

## V-Day

Revelation 19:11–21

*Studies in Revelation #26*

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**L**ife under the sun is hard. Work is toilsome. It's like that scene in the movie *Groundhog Day*: the alarm rings, you get up, you go to work, only to repeat it everyday. The things we don't think take work do, like marriage. Our relationships are fractured. We just came out of Tax Day and money is a worry to us all. Life is hard. And then there's being a Christian in the world. We are citizens of another kingdom; we swear ultimate allegiance to King Jesus alone; we live according to his rules oftentimes contrary to the world's rules. More and more we are seeing and feeling the pressure of persecution. Hilary Clinton just gave a speech in which she said religious beliefs have to change in order to allow girls and women access to abortion. And if you're paying attention you know these sorts of statements are not just rhetoric; they are shots across the bow of what is to come: suppression of freedom to think and believe what you want under the threat of punishment.

But what we're going through pales in comparison to our brothers and sisters across the world today who are suffering like Christ for Christ. And they have an intimate acquaintance with what the first century audience of John's Revelation were going through. If you recall my first sermon on Revelation back in September—if you weren't here I encourage you to go online and listen—I mentioned that one of the principles that needs to guide us in our reading and applying of Revelation is that it was written to real Christians. It has an original audience and it actually meant something to them.

And here at the end of chapter 19 John's words are meant to assure persecuted Christians of King Jesus' victory over his enemies at his Second Coming. It is meant to embolden persecuted Christians to stand firm in their testimony to Jesus regardless of the threats and consequences. Here, then, is a glimpse of *V-Day*. If you know your World War II history you know that when the war ended in Europe and then in Japan those particular days were called "VE Day"—Victory in Europe Day—and "VJ Day"—Victory in Japan Day. Here is the Christians *V-Day* over the enemies of the two beasts and their followers. Note two big details about this day of the Lord:

1. *A Vision of the Lord*
2. *A Vision of Victory*

### **A Vision of the Lord (vv. 11–16)**

The first thing John reveals here to assure and embolden us is *a vision of the Lord*. It's been a while, but several times already we've seen the Lord in glory. We saw him back in chapter 1 as the glorious Son of Man and then again in chapter 5 and the worthy Lamb-Lion. Now again here we get a glimpse of our ascended Lord who feels absent to us in our sufferings: **Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.** But more important than the horse is its rider: **The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war** (v. 11).

*Notice the names of our Lord.* He is called **Faithful and True** as he was back in 3:14. What an encouragement to beleaguered brothers and sisters like you and me who are constantly tempted to be unfaithful to Jesus in the world by renouncing our witness of

him. How many times have you been asked, like Peter, “Are you one of his disciples?” only to say, “I do not know him!” Yet Jesus is faithful to us and he is the true witness to the gospel he applies to us. He is also called **The Word of God** (v. 13). As John 1 says, as the Word Jesus is eternal God through whom all things were made and through whom the Father is known to us in the world. In other words, to persecuted Christians he is the Lord of the universe and the Savior of a people out of the world. And he is finally called **King of kings and Lord of lords** (v. 16). Like a painting that has a title over it to give it some description, here John reveals Jesus to us with these descriptive titles to help us know him better and to live for him in the harsh world we find ourselves in.

There’s something else in this vision of the Lord. *Notice the descriptions of our Lord.* Like in chapter 1:14 **his eyes are like a flame of fire** (v. 12), as he is the one who sees all our suffering; nothing is missed or forgotten by him. **On his head are many diadems.** I should say as an aside note well how this is symbolism like we’ve been seeing all throughout the book. You don’t put more than one crown on your head if you are king, but to say that he has many of them on his head is to say Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). The dragon (12:3) and the beast from the sea (13:1) had seven and ten crown, respectively, symbolizing their false sovereignty; Jesus has more than are numbered symbolizing his infinite sovereignty! He has **a robe dipped in blood** because as verse 15 goes on to say **he will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.** Children, to make wine out of grapes you need to get the juice out of the grapes. And traditionally this is done by stomping on grapes in a thing like a big bathtub with a hole for the juice to go out. This is how John shows us what it is like to be an

enemy of Jesus. It's like being a grape that is going to be stomped. And as I've been pointing out throughout our studies in Revelation, this comes right from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah 63, where the coming Messiah is described as wearing blood-stained garments from his victory over the unbelieving nations. Note also what verse 15 adds to Jesus' description: **From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.** Like in chapter 1:16 where we saw this symbolism, to say that Jesus has a sword coming out of his mouth is to say that he will judge. Paul describes Jesus' judgment of the enigmatic figure of the "lawless one" in 2 Thessalonians 2 saying, "whom the Lord Jesus will kill with breath of his mouth" (2 Thess. 2:8).

