

**THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON**

Episode Seventeen: Revelation 19:11-21

Armageddon. No place stirs the imagination more than this site where the final axis of evil will gather to battle the Lion King. A single sword from his mouth will strike down the Beast, along with the gathered armies of the world. This one called “Faithful and True” will come with such power and fury that he will not even need the assistance of the vast armies of heaven that follow in his wake. The Battle of Armageddon is not only an awesome reminder that the Lion King and his followers will one day triumph, but it also shows us how to overcome in the conflicts of this present age.

*“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war”.*

1. **The King is Coming.** [Revelation 19;11-16] Everything in the Apocalypse of St. John has been preparing us for the ripping away of the veil. The Scroll of History is reaching its grand climax. History moves inexorably and unalterably from the first paradise to the last, passing through the cross and moving on to the triumphant return of Christ. The Puritans called this *The Blessed Hope.*
* **What a difference a look makes.** *“Now [or then], I saw heaven standing opened, and before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.”* [vs. 11**]  *“…heaven standing open…”***The Greek word *apokálypsi* literally means “to pull away a curtain” or “lift a veil” to reveal what is hidden behind it. The entire Apocalypse of John has been a gradual lifting of the veil to reveal what St. Paul calls “the heavenly realms”—unseen by the naked eye, but more real than what we can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste with our five senses. This is as close as we will get to seeing heaven…this side of heaven.

***“I saw…”***or *“I looked…”* [vs. 11]We have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly in this apocalypse—just as we see the negative and positive in our present time. We cannot take our eyes off either. We must remain vigilant in the face of the pervasive and corrupting power of evil. We have to look out for Babylon, the Beast, the Dragon and their seductive ways. But we can be so focused on the terrifying, that we forget to focus on the triumph; to see the opportunities in the obstacles; to keep hope in the most hopeless of times; and to focus more on heaven than hell; to obsess more about Jesus than the devil; and to look to the Bible more than the daily drumbeat of bad media news.

St. Paul writes, *“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report…think of these things.”* [Philippians 4:8]. Or, as he says in another place, *“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”* [Colossians 3:2]

* **The Militant Jesus.** He who entered Jerusalem as a suffering servant on a donkey will now descend to the Mount of Olives as Warrior King to destroy all his and our enemies.

***“…a white horse.”*** [vs. 11] In ancient literature, a horse speaks of honor, power, and speed. A white horse is a symbol of victory. When Roman generals returned home after victory, they were given a triumphant parade, and the horses who pulled their chariots were always white.

***“…whose rider is called Faithful and True…”*** [vs. 11] Jesus keeps all of his promises, including judging the world: *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. The people of every nation will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right but the goats on his left.”* [Matthew 25:32-33]

***“With justice he judges and wages war.”*** [vs. 11] For centuries, theologians have wrestled with and debated the question of what constitutes a just war. In our checkered history, so-called Christian nations have marched off to *Holy Wars* and *Crusades* against the infidel. But there has never been a just war in history because they’ve all been waged by sinful people. But Jesus is sinless, holy God the Son. He will not wage war out of greed, ambition, rage, lust for power, or to prey on the least, last or lost. His reasons, methods and ends are perfect justice.

***“His eyes are like blazing fire…”*** [vs. 12] Some translations say, “…like flames of fire.” His eyes burn through all our masks, pious words, pretenses, excuses, rationalizations and straight to our hearts. In the Bible, holiness is always seen as a fire that burns away all that is patently evil and all that pretends to be good, exposing only that which is real and eternal.

***“…and on his head are many crowns.”*** [vs. 12]When he was last here. He wore a crown of thorns. Now he wears a *diadema* which is the Greek word for a crown of authority and power—that of kings and Caesars. But, more than one—*many.* He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. All crowns belong to him alone. Even the saints throw down their crowns before his throne. As the Scots Presbyterians used to say, “We have no king but King Jesus!”

**“…a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.”** [vs. 12] Later we will see that name revealed in Revelation 19:16. But for now there is a powerful lesson in this: God does not choose to reveal everything to us. If he did, we couldn’t handle it. There so many mysteries that seem unsolvable. As St. Paul says, “We peer through a dark glass…” [1 Corinthians 13:12] We want to know the answers, but God only gives us what we need and can handle. Surely God himself is inscrutable, and his infinity beyond knowing. He said through Moses, “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever.”* [Deuteronomy 29:29] He has revealed many things in the book of Revelation, but not everything! That should keep us all humble, and even grateful!

***“…a robe dipped in blood…”*** [vs. 13] Or *sprinkled* with blood. It could be his own blood, or that of his enemies. One might suspect, if it were his enemies at Armageddon, his robes would be drenched with blood. This has the sense of the priests or penitents in the temple rituals who are “sprinkled” with the blood of the sacrificial lamb. Isaiah 52:15 says, *“So he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him.”*  As the Sacrificial Lamb who has shed his blood to purify God’s lost sons and daughters, he has earned the right to wage war against those who have shed their blood. This makes his war all the more just.

***“…the armies of heaven dressed in white, riding on white horses…”*** [vs. 14] These are not angels, but the redeemed saints. [Revelation 17:14 & Jude 14&15] Notice, they wear no armor. Their battles are over. Jesus alone fights for them.

