

The Glorious Return of Jesus Christ, Part 2

Scripture: Revelation 19:11-16

Code: 66-71

It is our great privilege tonight to open our Bibles to the nineteenth chapter of Revelation and to look at that great text which details for us the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 19 verses 11 through 16, I want to read this text, it's such a powerful text I want you to have it in mind.

Starting in verse 11, John, of course, is given this great vision while on the island of Patmos in exile for the preaching of the gospel. And he says, "I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire and upon His head are many diadems and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He's clothed with a robe dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword so that with it He may smite the nations and He will rule them with a rod of iron and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

Here is the great presentation of the vision of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now to show you how important this is on the pages of Scripture, a total of one thousand five hundred and twenty-seven Old Testament passages alone refer to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are approximately eight thousand verses in the New Testament and three hundred and thirty of those or about one out of every twenty-five verses directly refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, next to the subject of faith, no subject is more often mentioned than the return of Christ. For every time the first coming of Christ is mentioned, the Second Coming is mentioned eight times. And the Lord Himself refers to His coming twenty-one times and over 50 times we are exhorted to be ready for that great event. It is a major theme throughout the pages of Scripture.

Clearly because of so much biblical testimony, we can be certain that Jesus will come again. The promise of God demands it. God who cannot lie promised that the Messiah would come and that He would establish a kingdom and that throne would be in Jerusalem and from that throne He would rule the world. God promised that He would set His King upon His holy hill, Psalm 2; that the government would be upon His shoulders, Isaiah 9; that He would reign and rule. Daniel chapter 7 portrays Him coming, Zechariah chapter 14 and other Old Testament passages. And even the New Testament repeats that promise. It is repeated to us in the gospel of Matthew in the Olivet Discourse and also in the gospel of Luke.

So the promise of God demands the return of Christ. Secondly, the statements of Jesus demand it. Jesus Himself said that He would go away and come again in John chapter 14. And again in Matthew 24 and 25 He described His own coming, the coming of the Son of Man in heaven.

Furthermore, the guarantee of the Holy Spirit demands it. The Holy Spirit it was indeed who inspired the New Testament writers to write the promise of the return of Christ. And it is the Holy Spirit in us who is the guarantee or the down payment on that great event that is yet to come. The word arrabon is used to describe the Holy Spirit, He's called the earnest of the Spirit. Arrabon can be translated "engagement ring." He is the engagement ring that guarantees the wedding between the bride, the church, and the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, the promise of God demands Christ's return, the statements of Jesus demand He returns, the guarantee of the Spirit demands He returns. And even outside the trinity itself the program for the church demands that He return. God has established the program for His church. In fact, it is laid out in the New Testament no more clearly than in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts where the Scripture very clearly tells us that the Lord has a wonderful plan for His church. It unfolds starting in verse 6. "And the apostles and elders came together to look into this matter and after there had been much debate, Peter stood and said to them, `Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the gospel and believe; and God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.'" And so God established His church, made up of Jews and Gentiles. Down in verse 15, "With this the words of the prophets agreed, just as it is written, `After these things I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen and I will rebuilt its ruins and I will restore it in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord; and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' says the Lord, `who makes these things known from of old.'"

God has a plan and it's a plan that involves His return and the establishment of His glorious kingdom. And we know that promise is laid out for us not only in the book of Acts but it's unfolded for us even in the book of Revelation, as we shall see in chapter 20. So God's plan for the church demands Jesus' return, after all He has to come back and take His church to be His bride, marry His church, the promise of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which we already saw in this chapter, involves the church. He must return for that.

And then God's plan for the nations demands it. He's coming back to judge the nations, Matthew 25 says that, Joel 3 says that. He's coming back, He's going to judge the nations, set up a Kingdom and rule over the nations. God's plan for Israel demands that Jesus return because the kingdom, after all, was promised first to Israel, they would have a Messiah and they would ultimately enter into the Messiah's kingdom. All Israel, eventually, Romans 11 says, will be saved. The dry bones will be

revived, Ezekiel tells us and there will come a time when Israel believes, when they look on Him whom they've pierced, as Zechariah put it, mourn for Him as an only Son and enter into their kingdom.

So the plan for the church, the plan for the nations, the plan for Israel demands that Jesus Christ return. You could look at it another way, as well, the humiliation of Christ demands that He return. The first time He came He was scorned and He was hated and He was despised and humiliated. And that demands that He come back in the glory which He is do, with the respect and honor and worship which should be given to Him. Furthermore, the exaltation of Satan demands the return of Christ. Satan who is the usurper needs to be dethroned, who is temporarily the prince of this world, the god of this world needs to be taken off the throne and the rightful heir needs to be placed on that throne. The serpent's head which was bruised at the cross needs to be finally cut off and he needs to know the execution that God has planned for him.

So, the promises of God, the statements of Jesus, the guarantee of the Holy Spirit, the plan for the church, for the nations, for Israel, the humiliation of Christ, the exaltation of Satan temporarily, all of those things demand the return of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom. And finally, that this takes us right into the wonder of this whole passage, the expectation of the saints demands it. We are those who love His appearing, according to 2 Timothy chapter 4. We are those who wait for His coming. This is the Christian hope, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you find the saints not only in the New Testament, but throughout the Old Testament, longing for and anticipating the coming of the Messiah to set up His kingdom. So in order to fulfill His promise, in order to fulfill His own Word, the Lord Jesus Christ must come. In order for Jesus to be true to that which He promised He must come. In order for the Holy Spirit's guarantee to come to pass, He must come. For God to execute His program for the church, for the Gentiles, and for Israel, He must come. And in order to reverse the humiliation of Christ and the exaltation of Satan, He must come. And to fulfill the anticipation of the saints, He must come. And He will. And we see the coming of Christ portrayed and demonstrated in the majesty of the words which I just read to you in chapter 19.

Now I want to divide these verses up into three parts...the return of the Conqueror, the regiments of the Conqueror, and the rule of the Conqueror...the return, the regiments and the rule. However, before we look any further into this text, I want to give you a little bit of background, so I want you to turn in your Bible back to Isaiah. Back in Isaiah chapter 11 we have a text of Scripture that I mentioned to you last time that is important for you to understand because it lays the background for this vision. You remember now, in Isaiah 11:1 a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, that refers to the Messiah, coming from the line of Jesse, He came through David who was Jesse's son. "A branch from his roots will bear fruit and the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord and He will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what His eyes see nor make a decision by what His ears hear." In other words, He'll make no superficial judgments. "But with righteousness

He will judge the poor and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth and He will strike the earth with a rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked and righteousness will be the belt about His loins and faithfulness the belt about His waist." And there you have the promise of the Messiah and of His reign.

Go over to the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah and you'll find another text of Scripture that is in some ways parallel as well to the vision that John has. Verse 1 of Isaiah 63, "Who is this who comes from Edom, with garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, this One who is majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength?" Obviously it's the Messiah, this is the messianic portion of Isaiah's prophecy. "It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." That's who's coming. That's who is coming in garments of glowing colors, literally in the Hebrew, crimson colors, red the color of blood. Verse 2, "Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the winepress splattered?" as it were, with all the red juice of the grapes. Why? "I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them to My anger and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments and I stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. And I looked and there was no one to help and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold, so My own arm brought salvation to Me, and My wrath upheld Me and I trod down the peoples in My anger and made them drunk in My wrath and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth." Pretty vivid imagery, isn't it?

Blood splattered the Messiah comes and by Himself tramples out His wrath. Those two scenes in Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 63 have some parallels to the vision here in Revelation 19, and I only wanted to draw those texts to your attention because of the common expressions that we find and we'll see also in Revelation.

Now this return of Christ that is given us in the nineteenth chapter has already been anticipated. You remember in the fourteenth chapter verse 14 John looked and behold a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a Son of Man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And down in verse 18, He took that sharp sickle and He was told to put it in and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth because the grapes are ripe. It tells us the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth and threw them into the great winepress of the wrath of God and the winepress was trodden outside the city and the blood came out from the winepress up to the horses' bridles for a distance of two hundred miles. Here is another blood-splattered scene where blood is splattering up as high as the height of a horse, as the Messiah Himself tramples out the winepress of the wrath of God and grape juice becomes the picture of spattering of blood.

Over in chapter 16 another vision of this, as I noted for you last time, is given. Verse 15, "I am coming like a thief." And when He comes, verse 16 says, they gather them together to a place which in

Hebrew is called Armageddon.

So now we come to the scene which has been anticipated by Isaiah, and anticipated as well by John in the book of Revelation in those texts which I read to you. Now we come to the actual event in its chronological sequence, followed by chapter 20, the establishment of the kingdom and flowing on into the eternal state.

Let's look then, first of all, at verses 11 to 13 and look at the return of the Conqueror..the return of the Conqueror. Verse 11, "And I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."

Again, for another time in the book of Revelation, heaven is opened. And we're going to see a glorious glimpse of heaven, a glorious vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's very different than the one we saw in chapter 1 where He was ministering in His church. Here He is obviously coming in fiery, flaming vengeance. He is coming with a sword of judgment. He is coming with blood-splattered garments. This is the point of His return. This is the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus Himself from His own lips in Matthew chapter 24 where He said in verse 27, "Just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather." It will be a time of great carnage. Immediately after the Tribulation it will happen. "The sun will be darkened. The moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from the sky. And the powers of the heavens will be shaken." In other words, the whole universe goes pitch black. "And then the sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky, all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they'll see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." That is that which now is being described in Revelation 19.

So as the scene unfolds, our eyes are fixed on this majestic, regal, mighty rider. Heaven is opened to us and we see the white horse and on the white horse we see the rider. Now let's talk about these details, because they're important.

