

The King Is Coming

Thy Kingdom Come – Part IV

Revelation 19:11-16

Introduction

On August 21st, 2009 – just a few weeks ago – the Supreme Leader of Iran, the Ayatollah Khamenei, called on all Muslims in his country and neighboring countries to intensify their preparations for the coming of the Islamic Messiah known as the Mahdi or the Twelfth Imam. This is their version of Messiah, who will come and bring peace to the world.

I find it interesting that many Islamic scholars believe that their coming Mahdi or world ruler, who is at the moment hidden but will make his appearance in the Middle East, will rule over the world for seven years, followed by a global resurrection. We, as Christians, also believe in the coming of a world leader who will offer peace in the Middle East and basically attempt to rule the world for seven years, right? And we have learned already that no one would want to follow him because he will be the world's final deceiver.

These are fascinating days for the believer, are they not? All we have to do is go online or read news reports to discover a growing fever, a building fervor over coming apocalyptic events.

Whether it is Nostradamus who keeps helping to sell magazines at Harris Teeter with all of his predictions of coming disasters, or the Mayan Calendar predicting the end of the world as we know it in 2012, or a Chinese oracle predicting the coming of global cataclysmic events – the fever is growing.

If there was ever a time in world history in which people are hoping for and anticipating the coming of someone who will make a global difference, it is today.

The election of our own president, and probably every president in the future, will have to somehow convince the public that they can offer – in one key word – “hope,” not only for America, but for the entire world.

People are now thinking globally. We are all more aware of global events than ever.

A sense of global responsibility is now the primary distinctive of civilized cultures. This is true from second graders who are being taught to go green

and save the planet, to leaders who are as concerned with CO2 emissions into the atmosphere as they are stock prices on Wall Street, to religious leaders trying to smooth out contrasting doctrines so everyone can get along.

The world and its future seem to be on everyone's mind. What a great time to be a Christian and what a critical time to have the answer.

It is wonderful to have objective, inspired revelation of exactly what will indeed happen on earth during the coming apocalyptic times. We know who will be affected, how to escape it, and, most importantly, that the Sovereign King happens to be in control of it all.

The predicted truths of Christ's return happen to form *the* greatest anticipation in all of redemptive history. From the fall of Adam to the second coming of the Second Adam when Christ sets up His kingdom – this signature fulfillment has been, since the beginning of time, the long awaited moment. This is when:

- the true King will receive the ruling scepter (Genesis 49);
- God will establish the throne of David's greater Son (II Samuel 7);
- the Son will rule the earth with a rod of iron (Psalm 2);
- the nations will be judged (Joel 3);
- the returning King will defeat His enemies (Zechariah 12);
- Jerusalem will become the center of Messiah's kingdom (Zechariah 12);
- the angels will gather the unbelievers for judgment (Matthew 25);
- Jesus Christ will visibly, physically descend in holy majesty to judge and rule the world (Revelation 19).

It is no wonder that the second coming of Christ is considered the culmination of redemptive history.¹

Even though the average Christian knows more about the first coming of Christ – His first advent –

the second coming of Christ is actually the focus of much more scripture.

The Bible was never silent on this subject. In fact, Christ's second coming to rule and reign on planet Earth is emphasized at some point in at least 17 Old Testament books; Jesus Christ referred to His second coming 21 times, and 7 out of every 10 chapters in the New Testament mention His second coming.ⁱⁱ

For every one Bible verse referring to Christ's first coming there are eight verses on His second coming.

Now the average Christian is still more familiar with the first coming of Christ simply because it is history. However, there is some confusion about His second coming. The perspective of Old Testament prophets allows a student of the word to interpret both comings of Christ as either one event or closely related in time. The mixing together of these two prophetic events has led many Jews, for example, to reject Jesus Christ. Old Testament prophecies spoke of a Messiah suffering but reigning . . . they thought the suffering Savior would become the conquering Savior in His first coming. They did not realize He would come a first time to suffer and then a second time to conquer.ⁱⁱⁱ

We have arrived at this moment in world history, recorded in John's Revelation. John provides a seven-fold description of this climactic event as Jesus Christ returns to planet Earth.