1. **The Winepress of His Fury.** [vv. 15&16]The descriptions of Jesus which have proceeded are critical to understanding and accepting the bloodbath that is to follow. As we said in an earlier lesson from Revelation 16:12-16 with its preview of the *Battle of Armageddon*, the blood will flow as high as a horses’ bridle (about four feet deep) in a river of blood that flows for 200 miles—a slaughter of some 500,000 soldiers of this global army in a single battle. Though the description is horrifically graphic, this *is* a war waged with justice and righteousness!
* ***“…coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations…”*** [vs. 15] Five times in the book of Revelation a sword comes out of the mouth of Jesus. In chapters 2&3, it is like a surgeon’s scalpel of discipline to cut sin, corruption and false doctrine from the church. Now it is a warrior’s sword of judgment and wrath to slaughter his and our enemies. Notice here that it is a total annhilation of all the nations of the world. This is the war to end all wars.

**An application for today:** We do not have to fight the battles. Jesus always goes before us and fights them for us. We simply have to stand firm, say and do what’s right and let him do the rest. This should give us much peace, and put an end to so many of our carnal conflicts. He’s in charge; we aren’t!

* ***“…he will rule them with an iron scepter...”*** [vs. 15] Literally *“a rod of iron”* in fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 2. This is absolute authority. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. All authority will be taken out of all authority’s hands and put in his alone.
* ***“He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty…”*** [vs. 15] We saw this metaphor of a winepress earlier in Revelation 16. Note the explosive repetition of phrases, *“the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”* Combine those three words together: fury, wrath and Almighty. The force of this fury beggars the imagination.
* ***“On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”*** [vs. 16] The name is on his thigh so it can be easily seen while riding the horse—a name that should stand out for all to see. Some scholars think that this name is actually a tetragrammaton of the four consonants, YHWH which make up the Hebrew *Yahweh,*  which is the most sacred and secret word for God—a word so sacred that it is without vowels so it can never be pronounced by human lips. Thus, we read in Revelation 19:12, it is known only to him.
1. **The Final Victory of the King of kings.** [vv. 17-21] *“Come gather together for the great supper of God.”* Some of the most frightening words in all of sacred scripture and world literature.

***“…the great supper of God…”*** [vs. 17] The cry goes out to all the flesh eaters of the air—buzzards, crows, ravens, etc. They will have a banquet on which to gorge. Though most banquets have a guest list made up of the elite, this feast will include everyone (as the menu): *“…the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slaves, great and small.”* [vs. 18] Suppers are metaphors used throughout Scripture. There are four that stand out:

1. The *Supper of Salvation* in Jesus’ parable. [Luke 14:16-24]
2. The *Lord’s Supper* that commemorates that first supper.
3. The *Marriage Supper of the Lamb.* [Rev. 19:6-9]
4. The *Great Supper of God*. [Rev. 19:17]

If we reject the first supper, the second will be meaningless to us. In that case, we will not be at the third supper. But we will be present at the fourth supper—not to eat, but to be eaten ourselves. Which of the suppers will you attend?

***“…the Beast, kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the white horse and his army…”*** [vs. 19] This is the great battle of Armageddon. It is predicted as early as Psalm 2. How foolish are these kings in their arrogance [as well as those who today rise up against Christ]:

 *“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?* *The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together
  against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,* ***‘****Let us break*

 *their chains and throw off their shackles.’ The One enthroned in*

 *heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his*

 *anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,* ***‘****I have installed*

 *my king on Zion, my holy mountain.’ I will proclaim the Lord’s*

 *decree: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have become*

 *your father. Ask me,  and I will make the nations your inheritance,
  the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a*

 *rod of iron[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13955b)*]; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.’”*

[Psalm 2:1-9]

***“…the Beast was captured, and with it the False Prophet…the two of them were cast into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”*** [vs. 20]Notice, the armies of the final great Empire begin to follow the Great Antichrist into battle, egged on by the False Prophet, who has deluded and emboldened them with his miraculous signs. No sooner do they engage, then the two diabolical henchmen of Satan are captured and thrown into the Lake of fire and sulfur [in other words, hell].

The battle is over before it even starts. For all of their terrifying power—that which had wowed the world—they can’t stand for a minute against the Almighty God who come riding on his white horse. One almost sees them running in craven fear away from the battlefield. But they are quickly rounded up. No one can escape the *“winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”*

This scene is what we should remember when we are tempted to be cowed by the terrifying enemies of the gospel in our day.

***“The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”*** [vs. 21] The awful finality and completeness of this victory is breathtaking in its pure horror. This is not the *Jesus* that people have freeze-framed from the gospels. They don’t realize that he came as a suffering servant for a season, or that his gracious patience won’t last forever. This Jesus may not resonate with today’s culture, but it should fill them with fear. The same should be true for those of us who have given ourselves to him as our Lord and Savior. He is not to be trifled with! As the Scripture says, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”* [Proverbs 9:10]

When we are tempted to fear this world, and the temporary consequences of being fully devoted followers of Christ, we should remember what we have seen in Revelation 19. The writer of Proverbs is right: only a fool would play it safe only to face this Rider on the White Horse.