

# Christ Advancing His Kingdom Worldwide

Revelation 19:11-16

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-06-10

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## Text

11 I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! And the One who sits on it, called Faithful and True, both judges and makes war with righteousness. 12 Now His eyes were a flame of fire and on His head were many diadems, having names written, besides a written name that no one knows except Himself; 13 and He was clothed with a robe that had been baptized with blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white, clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 And out of His mouth goes a sharp, two-edged sword, so that with it He may strike the nations. And He Himself will shepherd them with a rod of iron. And He Himself treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And He has a name written on His robe, even on His thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords!

## Introduction

Have you ever noticed that the Bible keeps asking us to do impossible things? Jesus asks us to forgive those who have hurt us terribly. He asks us to love those who are impossible to love. He calls upon us rejoice when we are persecuted. He commands us in the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. In Revelation 21-22 He calls us to believe that the world will be filled with believers and that everything will eventually be transformed by His grace. So even believing the astounding promises of the Bible for the future seems impossible for some people unless God gives them faith. But I was encouraged this last week by the man who in Mark 9 begged Jesus to cast the demon out of His child.

Mark 9:23 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

He was committed to believing, but he knew that his heart was so prone to unbelief. “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” Do you sometimes feel like that? Well, the book of Revelation was given to help our unbelief and to give us faith.

The words “I saw” are the clue that a new vision has begun.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, verses 11-21 form the introduction to the last section of this amazing book.

Revelation was divided into seven sections, each of which is subdivided into seven units of thought. And each of the major seven sections has an

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<sup>1</sup> So G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) and David E. Aune, *Revelation, Word Biblical Commentary*, Vols. 52a and 52b, edited by Ralph p. Martin. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997 and 1998).

introduction that focuses on the sufficiency of Christ and the victory of His grace. These introductions are designed to stir our faith and confidence in Jesus. And that is certainly true of this introduction.

This introduction has two snapshots of what Christ began in AD 70. Verses 11-16 show Christ on His white horse victoriously extending His kingdom to the ends of the world. Verses 17-21 show Christ extending His judgments to nations that refuse to bow to His kingship. It shows what we are in for if America does not change.

Now, each of these two snapshots shows a different side of the same coin and they both begin in AD 70. So though the timing is in AD 70 (that's when the white horse starts riding), the trajectory that was begun then goes way beyond that. It promises the conversion of the world. And as we will see, converting the world is quite different than looking to the world to support our agendas (which too many evangelicals do). Christ made it crystal clear to Pontius Pilate in John 18 that His kingdom did not derive from this world. There is not one iota of the kingdom of Christ that is dependent upon the world or anything in it. It is quite the reverse. These verses show heaven invading the world and changing the world from evil to righteousness. It is truly the beginning of a grand invasion by the kingdom of heaven. So let's dig into the first snapshot today.

## **I. His kingdom is not from this world, but invades this world (v. 11)**

### ***A. Heaven opened (v. 11)***

The first words say, "I saw the heaven opened." Heaven must open if we are have showers of blessings. That's why we pray, "Thy kingdom come. They will be done on earth as it is in heaven." There is an invasion of kingdom of heaven taking over the kingdoms of man.

### ***B. Christ riding from heaven (v. 11)***

And what is the first thing that rides through this portal in heaven? It is Jesus riding on a white horse. Where donkeys were symbols of times of peace, horses were symbols of conquest.

So what is the timing? This is not the Second Coming when conquest will have been long finished. The context militates against that. And so does Acts 1:11, where the disciples had just witnessed Jesus ascending out of their sight into heaven in a cloud, and the angel said,

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

He didn't go galloping into heaven on a stallion slaying His enemies, and He won't return from heaven at the Second Coming galloping on a stallion. He will come in like manner as He left. Likewise, this coming begins an invasion; it doesn't signal the end of His kingdom, as the Second Coming will. 1 Corinthians 15 says that Christ will not come back until all enemies are conquered, whereas this spiritual invasion begins His process of conquering. Adams, Reasoner, Brown, and many others have shown numerous other contrasts between this passage and Second Coming passages.<sup>2</sup> This is clearly rooted in AD 70. Yet Christ is invading planet earth in some significant way on that day.

