we can look at these saints, after the Tribulation, at the time of completion and full judgement and know this song of victory that they will sing in heaven. Lord, if we have placed our trust in You, completely surrendering to You, then we, too, can sing this song of victory, being fully encouraged that we also have the ability, by Your Spirit, to endure anything that we're going through, to Your glory. I pray that truly the joy of the Lord is our strength. I pray for anyone who is struggling right now and has not surrendered and given their life over to You and asked for forgiveness. May right now, today, be the day of salvation. I pray that You would just show them open arms and help them to understand Your love and that You are not judging them at this point because You've already judged sin—past present and future. Right now, You're simply calling every single person into a living relationship with You, through Jesus Christ. All they have to do is ask for forgiveness. All they have to do is ask You to be their Lord and Savior. I pray that You would do that work in whoever is contemplating that; just show them Your grace. I pray that You would help the rest of us, strengthen us, fill us with Your Spirit to overflowing. May we truly be

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encouraged by the lives of others who have gone before us to show us the way of life, to show us how to walk with You according to Your word. We pray this is Jesus name. Amen.