Christ's Second Coming

Let us look at the details in Revelation 19 beginning where we left off in our last study at verse 11,

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True . . .

1. Introduction

We notice right away in this description that there is an introduction. This coming One is named at least four different ways in Revelation chapter 19 and the opening names that introduce the sovereign King are ". . . Faithful and True . . ."

Why are these names used? Why not use other names that have been given to Him over the ages of revealed scripture? These include:

- the Lord Jesus (Acts 7:59);
- Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1);
- Christ, the Son of God (John 11:27);

- the Lamb of God (John 1:29);
- the King of Glory (Psalm 24:10);
- the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8);
- the Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5);
- the Hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27);
- the Bread of Life (John 6:35);
- the Everlasting God (Isaiah 40:28);
- the Word of Life (I John 1:1);
- the High Priest (Hebrews 6:20);
- the Good Shepherd (John 10:11);
- the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6);
- the Savior of the World (I John 4:14).

Why is one of these names not used? Perhaps it is because none of them can operate unless He keeps His word and His word is the truth.

- What kind of Lord would He be if He did not tell the truth?
- What kind of God would He be if He could not keep His promises?
- What kind of Prince would He be if He did not conquer His foes?
- What kind of High Priest would He be if He could not sanctify forever His chosen people?
- What kind of King could He be if He did not return to claim His throne?

John writes,

. . . He . . . is . . . Faithful and True . . .

Donald Grey Barnhouse, a former pastor who wrote prolifically, illustrated this point in his commentary on Revelation by recounting the story of a woman who was on her death bed. This woman talked to her family and friends of her assurance of salvation. On one occasion, a young minister who was unconverted happened to visit her. He had never seen anyone quite so sure of her future with the Lord and thought he should warn the dear soul against such dogmatism. She answered him well, Barnhouse wrote, as she said, "If I should awake in eternity to find myself among the lost, the Lord would lose more than I would." The minister asked, "How's that?" She responded, "While I might lose my soul, He would lose His good name."

This is so true. If God is for even one moment and with even one person unfaithful and untruthful, He has lost everything.

Since the Bible speaks more of His promises relative to the second coming of Christ, is it any wonder that John would record his vision by writing, effectively, “I saw heaven opening and the Sovereign Lord descending . . . just as He promised . . . He has kept His word.”

. . . He . . . is . . . Faithful and True . . .

2. Transportation

Secondly, notice immediately in verse 11 not only Christ’s introduction, but His transportation.

John writes,

. . . and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it . . .

“Behold,” or in other words, “Would you look at that – a white horse, and the Lord riding on it.”

Now to John and his generation, a white horse was clearly symbolic of a victorious general or emperor. The Roman Senate granted Julius Caesar permission to drive a chariot drawn by white horses through Rome to celebrate his victory in North Africa.

During victory celebrations like these, Rome would decorate everything they could with white fabric and white flowers. Juvenal, the Roman poet living during the time of John the Apostle, referred to these times when Rome would become “a city in white.”^{iv}

The citizens would pour out of their homes and businesses to throng behind their Caesar to celebrate his triumph.

While a white horse is symbolic of a victorious Emperor, I also believe He will literally ride a white horse through the skies and reign in on the Mount of Olives where He will dismount.

3. Vindication

The third description of this climactic event could be summed up in the word “vindication”. The last part of verse 11 says,

. . . and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

This is the actual Battle of Armageddon at which we will take one more look in our next study together.

Jesus Christ is not just bringing a choir, He is bringing an army. The armies mentioned a little later in this paragraph are not angelic hosts, although the hosts of heaven will surround Him when He comes. These are a fulfillment of prophetic scripture that

Christ and His church will come in glory to judge the world.

The New Testament book of Jude repeats the very first prophecy, uttered thousands of years earlier by Enoch, the great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandson of Adam, saying that,

. . . the Lord [will come] with many thousands of His saints,

to execute judgment upon all . . .

(Jude 14-15a)

Imagine, only seven generations removed, Enoch prophesied, not of the first coming of the Messiah, but His second coming.