The reason heaven is opened this time is to not let us in but to let Him out. A number of times in the book of Revelation heaven has been opened and we've been given access to that. We can go back, for example, to chapter 4 and we remember, don't we, that John the Apostle says in verse 1, "Behold, I looked and a door standing open in heaven, the first verse which I heard like the...the first voice which I heard like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me said, 'Come up here and I'll show you what must take place after these things.'" And so the door of heaven was opened in chapter 4 so John could go in and see. And now the door is opened so the Son of Man can come out.

Jesus, the One who ascended to heaven as recorded in Acts chapter 1, the One who has been seated at the Father's right hand is now coming back. He is going to receive the kingdom which the

Father had promised to Him, the kingdom to which He was entitled. As you go back in to chapter 5 you remember that the Father was seated on the throne in heaven, in His hand He held a book which was the title deed to the universe. And you remember no one in heaven or on earth, verse 3, or under the earth was able to open the book or look into it. In other words, no one had the right to take possession of the universe. No one had the right to open this sealed scroll and take possession. And so John says, "I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or look into it." In other words, was the world always going to belong to the usurper, to Satan, to sin? Was there no one who could take it back?

And one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping, behold the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the root of David has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." And I saw between the throne with the four living creatures and the elders a Lamb standing as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out unto all the earth. That too a reference to Isaiah 11.

"And He came and took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne." And there you have the Lamb, the Son, Christ, the Messiah having the privilege and the right to take the title deed out of the hand of God because it is His right to take the universe. "And everyone sang a new song, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book and break its seals, for Thou was slain and did purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and Thou has made them to be a kingdom and priest to our God and they will reign upon the earth.'"

You have a right to take possession of the world. You have a right to establish Your Kingdom. And so the one who has a right now is on the edge of heaven and heaven is opened and He is about to come. That great and wonderful anticipatory prayer that comes from the sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, this first couple of verses, "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down that the mountains might quake at Thy presence, as fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil, to make Thy name known to Thy adversaries that the nations may tremble at Thy presence." That's the prayer...O, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down. And what Isaiah anticipated and prayed for in chapter 64 now unfolds in Revelation 19 as heaven is opened and He's ready to come.

And this time John doesn't see a Lamb in the midst of the throne, rather He sees, according to verse 11, a white horse. This is not a lamb, this is a white horse. And riding on that white horse is the great Conqueror, the Messiah. Riding no longer the way He rode when He rode in His earthly life, but now coming as a Conqueror in a typical fashion of Roman triumphal processions.

Now let me mention something at this point. Would you...capture this because it's very important. What you have in the imagery of this vision is a mingling of symbol and reality. And you have to comprehend that or you can't comprehend this. There is language here that is the expression of reality and there is language here that is the expression of symbol. Of course, that symbol points to a

reality. People ask the question...does this mean there are real horses in heaven? The answer, no...anymore than it means that when Jesus comes He's actually going to have dangling off His head a whole lot of crowns, or that when He returns He's actually going to have sticking right out of His mouth between His lips some kind of sword. Or any more than it means that all who come with Him are going to be riding on a myriad of white horses. Listen, there is nothing to indicate anywhere in Scripture that horses get glorified, that horses get eternally glorified and go to heaven. There is a mixture here of symbol and reality. This is not necessarily actual reality anymore than that Jesus Christ when he sets up His Kingdom is going to roam the earth with a huge iron stick in His hand, mashing people's skulls with it. And yet it says He'll rule with a rod of iron.

You have to understand that the symbolic language here expresses reality, but in itself is symbolic of that reality. And the symbol here, the majestic symbol here is of a Roman conqueror who is coming back in a triumphal procession. He's coming to a great battle, to triumph and to enter into the glory of that triumphant. A general would ride to war on his white horse, he would come with his battle garb, leading his tremendous battle troops, as it were. And they would engage in war. And when the war was won, he would then come to Rome and up the Via Sacra(?) the main street of Rome, to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline(?) Hill, and there he would enter into his glory. So the imagery is vivid.

John sees Jesus no longer as a Lamb, no longer as He was portrayed in Zechariah 9:9, coming in humiliation, riding on the colt, the foal of an ass. But in this case he sees Him as a conqueror. And white is not only the color of war chargers, in the ancient Roman world, but it is the symbol of purity, it is the symbol of spotlessness, of unblemished holy power. And, in fact, everything in that imagery is in contrast to the humble foal of a donkey which Jesus rode into the city. Now He comes as the conqueror, now He comes as the warrior King, now He comes to destroy the wicked, to overthrow the Antichrist, to bind Satan, take control of the earth and the universe and establish Himself as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. The horses are symbolic. The sword out of His mouth is symbolic. The rod of iron is symbolic. The crowns are symbolic. But the coming is reality. And the psalmist himself wrote of this event when he wrote, "And Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty, Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under Thee. Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Even the psalmist under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit could get a glimpse of the coming of God in the glory of messianic rule to establish His eternal kingdom.