### ***C. His heavenly armies riding after Him (v. 14)***

Verse 14 says, “And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white, clean, followed Him on white horses.” These angels are the invasion forces to take over planet earth. Reasoner says,

Christ rides between the first and second advent. After listing 150 revivals from the second century until modern times, Douglas and Eileen Crossman concluded he comes often (see Acts 3:19-20). And the frequency of revivals is increasing. From the time of the Reformation, there has been revival somewhere in the world every generation...

Christ rides in conquest. His kingdom progressively advances.<sup>3</sup>

And the symbolism of this chapter shows that though this conquering of the world will be gradual, it will be victorious. And the victory of His kingdom is symbolized in a number of ways:

## **II. The victory is symbolized by:**

### ***A. His white horses and white clothing of Christ and His armies (v. 14)***

First, the white horses and the white clothing of Christ and His armies is a symbol of victory. While white can also symbolize holiness invading earth (and there is probably an aspect of that in it), Mounce, Beckwith, Thomas, Ladd, F.F. Bruce, Swete, Bratcher, Leon Morris, Walvoord, Boxal, and many others from every school of eschatology demonstrate that the color white for

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2 Even Aune concedes that seeing the Second Coming in this passage “is problematic because the pericope contains no features clearly derived from traditional early Christian conceptions of the Parousia of Jesus.” David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, volume 52C of *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 1046.

3 Vic Reasoner, [A Fundamental Wesleyan Commentary on Revelation](#) (Evansville, IN: Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers, 2005), p. 460.

John symbolizes victory. Coke said that Jesus rode on this white horse “as a token of his victory and triumph over his enemies.”<sup>4</sup> Whatever is being started here, it will not be a failure.

And commentators point out that what is being started is signified by the fact that His only weapon is a sword that comes out of His mouth. I actually think that the rod is a kind of weapon as well, but it is tightly related to shepherding, so their point is well made. They say that this snapshot is dealing with the weapon of Scripture conquering people spiritually.

Another way of saying it is that the Great Commission will not be a failure. Christ intends to make every nation of the world into a disciplined nation (or a Christian nation) that obeys everything in His Word. These are the invasion forces that start that process. Which means that we are dependent upon heaven for the evangelization and transformation of earth. We cannot accomplish a thing with carnal weapons. Conquering planet earth must involve spiritual warfare and angelic forces.

### ***B. His diadems***

Second, the many diadems on His head symbolize His victory as well. Earlier Satan and the beast had diadems on their heads, right? Satan had seized control of the earth from Adam, and humanistic rulers have usurped the crown rights of Jesus. They wear diadems, but they don't deserve them. So these diadems on Christ's head symbolize that fact that Jesus will yank those arrogated diadems off of their heads to claim His crown rights as King of kings and Lord of lords. And we will look at those diadems more in a bit. But they show His victorious sovereignty and kingship.

### ***C. His names:***

But His names also show the fact that what Jesus begins, He will finish. He doesn't leave jobs half baked.

### **Faithful and True (v. 11)**

The first title is Faithful and True. He is faithful to His promises and He is true to His Word - no matter how unbelievable those promises might be. For example, when Romans 11:15 and 2 Cor. 5:19 both state that Christ's purpose is to reconcile the world to Himself, I choose to believe that He will keep His promise. Why? Because His very name is Faithful and True. There must be a reconciled world at some time in history, and Revelation 20-22

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Coke, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, volume 6, (London: G. Whitfield, 1801-1803), p. 1001.

describes that world. When 1 Corinthians 15 says that the Second Coming cannot happen until all things are placed under Christ's feet and all enemies are defeated, I believe that will happen. His very name and character is at stake if it does not happen. Chilton rightly said of this passage, "Every aspect of life throughout the world is to be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ: families, individuals, business, science, agriculture, the arts, law, education, economics, psychology, philosophy, and every sphere of human activity. Nothing may be left out. Christ must reign, until He has put all enemies under His feet." When Colossians 1 says that all things were created by Christ and for Him and that all things will be reconciled to Him, including thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, I choose to believe that He is up to the task of doing so. Because He is Faithful and True, the Great Commission will not be a failure.

