

THE COMING KING WHO RULES WITHOUT RIVAL!

REVELATION 19:11-21

In the southern United States, the story is told of a particular courtroom scene. On the first day of proceedings, the prosecuting attorney, while calling an elderly woman to the stand as his first witness, asked her, “Madam, do you know me?”

“I certainly do,” she replied. “I have known you since you were a little boy. You terrorized the entire neighborhood with your misbehavior. You were always in trouble, a constant worry to your parents and a continual nuisance to the community. I am greatly surprised that you ended up on the right side of the law.”

Taken aback and fumbling for a response, the prosecutor blurted out, “Do you also know the defense attorney?” “Most certainly!” she replied. “He was a terrible student all through school. I am surprised that he graduated. I am even more surprised that he made it through law school. Actually, his law practice is in a shambles. I’m sure he runs the worst law office in the district and I cannot fathom why the defendant would consider being represented by him.”

By this time, the judge had heard quite enough. He motioned for both attorneys to approach the bench. Then, in subdued tones, he said to them, “I’m warning you! If either of you asks this lady if she knows me, I’ll send you to the electric chair.” Well, one can readily see why the judge was not enthusiastic about this woman and her testimony. Who knows what she would have said about him. The Judge of all the earth, however, Jesus Christ, is most worthy of our highest testimony. He is glorious, radiant, and altogether majestic as presented to us here in Revelation 19.

Heaven stands open, and John sees this victorious Champion of the Church. Here is the One who is both the Son of Man and the Son of God; He is both the Lamb and the Lion; He is the Word of God, the messianic King; in fact, He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings!

I want us to understand from the outset that while much of the language of Revelation is metaphorical and full of rich and colorful symbolism, we must not take the return of our Lord to be metaphorical or merely symbolic. It will be real. In fact, the Scriptures teach that the manner of our Lord’s Second Coming will be very real: first, it will be a *personal* coming; second, it will be a *visible* coming; third, it will be a *glorious* coming.

His Personal Return

You will remember the scene in Acts 1 at the Lord’s Ascension. The disciples are spellbound as they look intently up into the sky. Suddenly two angels appear and stand beside them. “*Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven*” (v. 11).

Peter obviously believed these angels. Listen to him preaching to his fellow Israelites with these words:

“*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through the holy prophets*” (Acts 3: 19-21).

Paul also believed in the personal return of our Lord. Listen to him as he speaks to the church in Colosse:

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21) ... *“When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory”* (Col. 3:4).

This is the same Jesus who traveled the dusty roads of Judea and Galilee, who walked on water, went to the Cross, emerged from the tomb full of life, and visibly ascended into heaven in power and victory. It is the same Jesus who appeared to more than five hundred of his followers in between his resurrection and ascension. It is the same Jesus who will appear again when he comes to usher in his eternal kingdom in all its fullness. This appearing – at his Second Coming – will be personal.

His Visible Return

Scripture teaches us that our Lord’s return will also be visible. Jehovah’s Witnesses claimed that Jesus returned in 1914 in an invisible way. Revelation 1:7, however, rules out such an invisible return: *“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”*

Paul encouraged Titus with these words: *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ ...”* (2:11-13).

The first appearing was certainly visible. John writes that, *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

His Glorious Return

Just as the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, was seen at our Lord’s incarnation, so it shall be seen again at his Second Coming. In fact, his Second Coming will be far more glorious to the human eye than was his first coming. Our Lord’s former glory was seen preeminently on the cross, where it shone forth as Divine self-sacrificing love. It was not seen in the day-to-day physical appearance of Jesus as he moved among the people. The first coming of Christ was very humble indeed. In fact, the prophet Isaiah had foretold how he would appear:

“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (53:2-3)

Paul also reminds us that in his first coming the Lord *“emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,”* and *“humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross”* (Phil. 2:7, 8).

What a difference between that and what we read here in Revelation 19! Notice the description of the Rider on the white horse. This description, complete with names, leaves no doubt that this is none other than Jesus Christ returning in glorious conquest. The first time our Lord came, it was as a lamb to be led to the slaughter.

When he comes again, however, it will be as the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-14) and Lord of lords and King of kings (cf. 1 Tim. 6:13-16)! This time he will come to inaugurate his kingdom and set up his millennial reign. He will sit on the throne of David and fulfill every O.T. prophecy concerning his coming reign (e.g. 2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 45:6; Isaiah 63:1-6; Zech. 14:1-9).

When Christ returns, he will put all opposition down for the last time. The fate of those who oppose him to the end is graphically described in verses 19-21. Since they refused to accept the Lord's gracious invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb, they will be compelled to be at another banquet. Instead of partaking of food, however, they will be the food! Such is the tragic end of the ungodly.

It is both sad and sobering to consider the plight of the armies of the world. That they would even presume to amass themselves for a final battle against the Lord shows how their pride and rebellion have distorted their thinking. Evil, in its very essence, is irrational. To oppose God is the height of insanity. The outcome proves this, because there is really no fight. "***The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse***" (19:21). Almighty God speaks and it is accomplished! One word from the mouth of God is more powerful than the combined nuclear arsenals of the world's super powers. Thinking people have always known that ideas are more powerful than guns, and the pen mightier than the sword. Who, therefore, can stand in the face of the Word of God? God Almighty is the One who spoke and called a universe into existence; He is the One who said, "***Let there be light!***" and there was light. So, at the end of the Age, when He speaks a pronouncement of judgment to the nations, what is supposed to be their climactic act of defiance is over before it starts.

What must be our response to this vision? At least five things are mandatory:

1. Relate to one another in love (1 Thess. 3:12-13)
2. Commit ourselves to ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-2)
3. Be steadfast (James 5:8)
4. Be a soul-winner (Jude 21-23; 2 Pe. 3:12)
5. Refrain from judging others (1 Cor. 4:5)

Let no one doubt the Word of God! Our Lord is coming again. He is coming to rule without rival. The time-bound and transient kingdoms of the earth, which appear and soon vanish like puffs of smoke, must yield to the eternal rule of the Creator and Redeemer who comes in power. He is the Word of God; he is the Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords; he is our Jesus.

Let us not be like the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25, who slept when they ought to have been waiting and watching. If we will relate to one another in love, commit ourselves to ministry and mission, remain steadfast, be soul winners, and refrain from judging others, then we shall be ready when heaven stands open, the white horse appears, and we hear the voice of the One who is called FAITHFUL and TRUE ... KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS!