

It's All About Him XIII: *The Return of the Warrior King*

Revelation 19:11-16

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For 12 consecutive years, we have taken a weekend to refocus the lens of our church on the epicenter of what our church is all about. This is the 13th *All About Him* message. Before we start, I want to tell you what a privilege it has been these years to rejoice with you in the person and work of Jesus Christ, not just once a year, but every week in some way is about Him. Some more clearly than others, but always with Jesus in view - especially these weekends. Now, *It's All About Him 13: The Return of the Warrior King*.

We turn to a book of the Bible with a title that gives us a clue, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* or just *Revelation*. Its location at the end of the Bible indicates its purpose; it's the book of final or last things. There are 142 million books in the Library of Congress and not one of them can tell you with any certainty what is going to happen tomorrow or in the future. The book of Revelation does.

It tells it in a spectacularly visual and descriptive way. The book is filled with dramatic pictures and symbols which can be confusing. I was recently at an art studio in Chicago. As you probably know, modern art is often abstract with somewhat bizarre representations. One of the displays was rows of paper plates and plastic forks. As you look at it you wonder, *What was the painter trying to say? The Book of Revelation* is like reading a painting with colors and symbols describing spiritual truth and the future.

Let me put a frame around this painting in Revelation 19. The frame is the human story - our story. Our story had a beautiful beginning. In the beginning, we were created by God for two relationships - with God and with one another. He created us with a spiritual dimension so we could relate to Him and a social dimension so we could relate harmoniously with one another in friendship, family, and community. We were in a beautiful garden. Life was good.

This perfect existence was shattered when Adam and Eve sinned. The two relationships we were created for were shattered. The villain in this was Satan who was judged along with us. One little part of that judgment from God is both curious and profound. *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*" (Genesis 3:15, NIV)

Did Adam say, *Excuse me, who's "he"? How will "he" be "bruised" by Satan? How is "he" going to "crush" Satan's head? I don't get it.* Nobody did. There were centuries of head scratching about what that little statement could possibly mean and who "He" is and why it was so important for God to say to Satan, *Someday, you're going to get it.*

This little truth unfolds in the Old Testament as God set in motion events and circumstances that are interesting, but on the surface, not sufficient for the whole crushing Satan's head promise. A covenant with a shepherd fellow named Abraham and his descendants. An exodus of a small nation out of Egypt. Occasional promises to this little nation of a coming Messiah. Some son of David who would sit on an eternal throne. Interesting, but not at all accomplishing the Satan head crushing promise. And it didn't go well with that little nation. They were largely wiped out by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The temple was destroyed. It would seem that Satan was doing more crushing than being crushed.

This all changed with a shocking development in 4 BC. In a little obscure village in a wide spot in the road, a virgin gave birth to a son that God told her was the Savior of the world. He was given the name Jesus. This child was God in flesh. The God-man. Still, how does Satan get crushed by a God-man? Those close to Jesus knew He was different and hoped He would lead Israel back to political glory. As is often the case with humans, we think too small. Jesus' mission was more massive and cosmic than anyone could have conceived. He didn't come to defeat Rome, He came to defeat Satan and sin and death. He came to die. He did, ironically, on a Roman cross. That's the history, here's the theology. He died because He let himself die to pay a moral ransom price to God the Father for the guilt debt mankind owed. The Jews didn't know it. The Romans didn't know it. I wonder if Satan did. God the Father and the Son knew it. On the third day He was resurrected from the dead and 40 days later ascended to heaven.

He commissioned 12 of His disciples, *Tell as many people as you can that anyone who repents of their sins and believes in me will be forgiven their sins and given eternal life.* Empowered by the Spirit of God, these 12 and the millions and millions after them, have spread this message pretty much throughout the world. Bethel Church is here today because of it.

Here's the curious thing. If you look around, in spite of God's threat, Satan and his causes seem to be doing just fine. Sin is just as rampant as it has always been. The vast majority of people on earth don't believe Jesus' message and many who claim to don't live like it. Satan and those that follow his lies seem to be doing quite nicely. Then you read the first 18 chapters of Revelation, and with an exception or two, they show the future to be increasing rebellion against God, Satan exerting unchecked power, death and destruction envelop the whole world. Things go from bad to worse to truly horrific. We could ask, where's God? Where's Jesus? Does Satan win in the end?