### **The names written on the diadems (v. 12)**

His names mentioned in verse 12 also show His victory - "Now His eyes were a flame of fire and on His head were many diadems, having names written, besides a written name that no one knows except Himself." We've already seen that diadems were symbols of sovereignty and kingship. But in this verse, each diadem has a name of Jesus written on it. This means that the names exemplify the fact that He will successfully seize the diadems from Satan and the beast. And each name gives a different facet of that process. There are names that reveal His justice, salvation, kindness, wrath, and many other features.

And notice that there are names written on each of the many diadems, which means that Jesus has many names. And indeed, when you study the Bible you will discover that there are over 200 names of Jesus in the Bible. But even in the book of Revelation we have been given names that spell His victory. Revelation 1:8 said that He is the Alpha and Omega, or the beginning and ending of all things. Nothing can exist without His permission and all things that do exist are in some way promoting His glory. The same verse says that Jesus is "the Almighty," which means that no one can thwart His will - not Congress, or the Illuminati, or Satan. Revelation 5:5 already identified Him as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah - the ruler prophesied to bring peace and righteousness and prosperity to the earth. It will happen. Revelation 3:21 says that He is the Victorious One. When you look at the names and titles of Jesus, and you see that they are on His diadems and are thus the guarantee of His successful capture of all rule, it gives you great confidence that His kingdom will be victorious. Why? His names reveal who He is and what He does. They aren't just sounds. They have meaning that

dictates reality. Too many eschatologies don't make sense of the names of Jesus because they divorce the names from true dominion in history.

## The secret name (v. 12)

But that phrase indicates another name that no one knows except Himself.

Mounce says,

The most common interpretation is that it is a secret name whose meaning is veiled from all created beings. It expresses the mystery of his person. There will always remain a mystery about Christ that finite minds will never fully grasp.<sup>5</sup>

There is something mysterious - that even demons cannot figure out - about how Jesus establishes His rules. Even this unknown name is connected to a diadem, so there is mystery connected to His sovereign rule. Sometimes it is puzzling, but because it is connected to a diadem, it too results in victory.

But when you look at the Old Testament background to this unknown name, it becomes an even more powerful illustration of Christ's victory. Beale points out<sup>6</sup> that this is an allusion to Isaiah 62, which mentions a yet unknown name on a diadem in connection with Israel being Messiah's bride. So it fits the context. We looked at Messiah's marriage to the bride last time, didn't we? And the reason this allusion to Isaiah 62 is significant is that Isaiah 62 promises total victory over all Christ's enemies in time and history

5 Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 353.

6 If there is an OT background for the "diadems" on the horseman's head and his secret name, it is Isa. 62:2-3, which is supported by an allusion to Isa. 63:1-3 in 19:13, 16 and which applies the idea of a yet unknown "name" and the image of a "diadem" to Jerusalem, which figuratively represents Israelite saints (the "new name" promised to Israel in Isa. 65:15 may also be in mind). The "name" and crown respectively designate Israel's new, covenantal relationship with God and kingly status, which Isaiah prophesies they will have in the end time. The "new name" of Isa. 62:2 is said to show Israel's new, intimate "married" relationship with God (62:4-5, which also refers to Israel as a "bride" and God as the "bridegroom"). Targ. Isa. 62:2 says that "the LORD will make clear" the new but formerly unknown name when he fulfills the prophecy...

The explicit link between 19:12 and 2:17 is borne out by: (1) the common allusion to and similar use of Isa. 62:2-3 and 65:15, (2) the theme in both of a "name" that (3) is in some sense confidential, (4) unique verbal agreement (2:17: ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων ["a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives"]; 19:12: ὄνομα γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ αὐτός ["a name written, which no one knows except himself"]), (5) the figurative reference, preceding both, to a meal expressing personal communion. Therefore, that no one knows the name mentioned here except Christ means that the prophecy of Isaiah 62 and 65 has not yet been consummately fulfilled. But Christ's "name" will be known to his people when they experience the fulfillment of prophecy in a new, consummated covenantal marriage relationship with Christ...

Therefore, the symbolic meaning of the "unknown name" is the affirmation that Christ has not yet consummately fulfilled the promises of salvation and judgment, but will thoroughly reveal to all his character (i.e., his name) of grace and justice when he comes to carry out those promises in vindication of his followers. Though all will perceive his grace and justice, only his people will experience the full revelation of his grace, whereas his opponents will experience the full expression of his justice.