Zechariah prophesied that Jehovah would one day come and stand on the Mount of Olives as He defeats all the unbelieving nations. Zechariah said,

. . . And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Him. (Zechariah 14:5)

By the way, this is a wonderful verse to show Jehovah’s Witnesses contacts – Zechariah’s prophecy of God standing on the Mount of Olives with Christ, the embodiment of deity, God in the flesh, as He returns to set up His kingdom. Simply compare Zechariah 14 and Matthew 24.

Paul wrote of this same event when he sent to the Corinthian church the news that they would one day judge the world with Christ (I Corinthians 6:2-3).

This apostle also wrote of the coming glorious day of Christ’s revelation to the world as sovereign Lord and ruler when he said to the Colossian church,

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:4)

Jesus Christ and His beloved will be forever vindicated.

4. Vision

John records another description of this scene as he mentions the perfect vision of Christ. Notice what John writes of Christ in the first part of verse 12.

His eyes are a flame of fire . . .

His holy, piercing vision into the heart of mankind is part and parcel of His holy judgment. Nothing will escape His notice.

These eyes that once reflected tenderness and joy as He cradled a child in His arms; these eyes that reflected compassion when He encountered the distressed; these eyes that communicated sadness toward a denying disciple near a courtyard fireplace; these eyes that communicated forgiveness to this

same disciple along with others who had forsaken Him; these eyes that wept over Jerusalem; these eyes that shed tears at the graveside of His friend . . . now flash with the fire of holy judgment.^v

The world might try to say, “How can You judge us? You weren’t there. You didn’t see me do anything wrong.”

The truth is implied in this verse – He comes with omniscient vision. He is an eyewitness as the omnipresent Sovereign. He has all the information necessary to render a just verdict.

5. Domination

The next word that sums up John’s description of Christ’s second coming is the word domination. Notice further in verse 12,

. . . and on His head are many diadems . . .

A diadem was the crown of royalty. Esther received a diadem when she became queen of Persia (Esther 2:17).

A diadem was often nothing more than an elaborate head band, about two inches wide. Jewels could be attached to it or other insignia.

Excavations have given us ample pictures and reliefs of ancient kings wearing their diadems.



We have excavated carvings of an Assyrian King wearing his elaborate diadem with an attached bright red ribbon embroidered in gold hanging down to his shoulder.



Another relief shows a Persian emperor, whose name I could not pronounce, wearing his brightly colored diadem – a red headband with a green plume. This is every father’s dream son-in-law. This is what I am hoping for. Actually, I think I have seen this guy at the mall!



Here is one more picture – and I will not make fun of this guy, even though he is wearing red lipstick! This particular drawing depicts the typical emperor wearing his diadem – this would be in the mind’s eye of John’s readers.

I discovered that after Ptolemy VI, the Pharaoh or King of Egypt, defeated Antioch 160 years before the birth of Christ, he wore two of these diadems on his head – one representing his sovereignty over Egypt and the other over Asia. There was most likely some sort of insignia identifying the kingdom.

So what John is telling us when he writes that Christ is wearing “many diadems” is that Christ has conquered every other king and every kingdom.

Further evidence of Christ’s total domination is in the next verse. The first part of verse 13 says,

He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood . . .

Some would suggest that this blood is a memorial of His own blood. I do not believe that simply because this is a picture of judgment, not redemption.^{vi}

The language of Isaiah removes all doubt when he graphically writes of the Lord avenging Himself on His enemies. He writes,

Why is Your apparel red . . . like the one who treads in the wine press?

God answers,

I have trodden . . . them in 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...

(Isaiah 63:2-4a)

In other words, this scene portrays the awful Day of Judgment in the Battle of Armageddon in which Christ is seen victorious and with the blood of His enemies literally splattered all over His garments.

To the average person on the street, talk of God like this would shock and stun them. They do not understand that the unbelieving world is called by the apostle Paul “the enemy of God”. They have been deceived by the god of this world that they are really

okay, as one man told me recently, with the man upstairs. There is no big deal with God – He would not hurt a fly.

The truth of scripture is that He is storing up His wrath until these days when it pours out like an unstoppable tsunami.

We have already learned that the blood will flow after this battle up to the bridles of horses. Because unbelievers refused to wear, as it were, the blood of Christ upon their hearts, Christ will wear their blood on His garments. The world will be utterly horrified at the unrelenting, unmerciful vengeance of God unleashed at last.

This is what Paul warned the Athenians about in Acts 17 when he said that everyone needs to repent because,

. . . [God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness . . . (Acts 17:31)

This day has come.

Paul goes on to say that it will specifically be the God-man Jesus Christ who acts out the judgment of Triune God (Acts 17:31).

Now, as John continues to describe this amazing scene, if we have any remaining question who this coming sovereign is, John refers to Him with another name that he used years earlier. Notice the last part of verse 13.

. . . and His name is called The Word of God.

This is the “logos” (λογος) of God; the Spirit of God. John introduced us to this expression in John chapter 1, verse 1.

In the beginning was the Word [logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now the One is coming to rule and reign, fulfilling the prophecies that Jehovah will come to the Mount of Olives.

The One who is coming to defeat His enemies and reign on planet Earth is the same “Logos” that was born among us and of whom we beheld His glory (John 1:14), and as many as received Him – the “Logos,” the Word – became the children of God (John 1:12).

- We have the written word of God – John 5:39.
- We have the spoken word of God – John 3:34.

- We have the living word of God – John 1:1 and Revelation 19:13 (add this verse to your list of verses that clearly declare the deity of Jesus Christ).
- Our Bible is the written word of God.
- Our gospel message is the spoken word of God.
- Our Savior is the living Word of God.^{vii}

The written word, authored by the Living Word, empowers us to deliver the spoken word to a world that will one day give an account before this Jehovah who is coming back to reign on earth. He is Yahweh in the flesh, the Living Word – the visible expression as the embodiment of triune God (Colossians 1:15).

There is another word that came to my mind as I studied this paragraph.

6. Exhilaration

For the world this will be different – it will be all terror and bloodshed and the horror of the reality that they had indeed refused the Living Word of God. But for the believer like us who are actually in this future scene returning with Him, one word came to my mind, and it was the word “exhilaration”. Notice verse 14.

And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

This is the same clothing mentioned earlier in chapter 19 of the bride of Christ. This is the church pictured here. The plural word translated “armies” indicates distinct groups – many believe they will include resurrected Old Testament saints, tribulation martyrs, and angels.

However, the clothing John focuses on is the clothing of the bride – “fine linen, white and clean”.

This is a message of triumph for the church above all other saints of all the other ages.

In John’s day, the church was muddied, trampled, persecuted, and exiled, as John was himself while writing this Revelation.

This is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise Christ gave to His church when He said,

. . . I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

For the believer the timeline is now complete; a rapture – a resurrection, a reunion, or a return – and the reign of Christ. For the church, her days of conflict, rejection, and persecution are over.^{viii}

Do not miss the fact that believers are, like Christ, returning on white horses.

Is this just figurative language? Certainly John writes figuratively in verse 15 when he shows us the word of God coming from the mouth of Christ like a sword.

However, John has actually stated *twice* this means of transportation by divinely provided white horses – the transportation of a conquering King.

What makes this scene even more remarkable is that in the days of John, the army did not *ride* on white horses – that was reserved for the emperor – they *walked* behind him.

Oh, but this Emperor has provided the same transportation for His conquering beloved.

One of the only differences we will notice is that her garments are not splattered with blood. Why? Because Christ does the fighting. It is His word alone that will defeat the enemy armies at the Battle of Armageddon. He does the fighting, and it is over in a moment – and we do the cheering.

The imperfect tense of the verb translated “to follow Him” provides a graphic picture of Christ, the celestial warrior, with His armies seated on white horses following after their leader [as they gallop from the skies to encounter the enemy armies].^{ix}

Besides the fact that we have no reason to view these armies riding horses as figurative, I personally believe these are indeed literal white horses. Even to this day, no matter how many forms of transportation we have invented and no matter how fast we can travel, there is nothing quite as majestic or stirring as a horse in full gallop.

Sure, we have all seen things move faster than a horse. I have been on the Autobahn overseas going 100 miles an hour and can remember being passed in my vehicle by a guy on a motorcycle going so fast that I thought I was doing 50. But that was just irritating; there was nothing majestic about that.