Look at Revelation 19:11 - *Then [the Apostle John] saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.* (Revelation 19:11-16)

If you are cheering at all in your heart, then you are getting the big picture of what this means. This is the fulfillment of the oldest and greatest promise ever given. Centuries of waiting, wondering, waiting some more. When it seems that evil has won and all hope is lost, suddenly, heaven opens, and into this rebellious world steps the King of Glory, Jesus. In my mind I see him thundering, *I'm back.* Let's look at the scene.

White Horse, White Linen, White Horses

White is an important biblical color. The color itself means something. With only two exceptions, every time the New Testament uses the color white it is to describe the color of heavenly glory OR it pictures victory; not unlike Western movies where the good guys wear the white hats and the bad guys wear the black hats. It helps you figure out who is who.

Take the horse for example. The rider is on a white horse (verse 11) and the armies of heaven are riding white horses (verse 14). A horse symbolizes war. A white horse symbolizes victory. The Roman Caesars would ride into Rome on a white horse. Why? They were victorious in war, so they rode in on a white horse.

The rider is on a white horse and the armies behind him are wearing white linen riding white horses. This is an army going to war, but the battle hasn't started, and they already wearing white, the color of victory. I won't tell you how I got this, but this is a hat that is from the Super Bowl on February 4, 2007. It says, Chicago Bears - Super Bowl Champs. The astute among us are thinking, *Wait, they didn't win*. No. But they pre-printed hats for the players to wear after the game in case they did win. This is one of them. Super Bowl Champs. In reality, it didn't go so well for them. Imagine them taking the field before the game even started already wearing hats announcing victory. That's the picture here. The army is in white declaring before they even start, *We are the Champions*. We have already won. What about this Rider?

The Rider

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. (Verse 11)

Nowhere does this passage use the title Jesus or Christ, but this clearly is Jesus. The last time He was seen was at His ascension when the angels said, "He's coming back the same way you saw him go." All these years He was awaiting the moment to make His appearance. Remember, these symbols are artistically descriptive. They are not painting a picture, they are painting a portrait.

His character – faithful, true, righteous

These speak to His reliability. You can count on Him. He is faithful and true to all His promises. He promised He'd come back and here He is.

His Glory – omniscient, unlimited authority, mysterious

His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. (Verse 12)

Eyes like fire – nothing escapes His notice. Nothing is hidden from Him. All is seen and known. That's a vivid picture.

Crowned with Many Crowns – The ESV uses diadem. It means crown. It's another example of symbolism. Jesus is not coming with a huge pile of crowns on His head. To wear a crown is to have authority. To have many crowns is to have great glory and authority. On His head are many crowns. This rider is coming with absolute authority.

An unknowable name – in the ancient world, the gods would have a name that no one else knew. To share your name with someone is to give that person a certain power of knowledge over you. I might compare it to why our superheroes wear masks. They mask their identity which adds to the mystery of their person, *Who was that masked man?* The Rider has a name but only He knows it.

His power – victor and absolute Final Word

He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. (Verse 13)

At first glance, you might think that the robe dipped in blood would symbolize the blood He shed on the cross. Or you may be picturing Revelation chapter 5 where He is pictured as a lamb looking as if it had been slain. However, this is a direct reference to Isaiah 63 in which God describes Himself as a warrior, and this isn't pretty, but a warrior whose robe after a battle is stained with the blood of His enemies. The rider is wearing a robe stained with blood. He is a great warrior. I am an amateur WWII buff and especially enjoy the stories of the pilots and dogfights. When a pilot in WWII shot down an enemy, he would display that kill by putting an insignia on his plane. It took five kills to be considered an ace. Pappy Boyington of *Bah, Bah, Black Sheep* fame shot down 28. If you were a Japanese pilot on patrol and saw an American fighter plane with 28 kills decorating it, what would you think? You would think, *I think I'll get out of here.*

His robe is dipped in blood. It's not His blood, but any who stand against Him. He is a mighty warrior.