G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 953,956.

and says that Jesus will not rest until the church (symbolized by Zion) is glorious in all the world. You can see why many commentaries see this whole section as a symbol of the triumph of the Gospel throughout the world. It is full of symbols pointing in that direction.

### **The word of God (v. 13)**

Another name of Jesus is given in verse 13: “and He was clothed with a robe that had been baptized with blood, and His name is called The Word of God.” This harks back to the same author’s Gospel of John, chapter 1, which says,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. If that does not give you confidence in Jesus, I don’t know what would. According to John chapter 1, Jesus made all things, gives life to all things, and governs all things, so there is nothing that can stop his hand now. John 1 goes on to say that the Word enlightens every man who comes into the world. Men could not think unless Jesus enlightened them to think. They could not talk, unless He enabled them to talk. Even the spit they use to spit against Christ is spit that Jesus made. The point is that Jesus is the Sovereign, not man; He is God, not man. Jesus is not frustrated. He is Almighty.

### **King of kings and Lord of lords (v. 16)**

Verse 16 gives yet another name. “And He has a name written on His robe, even on His thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords!” Some versions translate the Greek word *kai* with an “and,” as if there are two places where the name was written. That’s a possible translation. If that is the meaning, then the name would be written on two places of the robe. But the very nature of a robe is to cover the torso and thigh, so commentators like Mounce and Beale see the Greek word *kai* as an epexegetical *kai*, that can be translated as “that is,” or “even.”<sup>7</sup> It was written on His robe, that is, on the part of the robe

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<sup>7</sup> Mounce says, “Commentators differ on the exact location of the inscription. If written in two places (as the NIV suggests), it could be inscribed on the girdle (or hilt of the sword) as well as on the outer garment. If “and on his thigh” means “that is, on his thigh,”<sup>25</sup> then it would refer to the place where the sword would customarily hang. The simplest explanation is that the name was written on that part of the garment which fell open across the thigh.” Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 356. Beale says, “Yet another name is added to explain further the ambiguous name in v 12. This name is written on the rider’s garment and thigh, either in two different places or only once, on a part of the garment that draped over the thigh (in which case *καί* would be epexegetical—“even” or “that is”; cf. Judg. 3:16). The thigh was the typical location of the warrior’s sword (e.g., Exod. 32:27; Judg. 3:16, 21; Ps. 45:3) and the symbolic place under which the hand was placed to swear oaths (e.g.,

where His thigh would be. Either way, this was not a tattoo, as Mark Driscoll thinks. This was clearly on the robe, and robes cover the thigh, they do not expose the thigh. It would not be a robe if it was a split gown that women sometimes wear today.

You've probably read Reformed authors who like to use this verse to justify tattoos. That is so exegetically irresponsible that I am surprised that they would do so. It is completely contrary to the Jewish nature of this book. Jews would be horrified by tattoos. Jews would have considered tattooing to be a marring of the image of God in man. Leviticus 19 explicitly forbids tattooing for Jews who honored the law whether it was ceremonial or not, so it is inconceivable to me that Jesus would be tattooed. Leviticus 19 says, "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD." This is the same section of Scripture that forbids divination, weird shaped shavings of head and beard like has become popular in some circles, cutting yourself for pleasure or punishment (a kind of masochism). And some people treat all of those things as ceremonial. I doubt it because of the connecting reason for not tattooing yourself. God gives as His reason: "I am the LORD." This is the same "I am the LORD" that punctuates the moral laws in that section:

Lev. 18:4 You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. 5 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

Verse 6 continues with a prohibition against incest. I am the Lord Verse 21 gives a prohibition of killing babies. I am the Lord. Idolatry, theft, swearing falsely, revering your parents, failing to pity the poor, taking advantage of the disabled, gossip, bearing a grudge, failing to tithe, cutting yourself, tattoos, Sabbath-breaking, occultism, failing to rise before the gray headed, lack of justice to the stranger, false weights and measures, and a general commandment to obey all His statutes and commandments are followed by an "I am the LORD." In fact, chapter 18 ends with a statement that the Canaanites were cast out of the land for doing the things listed in that chapter and warns that Israel too will be cast out if they do them: I am the LORD. I am more and more convinced that the issue of tattooing is a moral issue. And there is nothing in this verse to contradict it, contra Mark Driscoll.