What a vision of our Lord, King Jesus! What an encouragement! And I find it doubly encouraging that tucked away in this description of our Lord is a description of you and me—we who believe in and follow King Jesus: **And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses** (v. 14). Who are these armies? Back in chapter 7 we read of them being the multitude of the saved "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (7:9). And what are they wearing in chapter 7 and here? White: the color of forgiveness; the color of purity; the color of vindication.

## **A Vision of Victory (vv. 17–21)**

“But my enemies are great in number and they are great in power.” Yes, they are. So John gives us *a vision of victory*. Victory over what or whom? When I played basketball it was not enough to practice my own skills or for my team to practice together. We also had to know our opponents. And so every week before practice we would meet in a classroom to watch video of our coming opponents. Of course for us, we had to actually go out and play and try to defeat them. Here John not only gives us a glimpse of our opponents and their plays, so to speak, but John shows us before the game even starts, our victory over them! And so complete is this victory that it is described in the gruesome language of an ancient post-victory battlefield: **an angel...called to all the birds, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great”** (vv. 17–18).

Starting in chapter 12 we saw a vision of the dragon, which was symbolic of Satan. He is that original enemy of God, being a wonderful angel of God created to serve God but who desired to be like God himself and so led a rebellion of angels now known as demons. He is that original enemy of humanity, tempting our first parents in the Garden and leading us to rebel against God thinking we could be like God ourselves. Then in chapter 13 we saw a vision of two beasts, which we’ve been saying are anti-Christian, persecuting government power and anti-Christian false religion. Again, don’t forget Revelation was written to our brothers and sisters in the first century just as much as it was to those in the third century, or the sixteenth century, or to us in the twenty-first

century. The power of government has been used and is being used today to attempt to wipe the name of Jesus from the face of the earth. When you hear the political pundits echoing politicians in saying that we have freedom of worship according to the First Amendment of our Constitution, don't get excited. They are speaking with forked tongue and changing the terms. They say, "Freedom of worship," because they want to get Christianity out of the public square first; then once they have us huddled in our corners they will come for us there; here. We have freedom of religion: to believe *and* practice without fear of the beast threatening us. Then in chapter 17 we saw Babylon, which we said was the ungodly world. These enemies have been at work since the beginning; they are at work today.

We began to see victory in chapter 18. In fact, if you notice the order in which these enemies are presented: dragon, beasts, Babylon; you'll see how their defeat comes in reverse order. Beginning with chapter 18 we saw the defeat of the forces of the worldly influence of Babylon. Now we see the defeat of the beasts. In the next chapter we'll see the defeat of the dragon. In fact, as I said in our second study in Revelation back in September, all of this happens at the same time at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. All throughout the book already as early as chapter 6, we read about the Second Coming and final judgment. But for the sake of our encouragement and emboldening, Jesus reveals his victory over all our enemies one at a time.

And encourage and emboldening this does! **The beast** (vv. 19, 20) of persecuting government power that arrests, tortures, and kills our brothers and sisters throughout the world will be defeated! The beast of false religion known as the false prophet (v. 20) who

tempts us to swear allegiance to a flag and to the Republic for which it stands more than the Lord Jesus will be defeated! And of these two beasts we are told that they are defeated by being **thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur** (v. 20). **The kings of the earth with their armies** (v. 19) who did the bidding of these beasts will be defeated!

This assures us who believe because we are on Jesus' side by faith. But if you don't stand with Jesus now, this is a warning of your future judgment. But since it has not yet come it shows you God's patience with you. Now is the time to give your life to Christ. Today is the day of your salvation if you will believe!

And as we come to the Lord's Supper now together, we come to it as a celebration ahead of time of our feast of victory. With all your sins and doubts, come forward to not only to declare that you will have victory in Christ, but especially to receive God's gospel declaration that you are already victorious in him! Amen.