The Word of God - You may be familiar with Jesus' title in John 1 as "The Word" or the revelation of God. It is used differently here. To be the Word of God is to be the final word. The absolute Word.

His purpose – victory, judgment, and eternal reign

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (Verse 15)

Three symbols: *a sword; a rod; a winepress.* Victory; reign, and judgment.

A rod of iron is the hardest substance. It crushes everything else. No one can stand against him. A winepress is a picture of Him crushing His enemies like a winemaker crushes his grapes.

A mouth with a sword coming out is awkwardly vivid. He doesn't literally have a sword coming out of His mouth. This refers to the infinite power of His Word. His words are like a sword in that He speaks and by the absolute authority and infinite power of God, it is done. He goes to war with infinite and absolute power and His weapon is the Word.

So you *Braveheart* and *Lord of the Rings* fans get the battle image out of your mind. When you are Almighty God, you don't need a horse to get around and you don't need a sword to fight. He spoke and the galaxies came into existence. If you can do that, how difficult is winning a battle against a human army? Imagine the power of that. Heaven opens, out He comes, the armies of the world and all who hate Him are gathered somehow thinking they can fight Him. *I know, I'll shoot him with my gun.* And He speaks and the armies of the east are wiped out. He speaks and the armies of the west are wiped out. *"You're dead."* *"You're gone."* *"Bye-bye."*

Here is the ultimate....

On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Verse 16)

His glorious title – King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Just in case the white horse or heavenly armies or eyes of flame or powerful word or rod of iron didn't clue you in to who this person is, this title makes it clear, He is the King of Kings and He is the Lord of Lords. Who possibly rises to that title? Only one.

The last time He was here, He was here in weakness. His glory was hidden in the frailty of a human body. Last time He was here He allowed men to defy Him, blaspheme Him, speak against Him, beat Him, mock Him, and ultimately nail His body in execution to a cross. He chose to suffer indignity and pain on that cross. He let the very people He was dying to save hurl abuses at Him. He loved them! And in a moment that causes all heaven and earth to shake, He chose to die in total humiliation and weakness. Nobody realized who they were dealing with. Nobody knew that all glory and honor was His. Nobody knew. His first coming was cloaked in secrecy and who could have imagined that the one hanging dead on the cross was God incarnate?

If this passage tells us anything, it tells us that the day is coming when the secret will be out and when He comes again, it won't be in weakness my friends, it will be in absolute power and glory. Here He is, King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

What happens? This is very interesting. There is no description of any battle. The next thing that happens is the vultures are called to come eat the flesh of all the dead people. It's no contest when God is fighting. What about that old promise? The oldest promise of all to Satan? *You will bruise his heel and he will crush your head.* Look at Revelation 20:10 - *and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Does that sound like "crushing" to you? I think so.

My dear friends, on this *All About Him* weekend, there are so many applications for us in this passage. I just have two. The first one begs to be asked, *Whose side are you on?* Whose side will you be on? When it all comes right down to it, here's the question, "Is Jesus your Savior and Lord?" He becomes that to us by faith. *If you confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* (Romans 10:9) Everyone will bow someday. The opportunity now is to do so unto salvation. Bow now and be saved or bow later and be damned. That's the reality.

The second question is, Are you wearing white today? White is the color of victory. The armies of heaven can wear white because the real victory was won at Calvary. Ever since the cross, Christians are to live every day spiritually dressed in white. *We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* (Romans 8:37) Should this change the way I look at the apparent defeats in my life? In our church? In our country and culture? Yes, in every way. If you know you are on the side that wins in the end, the little defeats and challenges along the way don't seem nearly as scary or as final.

It's not because of us. We are the sinners in the story. We are just along for the ride. It's because of Christ that we can live our lives dressed in the white of confidence in a future victory. It will always be all about Him.

*And tho this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph thru us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him -
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure: One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly pow'rs, No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours Thru Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also -
The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still: His kingdom is forever.
(A Mighty Fortress is Our God, Martin Luther, Public Domain)*

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