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Gen. 24:2, 9; 47:29). Christ's victory over the wicked will be a fulfillment of God's promise to judge. Perhaps John could not at first read the name because it was covered by the garment or because of the initial luminescence of the vision (cf. v 12). But the name was revealed as the garment was blown aside or as the rider came into better focus." G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 963.

But the expression King of kings and Lord of lords is not merely a theoretical term. It appeals to Psalm 72 where eventually all kings really do bow down before King Jesus and acknowledge Him to be their Lord. And it is clear that Psalm 72 says it will be fulfilled in history. It also appeals to Psalm 2 where all kings are commanded to kiss the Son and submit to His reign. We are talking about a name which prophecies what will actually happen in history. This is not a theoretical King of kings and Lord of lords who has no kings or lords submitting to Him. That makes a mockery of the name. There will come a time when all kings and all lords will acknowledge Jesus.

#### ***D. That He is a Judge and Warrior (v. 11)***

But back to verse 11, it says that Jesus “both judges and makes war with righteousness.” Oh, that we had nations today who would judge in courts according to righteousness - in other words, according to the laws of Scripture. We would be a blessed nation just like Jesus is blessed if we would do so. Oh, that we had nations today that made war with righteousness - in other words, who warred according to the laws set out in Scripture. America does not do that. Our wars are scandalously lawless - they constitute murder. Our leaders do not submit to the Lord Jesus Christ who only wars with righteousness. Of course, people will criticize how Christ warred against Israel and Rome because they are so out of touch with what is just and righteous. They also are offended by His principles of justice because they call evil good and good evil. But longterm success will be granted by the Father to Jesus because Jesus submits to the Father in how He judges and wars.

But another thing we can see here is that Christ’s judgments on Israel and Rome illustrate that we do not need to wait till the Second Coming for Christ to judge His enemies as so many eschatologies insist. This judging and warring happened in AD 70. Where the prayers of the saints plead for judgment (as the saints plead in Revelation 6, Revelation 8, and other places), judgment happens. When the prayers of the saints plead for conquest, conquest happens. Many Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (like Psalm 72:2; 92:11-13; 110; Isaiah 11:3-4, and Jeremiah 23:5-6) speak about the Messiah judging the nations and warring against those that do not submit. Chilton summarizes those Scriptures by saying, Christ rides forth to do battle in the earth, subduing us to Himself, ruling and defending us, “restraining and conquering all His and our enemies,” as the Westminster Shorter Catechism says (Q. 26), rendering justice throughout the world according to the law of God, in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies.

### ***E. His eyes as flames of fire***

Verse 12 follows up with the clause, “Now His eyes were a flame of fire.” Mounce says, “Nothing can be hidden from the penetrating gaze of the Messiah.”<sup>8</sup> He cannot be fooled. He sees through hypocrisy. He is not satisfied with superficial righteousness. This is why Christ even fights against Christian nations of the past when they did not follow Him with unconditional surrender. His burning eyes are symbols that guarantee victory - full victory. Even in history, nations will not merely pretend to submit. There will be an actual submission of all things to Christ’s lordship. His eyes will see through anything else and not be satisfied with anything else. Isaiah 42:4 promises, “He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.”

### ***F. The diadems on his head with names***

I’ve already mentioned the diadems on Christ’s head, but there is one quote that I think is insightful that I will mention now. It comes from an Idealist who does not share our viewpoint, but he still has a lot of great insights.

Beale says,

The undefined multiplicity of diadems shows Christ is the only true cosmic king, on a grander scale than the dragon and the beast, whose small number of crowns implies a kingship limited in time. Christ should wear more crowns than any earthly king or kings, since he is “King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16)<sup>9</sup>

And of course, Isaiah 62 guarantees that Jesus will wear all the diadems of all the kings and lords of the earth, and these kings will cast their crowns at His feet. The very reference to diadems reminds us of Isaiah 62 and also guarantees victory.

