

CHRIST IS THE KING OF KINGS David R. Clark
Revelation 19:11-16 May 16, 2010

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Ascension

¹¹ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Brothers and sisters of the King,

I would guess that if you asked people what their favorite time of the Christian Church year is, you probably wouldn't get too many people who would say the fourteenth Sunday in Pentecost. Most of us would talk about Christmas or Easter. I know many of you have told me that Lent is a particular favorite, with our extra opportunities to worship and focus on our Lord's passion. Christ's ascension usually is not in the conversation.

I think there are a number of reasons for that. Many people would say that it just isn't practical enough for them. In other words, they might say, "It's not all that practical for my every day life." Others might say, "I know it's the time when we celebrate the Great Commission and that's really what is important." The Ascension affects the most mundane parts of your life and it affects how you witness to the world about Jesus because it proclaims that Jesus CHRIST IS THE KING OF KINGS. But what does that mean?

1

One of many pictures in the Book of Revelation is of a King who has fought a battle and triumphed. We know what it means to win a victory. From our first competitions playing Chutes & Ladders/Candyland to Little League to hearing, "We are the champions," we have all experienced victory. Today when we see the tickertape parade for the latest victor, we see a much tamer version of an ancient triumphal procession.

But a triumphal procession is not just about victors. War and battles are a street with two sides. One side certainly has won, but the other side has lost. Victory was nothing so ordinary as an athletic competition or even a political election. This victory means the difference between life and death.

That is true for our King, too. In Revelation the side who has lost is most often referred to as, "the nations." But just look at the way our King is described to the losing side!

He is called *a judge who makes war*. His eyes *blazing like fire* see through every single hypocrisy. He is *dressed in a robe dipped in blood*. This is not his own blood, but the blood of the vanquished. He has struck down all those who have not believed in him with a terrible *double edged sword* which we know is the word of God. His rule over them is not one of benevolence. He rules them with *an iron scepter*. In his wrath over sin, he will tread on them *as grapes in a winepress*. (He has trampled down the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored, Battle Hymn of the Republic.) For the nations, for all those who relied on anything other than our Christ, the King of Kings is awful. His reappearance will be terrible.

Brothers and sisters, I hope this impresses on each of us, the seriousness of unbelief. As much as we love our children, our parents, our spouses, our friends, even the stranger who serves you your coffee from behind the counter at Starbucks, those who do not worship the king, worship an idol. This is truly a black and white issue. Either you are for him or you are against him. There is no "Switzerland." You can't be neutral. There are only sides!

That is particularly difficult for you and me, in our misplaced love, if we somehow think sin and unbelief are ok. It is difficult if we think that God's patience in carrying out judgment is somehow a leniency toward sin. It's not! For all those who think that they can "get away" with it or put it off until tomorrow, he will be terrible. He will be awful.

This is a warning for you and me personally. We dare never consider sin as something we can collectively bargain with God. Satan will continue to whisper in my ear that the pet sins I harbor in my heart, aren't hurting anyone. That the sins my loved ones commit can simply be overlooked. These attitudes and thoughts are the attitude and thoughts of the nations. Those who conceal such in their hearts will find that the King of Kings is awful.

2

This is why you and I sorrow over our sin. This is why we take seriously every transgression, every misstep, every single hasty word. It is why even a lustful look betrays a need to repent and turn away. It is why Peter's bitter tears at the crowing of the rooster are shared by every single Christian who has denied him by our words or actions. It is why we speak clearly with the publican, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." It is why the words of my confession can never be spoken for me and why I long day after day, week after week to lay these burdens of guilt at his cross.

It is why I look up to his cross and see him bleed all over my guilt and sin. It is why a tomb with nothing in it but some slightly used grave clothes give me hope and joy.

It is why although we are foreigners in the midst of the nations and although we struggle with the routine challenges of life, our focus is not on the world around us, but on the skies.

It is why we look not only back to his ascension, but forward to his return, when the one whose name is the Word of God, will return riding on that great white horse, with all of the armies of angels with him dressed in fine white linen. It is why you and I live every single day in the sure hope that time will end, probably soon, but we will be ready because our faith is in him. We know the victory has been won. The victory parade has begun and we are simply waiting on the parade route for the king to reach us so that we can follow along. We know and we believe that Christ is the King of Kings. He is our king and he is awesome.

The King of Kings is ruling over all things and puts all of the power of the universe at your disposal. That means it affects every single thing that happens every single day of my life. That's practical.

It's also the celebration of the Great Commission, but what will you tell people? What will you witness to the nations? What will you teach those who are Christians? Our God is an awful God for all those who oppose them. Our God is an awesome God for all those, like you and me, who wait expectantly for him to return with the army of angels. But most of all, it is a reminder that Christ is the King of Kings. Amen.