In the center plaza of Las Colinas, Texas, my wife and I saw what has become the largest equestrian sculpture in the world. There are nine bronze statues of mustangs fashioned in various poses – some in full gallop – racing across a pond of water. Fountains are designed to spray water where the hooves of these horses make contact. It is stunning and people all around the world have traveled to see this magnificent sight.

Horses used to graze behind our home on a twenty-acre pasture – now used by cows and their calves. No matter what we were doing, when we

heard the thunder of hooves we would stop and watch as these beautiful thoroughbreds raced across that pasture. The sight and sound was stirring.

Imagine what John sees and hears – millions upon millions of white horses galloping across the skies toward Jerusalem. The King is coming and with Him His saints.

Let me give my seventh and final word from this description.

7. Exaltation

Notice verse 16 as John describes our Commander in Chief.

And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

The Greek construction is better understood when translated,

And on His robe, even on His thigh He has a name written . . .

The Lord is not baring His thigh – what John is describing is the Lord’s monogrammed robe wrapped so that this magnificent title can be seen draped at His thigh.

The thigh, however, was the place where a mounted warrior’s sword would normally be strapped.^x

The only weapon our Lord brings is the power of His word. And draped across His thigh is simply another name.

This is a name above every name – the only other time this expression appears together is in Revelation chapter 17, and it is reversed.

The two titles in this name are separately attributed to God in other parts of the Bible, but here they are both given to Jesus Christ. This is another declaration of His sovereignty and deity.

He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Caesars were fond of being called King and Lord.

The monogramming on this robe simply states there is no more supreme King than Christ; there is no Lord greater than our Lord. Everyone else is His subordinate. Everything is at His footstool.

What a procession John describes here. What thunder. What majesty and glory.

Does it occur to you how obvious it is that Jesus Christ continues to lavish upon us His grace?

We are in this scene – puny little us. We are allowed to ride to victory in the same way as our great God.

If we were God, we would ride the stallion and everyone else would ride a scooter or a skateboard, or walk.

We are faltering, failing, stumbling, cowardly, finicky, limited, faithless, selfish, impatient saints, yet all this is long past. As members in this triumphant bridal procession, we will gallop forward just like the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are with Him in every way!

Imagine the President-elect coming by your home and saying, “Look, when I’m inaugurated into office, I want you out there with me on the steps of the Capitol. I want you with me.”

Imagine the Prince of Wales saying to you, “Listen, when I’m crowned king and seated on my throne at that grand ceremony, I’m planning on pulling up another chair for you to sit beside me.”

Are you kidding?

I am not – a million times greater than this. The King is coming!

Our Lord invites us to mount up, basically saying, “You’re coming with Me.”

The last time I rode a horse, I fell off – but not this time. Evidently there are some riding lessons between now and then for me and you!

The King is going to say to us all, “Mount up. It’s time to return as promised, and you’re coming with Me. You will be with Me!”

What incredible thrills, majesty, glory, excitement, fulfillment, security, and opportunity await us as Christ in His glory takes the throne and all His saints reign with Him in His kingdom.

This is like Paul writing to Titus. “This is our longing,” he wrote, “we look forward to the wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.” (Titus 2:12-13)

It is no wonder that Martin Luther, the reformer, once said, “There are only two days in my calendar – ‘today’ and ‘that day.’”

Today and that day!

ⁱ John MacArthur, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 2000), p. 211.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 217.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Jeremiah, What in the World Is Going On? (Thomas Nelson, 2008), p. 214.

^{iv} Mark W. Wilson, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Revelation (Zondervan, 2002), p. 114.

^v MacArthur, p. 217.

^{vi} MacArthur, p. 217; Kendell H. Easley, Holman New Testament Commentary: Revelation (Holman, 1998), p. 353.

^{vii} Daymond R. Duck and Larry Richards, Revelation (Thomas Nelson, 2006), p. 290.

^{viii} Edward Hindson, Revelation: Unlocking the Future (AMG, 2002), p. 195.

^{ix} Robert L. Thomas, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1995), p. 388.

^x Easley, p. 355.