## **III. How the kingdom advances**

### ***A. Christ’s presence (vv. 11-16)***

Well, how does this kingdom victory advance? It does not advance through a literal sword. It does not advance by church programs, politics, or any other gift of man to God. It does not advance through deceit or political maneuverings.

It advances first of all through Christ’s invading presence. We see that presence in every verse. Heaven must open for earth to be transformed. The

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8 Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 353.

9 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 952.

social Gospel of the liberals only makes things worse. It is humanism rearranging humanism to come up with some better form of humanism, and it is all destined for judgment. It is Christ and Christ alone that is the solution to this world's ills.

### ***B. His blood (v. 13)***

And Christ advances His kingdom through His blood. Verse 13 says, “and He was clothed with a robe that had been baptized with blood...” Because of the way translations have obscured the Greek word for “baptism” (translating it either as dipped or sprinkled) I used to think this was the blood of the enemies that had splattered on His garments as He executed them. I think a majority of the modern scholars have taken that position. And it is true that Christ will bloody his garments with the execution of His enemies. There are passages like Isaiah 63:3 that prophesy exactly that.

But there are a number of things that made me change my mind and think that this is probably not the blood of His enemies, but the blood of Christ Himself. First, the blood is already on His garments before He rides into battle - while He is still in heaven. That would seem to indicate that it is His own blood that conquers. It is a causative blood stain rather than a resultant blood stain.

Second, the Greek word “baptized” is better fitted to Christ's blood than to His enemies' blood. This is likely an appeal to the Mosaic ceremonial law that spoke of putting atoning blood on the garments of the high priest. It was a kind of baptism. It may also be an allusion to Genesis 49:11, which prophesies of Jesus:

Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, [That would be Palm Sunday] He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. [That would be a symbolic reference to His death]

But there is plenty of Old Testament background to robes being baptized with blood as a symbol of redemption.

Third, commentators point to all the previous mentions of blood in this book that are explicitly connected with Jesus, and they are all references to His own blood (1:5; 5:6,9; 7:14; 12:11).

Fourth, the only other reference to robes with blood on them is specifically said to be Christ's blood that is on the garments. It's the garments of the righteous in chapter 7:14. Garments made white by being washed with blood. I know you can't make clothes white by washing them in blood in real life, but in spiritual life you can.

Fifth, the tense of the Greek indicates that this is something that happened before with a permanently remaining result. The Greek perfect tense indicates that this is a past action with an abiding result. He always rides with the same blood on His garments. That makes much more sense of His blood than it does of enemies. Leon Morris says,

He is dressed (perfect tense) in a robe dipped [and “dipped” is a bad translation. But he says, “dipped”] (perfect again; perhaps both indicate permanency) in blood. This is surely a reference to Calvary; Christ overcame by shedding his blood. Most recent commentators hold that it is the blood of a defeated foe... but it is more than difficult to hold that John writes of blood without a thought of the blood shed on the cross. In this book he repeatedly makes the point that it is in his capacity as the ‘Lamb as though slain’ that Christ conquers. He overcame, not by shedding the blood of others, but by shedding his own.<sup>10</sup>

Yeatts<sup>11</sup> and others say much the same. So, for those five reasons I take this as Christ’s blood, not the blood of the enemies. If this is the case, then it would seem to reinforce the idea that Christ is riding in redemptive judgments. His blood both condemns the non-elect and saves the elect. But again, this shows that a social gospel is not the answer. This is a redemption that Jesus performs. Without the power of His blood, planet earth will not be saved. It doesn’t matter how much human blood the Utopian Marxists and Maoists might shed or how many wars are won, man will never get utopia. Only Christ’s blood is sufficient to bring the ‘paradise restored’ that is promised by God.

### **C. Angelic presence (v. 14)**

Verse 14 says that the kingdom is also advanced through the presence of Christ’s angelic armies. “And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white, clean, followed Him on white horses.” There is debate on whether these armies are composed of angels alone, believers alone, or all those who belong to Zion (both angels and believers). In one sense it doesn’t matter. We too are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. We too have access to that rod of iron.

But if Leon Morris is correct<sup>12</sup> that this is only a reference to God’s angels,

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10 Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 219.

