

Christ Comes Riding upon a White Horse as King of Kings

Ezra 7:11-12

Revelation 19:11-16

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In the previous sermon, we moved from considering King Artaxerxes of Persia, who takes to himself the title, “king of kings” in Ezra 7:12, to considering King Jesus, who alone bears that title in a universal sense over all kings and kingdoms of the earth, “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16). We will be working our way through Revelation 19 in sermons to follow as we seek to understand and apply Christ’s universal dominion over all nations, especially as the Holy Spirit depicts it in Revelation 19:11-21.

Dear ones, Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). I, as a minister of Jesus Christ, am not your mediator before God. No minister, priest, bishop, pope, saint in heaven, or angel is your mediator before God. Jesus Christ alone is that all-sufficient mediator who can and will bring forgiveness to the sinner who trusts alone in Christ and His obedience as his/her justifying righteousness before God. But I also want you to understand that **Christ as our Mediator is also our King** and has conquered all His and our enemies by His bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven, at which time He was seated at God’s right hand. And from heaven the Lord Jesus rules and directs all of creation, all people, and all events to the glory of God and to the benefit of His Church (according to Ephesians 1:22). And it is as our mediatorial King that He is so graphically displayed in universal power and great glory for us in the vision which the Apostle John received in Revelation 19:11-21.

Now as we turn our attention to Revelation 19:11-21, let us read it in its entirety. In what we have just read, we observe that this portion of inspired Scripture depicts a great battle wherein Christ defeats Satan, and his chief agents: the civil beast (along with all of the nations of the world confederated with the civil beast), and the ecclesiastical false prophet. In a future sermon, we will describe in detail who is the civil beast and who is the ecclesiastical beast (or false prophet mentioned here in Revelation 19). But notice that this world battle against Christ and Christ’s victory over His enemies (in Revelation 19) immediately precedes the millennial reign of Christ (in Revelation 20).

Is this coming of Christ in battle to defeat His enemies (in Revelation 19) the bodily Second Coming of Christ, or is it a figurative, non-bodily coming of Christ in which Christ comes spiritually in the power of His Word and Spirit to defeat His enemies? How one interprets and understands this coming of the Lord is a watershed text which draws a line between Premillennialists (who believe that **Christ’s bodily Second Coming** will occur BEFORE the millennial reign of Christ), and between Postmillennialists (who believe that **Christ’s bodily Second Coming** will occur AFTER the millennial reign of Christ). For if one is a Premil, he/she will interpret this coming of Christ upon a white horse (in Revelation 19) to be His bodily Second Coming; whereas if one is a Postmil, he/she will interpret this coming of Christ upon a white horse to be a figurative, non-bodily coming of Christ (though a very real coming of Christ spiritually and invisibly).

This text in Revelation 19 is perhaps the most significant text to which Premils will turn in order to defend their view that Christ’s bodily Second Coming will precede the millennium. The Premil will argue, “It is all very clear. Christ returns to the earth bodily at His Second Coming in Revelation 19. Christ then establishes His millennial reign over all the earth in Revelation 20. Thus, the bodily Second Coming of Christ is premillennial.”

And perhaps at first glance, this reasoning of the Premil looks very compelling. In fact, some of us (myself included) were in the past premillennial, and understood this coming of Christ upon a white horse (in Revelation 19) to be Christ's bodily Second Coming BEFORE the millennium (in Revelation 20). But I submit to you that the Lord has opened my eyes to understand that what is recorded for us by inspiration of the Holy Spirit here in Revelation 19 concerning Christ coming on a white horse to defeat His enemies is NOT the premillennial and bodily Second Coming of Christ, but is rather a figurative, non-bodily coming of Christ in the power of His Word and Spirit wherein Christ invisibly and spiritually works through His angels, His gospel, and His people to bring about the defeat of His enemies before the millennium commences (in Revelation 20).

Dear ones, since this inspired text of Scripture is a matter of great significance and controversy that divides Christians into various churches; and since we ought always to be concerned about doctrines and practices that divide Christians from one another, for it is Christ's will that His Church be one and united in doctrine, worship, church government, and love according to 1 Corinthians 1:10; and since, dear ones, we should so love Christ, so love His truth revealed in Scripture, and so love our brothers and sisters who trust alone in Christ and His obedience alone as their only justifying righteousness before a holy God, we cannot simply dismiss, ignore, or run away from such significant differences and controversies that divide Christians, as if they were unimportant. Dear ones, we are obligated by our love for Christ, our love for His Word of truth, and our love for fellow Christians to faithfully examine and apply the truth concerning Christ's universal dominion and kingship that is found here in Revelation 19 (with the hope that Christ might use us in leading other Christians to a unity in the faith).