And so He comes. Scripture tells us He comes in glory. We read that in Matthew 24, Matthew 25. In Revelation 1:7 it says, "When He comes every eye will see Him." Obviously the whole world will have gone black and dark, as we read to you, everything will be turned out, the blazing glory of Jesus Christ will come with such startling reality that everyone on the face of the earth will see Him. And He will come not only in glory, not only visibly, but He will come with vengeance to judge and make war.

Now at this point I want to digress for just a moment and just kind of talk to you about something you need to keep in mind. There is nothing in this scenario that matches descriptions of the Rapture of the church in the New Testament. There are two Scriptures in the New Testament that refer to the catching away of the church. One is in John 14 and the other is in 1 Thessalonians 4. John 14:1 and following, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and following. Both of those describe the coming of the Lord for the church, the coming of the Lord for His beloved.

In John 14 Jesus said, "When I go away I will prepare a place for you and I will come again to receive you unto Myself that where I am there you may be also." That was not a warning, that was a promise. That was not an event to be feared, that was an event to be anticipated. I'm going to prepare a place for you and I'm going to come and get you and take you to that place. That's very important because whatever the catching away of believers is, it is something we long for, look for, love, anticipate, hope for because He's going to come and He's going to get us to take us to the place He's preparing for us.

Where is He now? He's in heaven. What's He doing there? Preparing a place for us in the Father's house. But when He comes to judge, He comes to the earth, stays on the earth and sets up His kingdom here. The Rapture is a very different event. It's a catching away of the church into heavenly homes that have been prepared for the believers. And that's why it's very difficult to see these two things as the same event.

At the Rapture, furthermore, Christ doesn't come to the earth, He meets us in the air. Here He comes all the way to the earth. He doesn't come to meet His saints, He brings them with Him. And they follow Him as they come. In the Rapture He comes and meets His saints in the air and takes them to heaven. In the Second Coming He comes all the way to earth with His saints and establishes their kingdom on earth. At the Rapture there's no judgment, there's nothing in the text of John 14 or 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 to speak of judgment, but here everything is judgment. The Rapture is a time of blessing. And this is a time of cursing. There will be blessing for the godly when He comes back, but the emphasis is here on judgment and no such emphasis is made with regard to the Rapture.

At the Rapture, as I said, He meets His own in the air. And here He sets His feet on the Mount of Olives, according to Zechariah 14. He puts His feet right on the Mount of Olives, splits the Mount of Olives, creates a valley in which He judges the world and establishes His kingdom.

Furthermore, the event of the Second coming of Jesus Christ is preceded by blackness, the darkened sun, the darkened moon, the stars are falling, smoke fills the universe, lightning and blinding glory introduce the coming of Jesus Christ. Such aspects are not associated with His coming for His saints in John 14 or 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. And that's why we believe that the coming for the church, which we call the Rapture, the catching away, is a different event that precedes the coming of Christ

in judgment to set up His Kingdom. And so we say we believe in a pre- tribulation Rapture, that is that Jesus catches away His own before the breaking out of the terrible judgments of His wrath during that seven period at the end of which He comes back to earth with His already raptured saints to set up and to reign with Him in the Kingdom.

And so we see here then that Jesus is coming in judgment fury. He's coming as a conqueror. Now let's look again at verse 11 and see some more about the return. It says that, He who sat upon this white horse, this symbol of conquering and symbol of holy, pure power is called "Faithful and True." He is called Faithful and True. Really there couldn't be a more appropriate name for the Lord Jesus. You remember He is called back in chapter 3 verse 14 "the amen, the faithful and true witness." So here for the second time Jesus is identified as Faithful and True. He is faithful to His promises, He is faithful to whatever He promises. And He speaks only the truth. Faithful and True returns.

In the third chapter of Revelation and the seventh verse He is described as "He who is holy, He who is true." Why is He called Faithful and True? Because He's keeping His word, right? He promised He would come, He promised He would come and He comes. He is faithful to keep His word, He is faithfulness and truth personified. And by the way, His name is certainly in vivid contrast to the unfaithfulness and the lying hypocrisy of Antichrist and Satan. Jesus always tells the truth because He is the God who cannot lie. He is always the faithful and true one. He will always keep His word. He promised He would come. He comes because He is faithful and true.

Today I am sure there are many who would be happy to sort of sort out the teachings of Jesus that they like, the teachings of Jesus that fit their sentiments. And happily they would reject His solemn judgments and His promises of fury and vengeance and wrath. But He is just as faithful and just as true to those promises as He is to the promises of salvation and grace and mercy. He's faithful and true. And you're never going to see it more clearly than when He returns because He will be faithful and true to His promise, to bring the righteous into a kingdom and to destroy the wicked.

The dragon is a deceiver. The beast is a false Christ. The second beast is a false prophet. And the world is filled at that time with false worshipers. But Jesus Christ is faithful and true. And because He is faithful and true, it says in verse 11, "In righteousness He judges and wages war." If He is faithful and true to His word, He has to act in righteousness. He has to do what is right. He has to have a holy and righteous reaction against sin, so He does. Faithful to His righteous character, faithful to His holy nature, true to His word, He comes and when He comes He has to do what He promised to do, what righteousness demands He do, He judges.

Once He came as Savior, then He comes as judge. When He was here the first time, wicked men judged Him. When He comes the second time, He will judge wicked men. He will not only be the judge, by the way, but He will also be the executioner. Remember that I read to you in Isaiah chapter 11 that He treads the winepress of the wrath of God alone? Angels are not executioners. Angels are

simply sort of the mop-up crew. And they are the sorting crew, according to Matthew chapter 13. But He alone treads the winepress. He alone has the power to execute. He alone has the power to bring final fury and the wrath of God.

There was a time when in His first coming He was brought before Pilate and Herod and Caiaphas and Annas, and brought before the crowd who cried for His blood, and they judged Him unrighteously. And there will be a day when He comes back to judge the world righteously. It will be different when Jesus comes, different than it was the first time.

There's a warning of that in the seventeenth chapter of Acts when it says in verse 31, "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed." What man? "The man He raised from the dead." The man Jesus Christ. So He's coming back to judge.

So He comes in fury to judge the world. And then this most amazing statement, "And to wage war." To make war. He comes as a warrior King. He comes to fight. Back in chapter 2 verse 16, amazingly, astoundingly, it is recorded that He said to the church at Pergamos, "I'm coming to you quickly and I'll make war against them with the sword of My mouth." He is a warrior against the ungodly and against the unbelieving and against the wicked and the sinful.

By the way, that mention of Him making war in chapter 2 verse 16 is the only other mention of Him making war in all of Scripture. And then it will be too late for the rejecters, they will obviously have been hardened beyond the point where they would respond positively. Even in chapter 16 verse 21 when they are at the very culmination of the horrors of the last judgment, when the last seal has been opened and the last trumpet blown, and the last bowl poured out, and hundred pound hailstones are crashing down on their heads, and you'd think they might repent. It says they blasphemed God. And they are at the point of absolute hardness. And this is when He comes, when there's no more point in waiting, when nothing else will cause them to repent, when no judgment moves them and no preaching moves them and no preacher can reach their hearts, He will come back and He will make war.

It's really a different Jesus than we're used to seeing, obviously. We're used to seeing Him ministering to the needy, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, casting demons out of people, giving peace to troubled hearts. We're used to hearing Him inviting those with heavy burdens to come to Him for rest. But that's not how it's going to be. He now comes on a war mission, He comes to search and to destroy.

This is not new character for God, nor is it a different personality than the God of Scripture. At the Red Sea, remember, back in Exodus chapter 15 and verse 3 when Jehovah destroyed Pharaoh and his hosts. You remember that Israel said, "The Lord is a man of war." The Lord is a warrior. It's an amazing title for God. It's an amazing title for the Son of God, but a true one.

Alexander White commenting on John Bunyan's great masterpiece called *The Holy War* wrote this, "Holy Scripture is full of wars and rumors of wars, the wars of the Lord, the wars of Joshua and the Judges, the wars of David with his and many other magnificent battle songs, till the best known name of the God of Israel in the Old Testament is the Lord of hosts. And then in the New Testament we have Jesus Christ described as the captain of our salvation. And then the whole Bible is crowned with a book, all sounding with battle cries, till it ends with that city of peace where they hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more," end quote.

The Lord is a man of war. In righteousness He judges and makes war. Frankly, the judging has already been going on in the breaking of the seals, and in the blowing of the trumpets and the pouring out of the bowls. But now He makes a final war. He who for long centuries had endured the scoffings patiently, the insults the bad manners of men who contemplated Calvary and, as it were, spit on Him, who displayed human hatred and contempt, who threw millennia have rejected the peace that He made through the blood of the cross. They're now going to find Him a warrior King. But there's not going to be much fighting on their part, the end will come in a split second.

You see, heaven cannot be at peace with sin. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, cannot look upon iniquity. God's patience has an end. He will not always tolerate iniquity. Justice cannot always live within justice. Truth cannot always live with lies. Rebellion cannot always go on. And when sin is finally incorrigible and man is incurable, will come the destruction. And mercy abused will bring the executioner. Here, says one writer, comes this sword of insulted majesty, the wrath of rejected grace.

Furthermore, this Conqueror comes not as other conquerors out of covetousness, ambition, pride or the love of power, this Conqueror comes in utter righteousness, in perfect holiness, in strict accord with every holy interest. And that's where it's going to go, this history of the world. That's where it's going to end.

Further in the description, verse 12, "And His eyes are a flame of fire and upon His head are many diadems and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself."

He has eyes like a flame of fire. What is that? Well nothing escapes His notice. He has penetrating eyes. His eyes pierce through and see everything. That too is said of Him in Revelation 1:14, "His eyes were like a flame of fire." It has to do with piercing, penetrating as well as purifying gaze. He can see into the recesses of every human heart. His vision penetrates everything.

In chapter 2 verse 18 of Revelation, to the church at Thyatira, it says the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire. When first He looked upon the earth, when first He came, His eyes sparkled with tenderness and joy as He gathered little children to Himself, as He expressed His love to the poor and the needy. His eyes glowed with compassion as when a single look on guilty Peter melted Peter's

heart and made him weep bitterly. His eyes were filled with tears as He looked over the city of Jerusalem and wept. And as he shed tears from those same eyes at the grave of Lazarus. But the day is coming when those eyes flash with fire, when they are penetrating burning eyes, probing the darkest recesses of every human soul and purging and purifying with judgment. To judge rightly He has to see everything. He has to sound the depths of every heart. He has to see behind every mask, under every facade. It is the flaming vision of righteous omniscience and anger.

And then it says in verse 12, "Upon His head are many crowns, many *diadema*, many king's crowns, ruler's crowns. And this speaks of His royal rank and regal authority. And it's the idea that He's just collected all the crowns and they're all on His head because nobody else rules anyplace. Here is the ultimate symbol of sovereignty. All the crowns are on one head. You will remember, won't you, back in chapter 12 as we were looking at the description there of Satan, we...we could see that he was a ruling monarch. In verse 3, "The great red dragon had seven heads and ten horns and on his heads were seven crowns." And then over in chapter 13 we saw the Antichrist and on his horns were ten crowns. So that Satan wore some crowns and Antichrist wore some crowns. But the day is coming when all the kings will yield their crowns. Satan will yield his crown. And Antichrist will yield his crowns. And the rulers of the world will yield their crowns and all the crowns will be on the head of Jesus.

And by the way, this was a custom in the ancient world. When Ptolemy conquered Antioch, he set two crowns on his head, the crown of Asia and the crown of Egypt, signifying the comprehensive nature of his rule. The dragon had seven crowns, the beast had ten crowns, but Jesus will wear them all. He puts them all on His head. They all become His and verse 16 says, "He is the King of kings." There will be no crowns for anyone else in that hour.

In chapter 11 and verse 15 we hear the same thought, a different way. "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever." It's a fair exchange, isn't it?, for a crown of thorns? A fair exchange. And what it refers to is I suppose what you could call unassailable sovereignty...unassailable sovereignty. He is King and no one can do anything about it. "Gird Thy sword on Thy thigh, O mighty One," the psalmist said as I quoted earlier. "And in Thy majesty ride on victoriously." He is the King.

Further it says about Him, "He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself." I can't tell you how many people have asked me what that name is? And I have told them all the same thing...it is a name that no one knows, not even me, and no one else. We don't like something like that, do we? We want to know. But this is something we don't know. John could see a name there, but either he couldn't read it, or he couldn't comprehend it when he did read it. It was unintelligible to him. He didn't know what it was. It was beyond human comprehension. It was beyond human knowledge. It was beyond human understanding. And listen, my friend, that's very encouraging with all that we know of Jesus Christ, we will not know the fullness of the mystery of His person. John

couldn't know it. Oh, maybe...maybe there are things that we'll know in eternity, surely there are, that we can't know now, but I'm quite confident that the full mystery of His being may well never be known to us. Yes we will know as we are known, to some degree, according to 1 Corinthians 13:12, and that's wonderful to think about. But here was John in an exalted vision taken to heaven and there was a reality about Jesus that he could not comprehend. There is an incomprehensibility to the character of God that perhaps even an eternally glorified human will never know. Oh we'll know so much more than we know now, but the full incomprehensibility of God will always be incomprehensible. And so all John is saying is there's something about Him that is way beyond anything we can ever comprehend.

That's wonderful to hear. Sometimes I think we can become overly familiar with Jesus. We can...we can over...we can overstate our comprehension and think we really know Him better than we do. There is a profound nature in the Lord Jesus Christ that is comprehensible only to God. Here comes the incomprehensible One, the sovereign One, the faithful and true One, the warrior King to do His judgment.

And then in verse 13, further describing the return, the ruler who returns, "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God." He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, this is not the blood that He shed on the cross, this is not a picture of redemption, my friend. This is a picture of judgment. And based upon what I read you in Isaiah, clearly the imagery behind this in Isaiah 63 is of a coming King with a blood-splattered garment. Jesus is coming with His blood-splattered garment.

You say, "Now wait a minute, He's coming with a blood-splattered garment, but the battle hasn't started? Where did the blood come from?" May I hasten to remind you, this is not His first battle, this is His last battle. He has worn His battle clothes before. Who but He has fought the dragon? Who but He fought for Israel in the days of Joshua? Who but He fought the kings of Canaan and Taanach by the waters of Megiddo? Who but He vanquished six world powers past and all the nations that have by this time fallen? No, His garments have been splattered with blood for a long time, who but He battled Pharaoh and the triumph of the Exodus? It's the Almighty Conqueror who has His war clothes on and His war clothes bear the stains of prior battles. This is not His first battle.

It's the same almighty Conqueror who battled with sin at the cross and mingled His own blood with the blood of His enemies on His battle clothes. And now these battle clothes are to be stained again and the stains now perhaps more far-reaching than ever before. He is to tread the winepress of the wrath of God and blood splattering in every direction in the holocaust of fearful judgment.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:7 it says, "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." He's coming in the fury of judgment to stain His garments again.

And then it says at the end of verse 13, "His name is called the Word of God." His name is called the Word of God. Just in case there's any question about who it is, we know who the Word of God is, right? John 1, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory," right? "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." The Word of God is none other than the second member of the trinity, Christ, the incarnate One who is also the Creator. He is the One with the blood on His garments, He is the warrior King. And He comes in judgment.

And so here again this name is so majestic. He...why does...why does...why does God to choose to call Him "the Word of God"? Because He is the expression of God, He is the revelation of God, He's the declaration of God. He is the one in whom we hear God speak and see God act. He is the full expression of the mind and the will and the purpose of God. He is God's Word. Word represents that which is communicated. He communicates God.

So the sum of His names really is a glorious picture, isn't it? He has a name which no man knew which expresses His essential deity. He has a name, the Word of God, which expresses His incarnate deity. And He has a name, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, which expresses His sovereign deity. Frankly, the gospel plan is in those three names. He is God who revealed Himself to man and some day will come to reign over the universe.

The sum of the names then is the sum of the picture of the Conqueror. So the return of the Conqueror.

Then we see the regiments of the Conqueror. Briefly in verse 14, "And the armies which are in heaven." Now we've got some armies up there in heaven, who are they? Well, they're clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and they're following Him on white horses. Who are these glorified troops? Well, get a little hint here back in chapter 19 verse 8, just go back a few verses. Here's the bride, verse 7, the bride is the church, as well as the redeemed saints who have been brought together for the great Marriage Supper to take place in the kingdom. And it says the bride, that is believers who have been redeemed, and it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean. Then it says this, "For the fine linen is the righteousness or the righteous acts of the saints." So down in verse 14 when it says that these armies in heaven were clothed in fine linen, white and clean, who are they? They have to be the saints...have to be the saints. And have to encompass the bride. It has to be the church.

So we said the church is raptured and now the church comes back with Him. They're coming back now depicted not so much in bridal character as in righteousness. This would, as I noted when we studied that earlier text in chapter 19, also encompass Tribulation saints who had been glorified. Because you see them in chapter 7 verse 9 standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed

in white robes. And in verse 13 they say, "Who are those in white robes? And where did they come from?" And he says they are the ones who came out of the Great Tribulation and they've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. So you've got the church garbed in fine linen, white and clean. You've got the Tribulation saints in their wonderful robes...robes that have been made pure and clean. And there's another group, Jude tells us that verse 14, "The Lord comes with many thousands of His saints, with many thousands of His saints." Literally, His holy ten thousands, to execute judgment upon all and to convict all, and so forth and so on.

Who would be the many thousands of His saints? Well, we certainly could conclude that it could be Old Testament saints. They've been there, too. And they're going to have a glorious resurrection at the end of the Tribulation. Daniel writes about that, a resurrection unto life. So you could have the church, the bride, the Tribulation saints, and even the Old Testament saints coming with the Lord. And we have to add another group, and that's the angels because in Matthew 25 and verse 31 it says, "When He comes all the angels come with Him." Ten thousand times ten thousand of the angels, two thirds of the original number, one third fell with Satan, the two third remaining glorious angels come with Him. All the saints of the Old Testament, all the saints of the church age, all the saints of the time of the Tribulation, all come blazing out of heaven with Him.

If...if we...if we want to make the Jude passage refer to the angels, we saw the little problem because then we don't have to get the Old Testament saints in there coming down from heaven, but rather we can have their resurrection happen right at the end of the Tribulation, which seems as the best time to have it and then they enter right into the Kingdom resurrected. But even if there is a gathering of these Old Testament saints and a bringing back, no promise was made to them that God had prepared a place for them in heaven to which they would have to go in their physical bodies first.

So it's best perhaps to see all of the saints coming. The white horses again are symbolic, like the bloody clothes are symbolic. I don't think Jesus will actually return in dirty clothes. But that's symbolic of the great warrior and the triumphant moment. Chapter 9, you remember, introduced calvary from hell, why not from heaven? Horses and chariots of fire protected Elisha and Dothan and a chariot and a horse took Elijah to heaven. That's symbolic of obviously of angelic power.

So the regiments of heaven come with the Conqueror. And that's who they are, they're all the regiments gathered in the glory up until that time.

You say, "What about the saints? What do we do?" Well we've come to reign, 1 Corinthians 6:2, Revelation chapter 20 has us sitting on thrones and reigning. And so once the Kingdom is established, we rule and reign in the Kingdom.