11 Yeatts says, “The rider on the white horse also wears a robe dipped in blood. The verb for dipped is the perfect passive participle of the word baptism. The tense indicates that the dipping is the permanent result of the one-time event of the cross of Christ. Indeed, consistency with other texts in Revelation seems to require that the blood is Christ’s (1:5; 5:6, 9; 12:11; 13:8). Thus, a new transformation has taken place: the military Christ has become the crucified Christ.” John R. Yeatts, *Revelation, Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 357.

12 “Heaven’s armies followed him, also on white horses. Their clothing resembles that of the bride in verse 8 (though here leukon, ‘white’, replaces lampron, ‘bright’, ‘splendid’). They are probably angels rather

then the focus is upon the spiritual warfare that must happen before planet earth will become completely converted. But in any case, this is encouraging. Christ's angels far outnumber Satan's angels (2 to 1), and this too gives us confidence that the victory is guaranteed.

#### ***D. The two-edged sword of Scripture (v. 15)***

Verse 15 gives another means for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. "And out of His mouth goes a sharp, two-edged sword, so that with it He may strike the nations." In chapter 2:16 Christ is pictured as disciplining the church of Pergamos with this two-edged sword going out of His mouth. So what does He conquer the nations with? With the Word of God. Not natural law, but the Bible. Commentators agree that this is the Bible - the two-edged sword. Mounce says,

The Word of God... This idea finds expression in Heb 4:12, "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword."<sup>13</sup>

Well, this image once again shows that Jesus does not use carnal weapons to advance His kingdom. The only weapons Jesus has on his person is the Bible as a sword<sup>14</sup> and the rod as a shepherding instrument. This doesn't mean that the only outcome is salvation, because both the Word of God and the Shepherding Rod of Psalm 2 can also bring judgment to those who reject Him. When we pray the imprecatory Psalms, I believe that they do bring judgment. According to Isaiah 55:11, God's Word never returns to Him void; it always accomplishes what He purposes. Sometimes it is a savor of death unto death and sometimes it is a savor of life unto life. So we should never underestimate the power of Scripture to either harden people or to convert them. Both are victorious actions.

Let me make another application. If Jesus emphasized the Word in His conquest, so too should we. Yet too many people exclude the Bible from their conversations in business, science, farming, politics, and the media. It's

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than the saints, for the saints are rather the bride (v. 7). Swete agrees that angels are meant and comments on the fact that they are clothed in white, whereas their Leader's robe is dipped in blood: 'He only has had experience of mortal conflict; for them bloodshed and death are impossible.' Though they are called armies there is no mention of weapons and neither here nor elsewhere are they said to take martial action. The victory over evil is won by their Leader alone." Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 220.

13 Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 354.

14 "In the New Testament, the sword is symbolically the word of God (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16). Certainly, the context in Revelation indicates that the only weapon Christ will use to defeat his enemies is the sharp sword of the word of God (v. 21). In a similar way, the faithful saints conquer by the word of their testimony (Rev. 12:11)." John R. Yeatts, *Revelation, Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 359.

a shame. We are laying down our powerful weapon and picking up the weapons of the world. Let me tell you something, demons are a lot more competent at using the weapons of the world than you and I are. They are much more skilled at politics than you and I are. They will win that strategy every time. Until the church fights like Jesus fights - with the Bible, with the blood, with spiritual warfare, etc., we will not succeed.

### ***E. The rod of iron (v. 15)***

But verse 15 also mentions the iron rod of Psalm 2. “And He Himself will shepherd them with a rod of iron.” This shepherd’s rod is made of iron, not wood. As Mounce points out, this makes it “strong and unyielding in its mission.”<sup>15</sup> This is the only future tense verb in this whole section, probably because in AD 70 there were no nations to shepherd yet. It’s anticipating the future. But He comes with that rod in AD 70 preparing the way.

And actually, the iron rod had a dual function - it killed wolves and it guided sheep. So it was already functioning. But His goal was to shepherd the nations as Christian nations (we are talking sheep here), but Yeatts points out that it is only after he strikes nations down that he is able to later shepherd them.<sup>16</sup> There is a process that Psalm 110 and other passages speak of. AD 70 was a time of judgment, but that judgment resulted in massive conversions, and it wouldn’t be too many decades before nation after nation in the Roman empire began to become Christianized until Rome as an empire became Christian. We call those redemptive judgments. Both uses of the rod often happen at the same time. But the work of shepherding will continue until all nations obey all words that Christ has spoken. That still has not happened. It’s progressive.