After all, the Lord Jesus revealed this vision to the Apostle John so that we Christians who follow throughout church history in the footsteps of Christ, His apostles, and His faithful Church might be blessed in reading, hearing, and keeping what is written herein (Revelation 1:3). Moreover, dear ones, it is never irrelevant or wasted time to pursue with diligence and faithfulness an accurate understanding of Christ's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16-17). And an accurate understanding of passages like Revelation 19 will not come by simply believing what we were taught on the basis of mere human authority (whether by a church, by a teacher, by a minister or priest, or by a parent). An accurate understanding of passages like Revelation 19 will only come as we humble ourselves in prayer and obedience to Christ, trust Christ to reveal Himself and His truth to us, and apply ourselves to understanding a particular text in its immediate context, but also interpreting one passage of Scripture by all of Scripture (for all of Scripture has the same author—God). And, dear ones, I ask, how can we show our love for Christ by obeying His Word, if we do not even understand what His Word teaches us (1 John 5:3).

Thus, I do not want this study into the accurate and faithful meaning of Revelation 19 to be dull, boring, and irrelevant to you. On the contrary, I want God's Word to come alive to you. I pray that it will burn in your innermost being today, that you will believe it as coming from Christ to you, that you will cherish it with all of your heart because Christ is speaking to you, and that you will go forth to obey it and apply it in your thinking, in your speaking, and in your acting.

Thus, for the remainder of this sermon and future sermons, we will consider whether Revelation 19 refers to the bodily Second Coming of Christ to the earth or to the figurative non-bodily coming of Christ. We must first sweep away that which distorts an accurate understanding of this passage before we can focus our attention upon that which is an accurate and faithful understanding of the universal dominion of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords here in Revelation 19.

As I said earlier, I am fully persuaded and convinced that Revelation 19 DOES NOT reveal to us the bodily Second Coming of Christ, as is taught by Premils. The reasons for this conclusion form the main points for the sermon this Lord's Day: (1) Revelation 19 DOES NOT Reveal the Bodily Second Coming of Christ Because This Text Is So Highly Figurative in Language; (2) Revelation 19 DOES NOT Reveal the Bodily Second Coming of Christ Because There Is No Resurrection or Translation of Christians Mentioned at the Time in which Christ Comes Riding upon a White Horse.

I. **Revelation 19 DOES NOT Reveal the Bodily Second Coming of Christ Because This Passage Is So Highly Figurative in Language.**

A. As this portion of Scripture begins in Revelation 19:11, there is a clue right at the outset that would help us to understand the symbolic nature as to what is revealed by Christ to John in Revelation 19:11-21. Carefully note what is written, "And I saw heaven opened" (Revelation 19:11). Beloved, **heaven was not opened in order for the Lord Jesus to bodily descend from heaven at His Second Coming.** No, John saw in this vision "heaven opened" in order for John to see the symbolic and figurative coming of Christ to judge His enemies. Heaven was opened for John's benefit, not for Christ's benefit. A very similar language is used in Revelation 4:1, when the Lord reveals to John by vision the glorious throne room of the Lord in heaven, using many symbols to describe that heavenly throne room ("After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven . . ."). Just as this door into heaven (in Revelation 4:1) was not opened so that the throne room of God might come to the earth, but so that John might see by vision the things revealed by God (as if he were standing in heaven itself), so likewise, we are prepared by the Holy Spirit (in Revelation 19:11) to anticipate (by way of many symbols) Christ, the King of kings, not parting the heavens to come to earth bodily at His Second Coming, but rather coming figuratively, spiritually, and invisibly by His Word and Spirit to subdue His enemies by His almighty power. Such a figurative, invisible, and non-bodily coming of the Lord in judgment, using such military language, is found in a number of Old Testament passages, of which I will mention the following three.

1. **Isaiah 63:1-3**, and notice the parallels to Revelation 19:11ff (and yet this refers to a historical judgment that God brought against Edom through Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian machine, cp. Jeremiah 49:17-18,22,28,30).
2. **Habakkuk 3:3-12,15** (and yet this refers to a historical judgment that God brought against heathen nations by means of the Chaldeans, i.e. the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, cp. Habakkuk 1:5-6).
3. **Micah 1:3-5** (and yet this refers to a historical judgment that God brought against Israel and Judah by means of the Assyrians, who destroyed the capital of Israel, Samaria, and led Israel into captivity; and by means of the Babylonians, who destroyed the capital of Judah, Jerusalem, and led Judah into captivity, cp. Micah 1:16).
4. Thus, I submit that as we consider what type of a coming of Christ is in view in Revelation 19:11-21 (whether a bodily or non-bodily coming), we should be careful not to jump to some unwarranted conclusion that what is in view here is the bodily Second Coming of Christ (as is alleged by Premils).

B. Next, as we continue to examine the first reason why Revelation 19:11-21 does not reveal the bodily Second Coming of Christ (as Premils so teach), namely because the language used is so highly figurative, let us examine the symbols used in Revelation 19:11-21 to describe this coming of Christ.

1. Christ was riding upon a white horse (Revelation 19:11).

2. His eyes were as “a flame of fire” (Revelation 19:12).
3. Upon His head are many crowns (Revelation 19:12).
4. He is clothed in a vesture that is dipped in blood (Revelation 19:13).
5. A sharp sword proceeds out of His mouth (Revelation 19:15).
6. This symbolic language is so characteristic of non-bodily comings of the Lord to bring

about His judgment (Revelation 2:16; Habakkuk 3:8; Revelation 1:12-16 [note the figurative language used to describe the non-bodily coming of Christ who comes to His churches and walks in the midst of His churches]). Nothing in these passages just mentioned (or in many others like them) would indicate that such figurative language indicates a bodily coming of Christ. Nor does the figurative language used of Christ’s coming in Revelation 19:11-21 warrant us to interpret this as the bodily Second Coming of the Lord.

7. In contrast to the highly symbolic language that is used when referring to non-bodily comings of Christ to bring judgment, note the obvious absence of such highly figurative and symbolic language when referring to the bodily Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 16:27; Matthew 25:31; Colossians 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7; Acts 1:11,9).

C. And so, I submit that the highly symbolic and figurative language found in Revelation 19:11-21 actually reveals this coming of Christ upon a white horse to be a non-bodily coming to judge the civil beast (and all who are confederated with the beast), to judge the false prophet (which is that Papal Church of Rome), and to judge Satan (by restraining him so that he cannot deceive the nations of the world in leading them into false religion for a figurative thousand years according to Revelation 20:1-3), rather than revealing this coming of Christ upon a white horse to be the bodily Second Coming of Christ.

II. Revelation 19 DOES NOT Reveal the Bodily Second Coming of Christ Because There Is No Resurrection or Translation of Christians Mentioned at the Time in which Christ Comes Riding upon a White Horse.

A. If this is the most (or one of the most) graphic and detailed presentations of Christ’s bodily Second Coming to earth (as is maintained by Premils), then it must be noted that there is an obvious and highly significant omission—there is no mention at all of the resurrection or the translation (which is also called the rapture) of Christians. For at the actual bodily Second Coming of Christ, the dead in Christ will first be raised from the grave and immediately receive glorified bodies, and then those Christians that are alive when Christ bodily returns will “in the twinkling of an eye” be caught up to be with the Lord in the sky and will be translated or changed into their glorified bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

B. However, not only is there no mention of a resurrection in Revelation 19:11-21, but the resurrection of the dead (both Christians and non-Christians) is revealed to occur (not BEFORE the millennium) but rather AFTER the millennium just before the Final Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Since the bodily resurrection of the dead occurs at the same time as the bodily Second Coming of Christ (as we just noted in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and since the Final Judgment also occurs at the same time as the bodily Second Coming of Christ (as we see in Matthew 25:31ff.), we must necessarily infer that the bodily Second Coming of Christ is revealed AFTER the millennium (i.e. Postmillennial) rather than BEFORE the millennium (i.e. Premillennial). I would also infer Christ’s bodily Second Coming from the words that are found in Revelation 20:9b-10 (for Christ’s bodily Second Coming is said in other places to be associated with fire or lightning, as we see in Matthew 24:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10; 2 Peter 3:10-12).

C. Dear ones, we have ended the sermon today on the subject of the resurrection of the dead and the judgment that follows. These are certain events to come, as certain as your own death. Are you ready to meet the Lord, and to appear before Him in judgment, if you should die today? What have you gained if you gain the whole world (if you gain riches, if you gain education, if you gain a good job, if you gain a wonderful family, if you gain the approval of others), but lose your own soul? We may be able to play the role of a Christian in our family, in the church, or with friends, but we cannot deceive Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Dear ones, examine your heart today. Are you trusting in your own obedience or in some grace or affection within you as that which will justify you before the King of kings and Lord of lords? If so (and I say it with love and tenderness), your faith is in vain. For it is not your faith that saves you, it is the object of your faith, Jesus Christ and His righteousness, that alone can save you. Christ invites all sinners who hear this good news of salvation to come to Him, to cast their sin upon Him, and to receive His glorious righteousness by faith alone. That, dear ones, is the only way in which you will have confidence and assurance as you anticipate your own death and that Final Day of Judgment before Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

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