So we see the return and the regiments. And then just briefly, the rule of the Conqueror, and it's obvious. Verse 15, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword so that with it He may smite the nations

and He will rule them with a rod of iron and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty and on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

The rule of the King is depicted in very graphic terms. You see the return, the regiment and now rule. "Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword," it's a symbol of His slaying power. And John had seen that sword before, back in chapter 1, in the vision of verse 16. "Out of His mouth coming a sharp two-edged sword." In that particular vision that sword was a defending sword, to defend the church against the onslaught of Satan and his powers, but here it is a sword of judgment. It is the flaming sword of death. And it's the sword out of His mouth because He speaks and it's done. The whole thing is over in a second. Death-dealing power in His words. Where once He spoke comfort, He now speaks death. And though the saints, as I said, return with Christ to reign and rule, they are not executors, we are not those who carry out the vengeance. That is His task. The angels may help in the gathering process, but He treads the winepress alone. And John wrote, "For this purpose the Son of Man was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." He carries the sword, He alone uses it, He treads the winepress. The angels assist in the mop up and we in the reign in the Kingdom. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

We don't see any weapons, by the way, in anybody else's hands. None of the saints who come with Him have any weapons. His word is enough. And He, says Isaiah 11:4, will smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

So verse 15 says, "With this sword He will smite the nations." Israel has been purged. The elect out of Israel have been redeemed. And they will be preserved into the Kingdom. The rest of the world He will slaughter in an instant with His own word. Then He will set up His Kingdom and rule them with a rod of iron. That is to say there will be regenerated Gentiles...there's a lot skipped in there, there will be regenerated Gentiles, He's not going to kill them, they'll go into the Kingdom. And through that Kingdom He will rule those nations with a rod of iron. What does that mean? It means instantaneous judgment, it means swift punishment.

Chapter 12 verse 5 says, "The male child who is Christ will rule all the nations with a rod of iron." Psalm 2 verses 8 and 9 is where that comes from. Back in Psalm 2 is the promise that the Messiah would come and He would break the nations with a rod of iron. What that means is instant, swift, righteous judgment will be the characteristic of the rule and the reign of Jesus Christ. When He comes His judgment will be sure. It will be swift, unyielding, absolute sovereignty, immediate justice with severity. It's going to be a very different world than it is today...when there's so much rampant injustice and inequity. God will establish the law, Christ will execute the law, justice will be absolute, sovereign, instantaneous and severe. All will be required to conform to that law or be judged.

And, of course, we will participate at that point in that judging process. In fact, it says in Revelation 2:26, "To him who overcomes, I will give authority over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." So we get in on that ruling process. He does the execution, we do the ruling. The angels do the mop up after the execution.

Then John gives a further description of His rule by saying, "He treads the wine...rather of His judgment by saying...He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty." That comment relates to His fury and His wrath. He crushes the grapes in His wrath...a very vivid symbol of judgment. In the ancient times they would stomp on the grapes and they would squish and spurt everywhere, that kind of vivid bursting of the blood of people is the imagery here.

So He comes in fury and He comes in judgment. And He tramples in an instant all the ungodly, out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ comes the sentence, and the execution. And that puts Him in a position to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And it's written on His robe and on His thigh that that indeed is His name. Psalm 45:3 says, "Gird Thy sword on Thy thigh, O mighty One." And on that same thigh is the name King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He's identified in John's image as having a banner that sweeps across and goes down on His thigh, and it shows that He is ultimately the sovereign, He's ultimately the King. So all foes are vanquished. The slaughter is fearful, frightening, terrible thing. But mercy abused and grace spurned reaches this point. And when He came the first time they would have preferred a murderer over Him and they killed Him, killing the prince of life as the book of Acts says. They openly blasphemed God, they become more and more wicked as time goes on. Finally in the end their wickedness reaches irredeemable proportions and the executor comes back to execute. And the picture is clear and unmistakable.

The psalmist saw this, and I close with this, in Psalm 2, he saw it so clearly that He was going to come with a rod of iron and he said this, verse 11, or verse 10, excuse me, "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment, take warning, O judges of the earth, worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling...and I love this...kiss the Son lest He become angry and you perish in the way for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him."

Father, we hear the words of the psalmist. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him. We're thankful that we're not looking for the judge in fear, we're looking for the Lord Jesus in hope. We're not living under the threat of doom, but under the promise of joy. We thank You that in Your mercy and grace You brought us to kiss the Son, do homage to Him, show Him reverence so that He's no longer angry with us, but loves us and seeks only our eternal good. Father, we thank You that we will not experience this, that we are not set for wrath, but we have been delivered from the wrath to come by faith in Christ. We thank You that we're looking for the Rapture, not the return. But, O God, at the same time there's a world of people headed for the holocaust of all holocausts and You're not willing

that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. And so, Father, make us like the Apostle Paul, aware of the terror of the Lord so that we persuade men to embrace Christ. Never let us become complacent and content and satisfied, and since all is well with us, and all is in Your sovereign care, we have no obligation to a sinning world. May we not be so presumptuous or so disobedient, but rather to go everywhere pleading with men, be reconciled to God, make God your friend so that He need not be your enemy.

Father, commit unto us the ministry of reconciliation that men and women, young people, children might come to Christ while He is Savior and not face Him as judge. We thank You for this clear word. We live in the light of it. Make us faithful in His name. Amen.

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