By the way, turn to Revelation 2, and I will show you that we have a part in holding that rod that is in Christ’s hands. And if you are one of those who hold that the armies of heaven include saints on earth, this could strongly factor in. But it factors in regardless. Revelation 2:26-27.

26 And as for the one who overcomes [So we have human responsibility in this equation] and keeps my works until the end, I will give him authority over the nations; [and then he quotes Psalm 2] 27 “and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron; they will be smashed like clay pots” [and then Jesus says] 28—just as I have received from my Father.

So just as the Father gave Jesus authority to use that rod of iron to shepherd

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15 Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 355.

16 Yeatts says, “After Christ’s enemies are struck down, he will rule them with a rod of iron. It is surprising to note that this is the only future tense verb in the section, probably under the influence of Psalm 2.” John R. Yeatts, *Revelation, Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 359.

the nations, Jesus is willing to share that authority and that rod with those who overcome. This isn't going to happen as the church passive waits. It requires the bold and courageous activities of faith outlined in Hebrews 11.

### ***F. Wine press of His anger (v. 15)***

Well, back to Revelation 19, verse 15 uses yet another metaphor: "And He Himself treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty." The next section will focus on that wine press, with massive numbers dying.

Acts 17:20 says that God overlooked the rebellion of nations to some degree in the Old Testament, but now commands all men to repent. His judgments and calls to repentance are now worldwide. From AD 70 and on, nations would no longer get away with rebellion against Jesus. To those who think that the judgments of the next section are harsh, Robert Mounce says,

Any view of God that eliminates judgment and his hatred of sin in the interest of an emasculated doctrine of sentimental affection finds no support in the strong and virile realism of the Apocalypse.<sup>17</sup>

And I say, "Amen!" Throughout this age Christ has been treading the winepress of His wrath by bringing plagues, famines, wars, pestilences, riots, ethnic cleansings, and unleashing the fruits of humanism upon humanism. Until humans begin to realize that they like His law better than their own laws, the blood will continue to flow from the winepress.

## **IV. The extensive nature of the kingdom**

But I will end with four statements of how extensive this advance of the kingdom is prophesied to be. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

### ***A. All heaven (vv. 11-14)***

How well is God's will being done in heaven? From this passage we would guess that it is being done pretty well. Heaven had already been cleansed of all demons. Verse 14 indicates that the armies of heaven are fully cooperative. They are following Jesus. They are "clothed in fine linen, white, clean." God's will is being done perfectly in heaven.

### ***B. All earth (vv. 15-16)***

But that's not yet happening on earth. In AD 70, almost everything on earth was resisting God's will except for His tiny remnant of 144,000 who were in hiding. But Christ's goal was to have heaven invade earth so successfully

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<sup>17</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 356.

that eventually we will have an earth that reflects heaven. We should pray that Jesus would conquer our hearts so thoroughly that we would be willing to say to Him, “Thy will be done, Lord” on any issue. We should pray that Jesus would conquer our church so that our church more and more reflects the impact of heaven. We should pray that Christ would conquer business, agriculture, politics, money - everything.

### **C. Nations = Psalm 2**

Verse 15 speaks of His goal of shepherding all nations. That implies that all nations are eventually sheep. Matthew 25 indicates that nations will be divided into sheep and goats on judgment day. Sheep nations are converted nations; Christian nations. And every commentator agrees that this verse is an allusion to Psalm 2 which commands all kings to kiss the Son lest He be angry and they perish in the way. And those are the only two alternatives that the Son holds out - submit or perish. But how extensive is the trajectory? Eventually the nations will submit to His shepherding care.

### **D. King of kings and Lord of lords**

But the last phrase indicates that all the world will one day acknowledge Christ as their Lord because Jesus will be in reality, King of kings and Lord of lords. As Paul worded it, every knee shall bow. As Psalm 72 prophesies, Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him... His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed.

And with the Psalmist, may we all conclude,

Blessed is the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.

Amen and Amen.

Let's pray.