

## The Rider on the White Horse is Coming

### Revelation 19:11-16 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> 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 wages war. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Coming out of his mouth is 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. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

For the last couple of kids' messages, I've asked them to tell me how they picture certain things – whether it's heaven or love or, like today, Jesus. No doubt you started to picture Jesus when I asked them how they pictured him. What came to mind? Think of and write down some descriptive words or start sketching a picture. Go ahead and do that right now. Use the space in the worship folder, if you would like. How do you picture Jesus?

Now, let's see what you pictured. Maybe your Jesus has kind eyes with a hint of a smile, one with outstretched arms beckoning you, inviting you, to come to him. Maybe you picture Jesus as the Good Shepherd lovingly clutching you as his sheep in his arms. Maybe you picture the resurrected Jesus showing you the holes from the nails and the spear as he did for his disciples, something like that famous painting by Caravaggio. Maybe you picture Jesus sitting on a golden throne in the bright clouds of heaven with a golden scepter in his hand and a crown on his head.

I'm guessing most, if not all, of us pictured a nice, kind Jesus, a Jesus of love. Did anyone sketch or think of the Jesus described here in Revelation 19? He's the rider on the white horse with eyes like blazing fire, eyes that see all, that penetrate you down to your very soul. He has many crowns on his head, showing just how immense his rule is as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself, a bit of mystery that we can't picture but also tells us that we don't know everything about Jesus. A sharp sword comes out of his mouth to strike down the nations. His hand holds an iron scepter to keep people in line. He has a robe dipped in blood, a picture enhanced by the description of him treading the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty, that his robe has blood splashed up against it as he crushes his enemies.

With that last description, I'm thinking that there are a couple of you who are impressed with this picture of Jesus, who maybe mouthed "cool" with a bit of reverence and respect while others of you feel kind of sick to your stomach, wondering if you should walk out right now because this picture of Jesus is revolting and not something that I want my kids to picture in their minds or draw during service. Jesus can't be a blood-thirsty, violent man, like someone out of the movie *Gladiator* or *300*. No, that's not my Jesus. Yet this is the picture we have, and it's a picture given to us for our comfort, a picture that lines up with the truth of Jesus' ascension.

We say in the Apostles' Creed, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and that he will come again to judge the living and the dead. The angels announced to the disciples who watched Jesus ascend into heaven that this Jesus would come back the way that he left, coming down from heaven. He comes the second time not to sacrifice or die for us; he comes the second time to judge with justice.

How is that good? Well, I'm guessing that it gets to you – all the injustice you see in the world. Does it make you sick how people can be exploited and brutalized, how someone can not only think up the idea of going into a school and opening fire but carry that thought through? Does it make you angry that nations wage war, killing people, destroying lives, and then using propaganda to call it a liberation when it's nothing short of a power grab? Are you beside yourself when the government makes laws to legalize sin?

Take it down from the world level. How about injustice in your personal life? Who of us have not experienced unfair treatment? Yes, we get slights here and there, but there's always more. What heinous ways have you been sinned against? How have people taken advantage of you? Have you been physically abused, verbally assaulted? Have people used your body for their sinful indulgence?

We've experienced the injustices of the incredible cruelty of mankind. Doesn't that make you wonder what God's going to do about it? When you don't see any action, does God then feel a bit powerless, a bit useless? Two weeks ago, we heard that God is love, and that love is patient and kind, not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs. Does God as love make him a pushover when it comes to injustice? Is he just sitting up there on that throne in heaven that he ascended to, not doing anything for us? When is he actually going to help me in my life with all the injustices that I experience?

God is love, but that doesn't mean that he's a pushover, that he is some feeble old man who just winks away acts of injustice saying something like, "Boys will be boys." No, Jesus is actively and powerfully ruling all things for us right here and right now. That's what it means that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. It's not that he's just chilling out on some throne in heaven, kicking back and taking it easy. It's that he has resumed this position of full power and authority, that he is ruling all things over the entire universe and everything on earth as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords so that his love, his payment for our sins, his perfect life lived for us, his death died for us, his resurrection from the dead to conquer death are all proclaimed to rescue all people from this world and all the injustices.

What's more is it's not that Jesus only whisks us away from all the injustices we experience. No, he brings the justice. That's the picture here in Revelation 19. "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 wages war." (verse 11) It may feel like an eternity before God actually does something about the injustices we experience because we want to see immediate results, but the vision given to the Apostle John tells us that Jesus rides in, coming back just as he said that he would. He comes to wage war against injustice.

Vengeance, paying people back for the injustices and the wrongs that they committed against us, is not our job; it's Jesus' job. He comes to judge. He sees all that has been done, all the injustices of the world – everything from unjust wars to selfish politicians to school shootings. He knows how we have been hurt, how injustice has come to us, how we have been assaulted or abused or taken advantage of. He speaks the condemning truth to evildoers with the sharp sword that comes from his mouth. More than that, he treads them down with the fury of the wrath of God Almighty, crushing the evildoers. When Jesus returns on the white horse, he comes and judges with justice. He settles the score and does not wink away evil or let it off scot-free.

Will Jesus coming on the white horse judge rightly, fairly? Absolutely! He is called "Faithful and True." (verse 11) He cannot get the facts wrong. His blazing eyes have seen everything, including everything in our hearts. All our secrets are laid bare before him. Nothing is hidden from him. He cannot misjudge anyone.

This is a powerful and kind of scary picture of Jesus. Scary because his blazing eyes see everything that I have done. Yes, injustice has been done to me, but I know that I too have treated people with injustice. I've hurt people. I've wronged them. Will the rider on the white horse wage war against me? Will he crush me in the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty?

This question is why we thank God that the rider on the white horse is not the only picture of Jesus. Yes, he's always been a God of justice and, because of that, he stepped in and paid the price for our sins. He is the Lamb who was slain for us. He himself was crushed in the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty for us. He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. Jesus paid the price we owed for our injustices that we committed. By his sacrifice, we have been cleansed with our robes being washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, just as we saw with the great multitude in Revelation 7. God's wrath against your sins, the injustices you've committed, have been satisfied because Christ is risen; he is risen indeed. Alleluia! That's the new light of the Lamb that we live in. That's why we will welcome the rider on the white horse to wage war by judging with justice on the Last Day.

There are a lot of ways to picture Jesus, all of them have something to comfort us. It's good to picture Jesus as love because God is love; It's good to know of his care and compassion which led him to pay the price for our sins. But it's also good to picture God as this rider on the white horse who wages war against injustice, that he's not a pushover. Jesus is our conquering king. We see the outcome in advance. All evildoers will be crushed by Jesus, treading upon them in the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. The King of Kings is coming to bring justice to us and for us. Come quickly, our rider on the white horse. Amen.