

Onward Christian Soldiers!

Revelation 19:11-16

INTRODUCTION

- A. Americans have become accustomed to quick victory on the battlefield.
 - 1. In Panama, we were able to install a democratically elected government and capture Manuel Noriega within days.
 - 2. In Gulf War I, we fought in the air for six weeks or so and for 100 hours on the ground, and we drove Hussein out of Kuwait.
 - 3. In Afghanistan, we overthrew the Taliban in just a few weeks.
 - 4. In Gulf War II, in just over a month, we freed a nation from tyranny.
 - 5. But, many of you remember the long years of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.
 - a. We should not make the assumption that war will always be easy for this country.
 - b. Although there are times that war may be the only option for national security, we should expect a long struggle rather than an easy one.
- B. Tonight's text speaks of a decisive victory.
 - 1. The language is that of warfare, and it pictures the Lord executing vengeance upon his enemies
 - 2. We want to examine this text to find modern applications.

THE COMMANDING OFFICER, vv. 11-13

- A. John saw heaven opened, v. 11.
 - 1. "Opened" is in the perfect tense in Greek; the perfect refers to an action in the past that has ramifications in the present.
 - 2. Thus, heaven had been opened, and it remains opened. The point is that heaven had been opened for revelation, and it was remaining opened, allowing God to reveal his plan.
- B. John saw a white horse. The One who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war, v. 11.
 - 1. Roman princes customarily rode on white horses in military triumphs, the image could be here that the Lamb is riding forth in victory.
 - a. However, white horses were more commonly associated with the Parthians, the chief enemies the Romans.
 - b. John might be mixing these two images - the Lamb is an enemy of Rome, more so than the Parthians, and he is riding forth in triumph.
 - 2. The One on the horse was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.
 - a. Revelation has repeatedly talked about God's faithfulness and righteousness.
 - b. However, this description of the Lamb adds a new dimension - he makes war in righteousness
 - 1) The idea is that he did not go about afflicting suffering, vengeance on the innocent.
 - 2) In the recent war in Iraq, the US took great pains to reduce "collateral damage," not to afflict vengeance upon the innocent - that's the way the Lamb is here being depicted.
- C. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself, v. 12.
 - 1. His eyes being like a fiery flame recalls the image in 1:14.
 - a. Again this has to do with his ability to pierce through the facades people put up, to see people as they really are.
 - b. This is an appropriate image for vengeance; people aren't able to hide their sins from him,

but he lays people's sins bare.

2. On his head are many diadems - this is in contrast to the references to crowns throughout the book. The diadem was a crown that signified authority, power.
 3. He had a name inscribed which no one knew but himself - this may be a way of saying that no one had power over him; ancient magicians claimed they could gain power over spirits once they knew the spirit's name.
- D. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God, v. 13.
1. The blood on his garment is not his own; it is the blood of his enemies.
 - a. Just as those in warfare often get other's blood all over themselves, the Lamb is drenched in the blood of those he has judged.
 - b. A noncommissioned officer wrote, "It is commonly supposed that the first duty of a good soldier is to die for his country. This is a mistake. The first duty of a soldier is to make his enemies die for theirs." Here we see Jesus executing vengeance upon his enemies, killing them.
 2. He is called The Word of God.
 - a. This obviously reminds us of John 1 where Jesus is referred to as "the Word."
 - b. In Jewish thought, a word is not lifeless, but it is an active agent that achieves the intention of the one who speaks it - thus, Jesus as the Word of God will achieve the intention of God.
- E. The picture presented here is one of Jesus' having authority and power, and using that authority and power to judge his enemies.
1. He will use that authority and power to judge us, just as he used it to judge the Romans.
 - a. "The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (Jn. 5:22) - Here we see Jesus' using authority and power to judge the world (the Father committed judgment to him).
 - b. "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained" (Acts 17:30) - the Father was the One who ordained the Son as judge.
 2. Are you ready to stand before Christ in judgment?

THE PRIVATES, v. 14

- A. The armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses.
- B. Just who are these privates who follow the Lamb?
1. They do not appear to be his saints.
 - a. When the fifth seal was opened, the souls under the altar - martyred saints of God - were told "rest a little longer" (Rev. 6:9-11).
 - b. Many commentators point to Rev. 17:14 as proof that these are saints of God.
 - 1) These saints are pictured as being with the Lamb who conquers the beast and his cohorts.
 - 2) But, that text simply refers to those who are with the Lamb; it does not say that those with the Lamb fought.
 2. A far more compatible view with Scripture is that these armies of heaven are the angels of God.
 - a. In Scripture, angels are pictured as taking part in the judgment of the world.
 - 1) "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire" (Mt. 13:41-42).
 - 2) When the end comes, Jesus will be "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God" (2 Thess. 1:7-8).
 - b. Thus, it seems that these are angels who follow Christ and fight with him.
- C. They are arrayed in fine linen, white and pure.
1. Their apparel stands in stark contrast to the Lamb's apparel - his clothing is stained with the blood of those he conquers.
 2. This demonstrates that the Lamb is powerful enough to conquer his enemies.

- D. They follow him on white horses - again, this was the primary method of attack of the Parthians, the primary enemies of the Romans.
- E. The image from this verse is that Christ has help in carrying out his judgment-his angels execute judgment with him.

THE CERTAIN VICTORY, vv. 15-16

- A. These verses describe the certain victory of the Lamb over his enemies.
- B. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty, v. 15.
 - 1. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations.
 - a. This is not the first time in Revelation that a sharp sword is depicted as coming from the Lord’s mouth.
 - 1) When John saw the glorified Christ, “from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword” (Rev 1:16).
 - 2) To the church at Pergamum Jesus revealed himself as the one “who has the sharp two-edged sword” (Rev. 2:12).
 - b. The sword’s coming from his mouth indicates that Jesus’ words are the basis for judgment.
 - 1) You know how words can sting and hurt; that’s the image here - Jesus’ words sting and hurt but differently than when someone hurts our feelings.
 - 2) Jesus words will judge us – “He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge: the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day” (Jn. 12:48).
 - 2. Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron.
 - a. Prophecy depicted Jesus as ruling with a rod of iron - “You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Ps. 2:9).
 - b. To rule with an iron rod is to destroy rather than to govern with a firm fist - notice the psalmist refers to breaking them with a rod of iron.
 - 3. Jesus will also tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.
 - a. The wine press of God’s wrath is an image of judgment-Rev. 14:19-20.
 - b. Jesus is seen as the agent of God’s Math - he’s going to tread out the wine - he’s going to be One who actually carries out God’s judgment.
- B. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name if Scribed King of kings and Lord of lords, v. 16.
 - 1. The thigh would be the most obvious place for one who was riding on a horse; this name would obvious to those who saw him.
 - 2. “King of kings and Lord of lords” was probably written on that part of the garment that fell across the thigh.
 - 3. He is “King of kings and Lord of lords.”
 - a. This was the title used for the Parthian kings at this point in time.
 - b. However, this was a title ascribed to God long before the Parthian kingdom.
 - 1) “The LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the mighty, and the terrible God, who is not partial and takes no bribe” (Deut. 10:17).
 - 2) “The king said to Daniel, ‘Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings’ ” (Dan. 2:47).
 - c. As the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord exercises authority over kings and lords; thus his victory over the Romans is guaranteed, for he had more power than they.

CONCLUSION

- A. This passage depicts the judgment of Rome as a certainty - Jesus has enough power to do so and he has enough help to do so.
- B. When this world comes to an end, the judgment of the world is certain.
 - 1. Jesus has enough power to do so and he has enough help to do so.
 - 2. Will you be ready for that judgment?