Jesus Reigns — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 19:11–16 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, August 21, 2022 · *Hallelujah!*

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You can open them to the book of Revelation. We're going to be in Revelation chapter 19 this morning. And for the several guests that are here this morning, our church normally picks the book of the Bible and we work our way through it line by line. And we've been doing that in this last book of the Bible for right over a year and a half now, and we finally got to this climax, finale point of the book of the Revelation where Jesus returns. When most people think about the apocalypse, they think about the end of the world.

Not everybody thinks about Jesus coming back at the end of the world. But I think most Christians have a general idea. Jesus lived, he died, he rose again, he ascended to the Father, and he'll come again. That's the basic framework. But not a lot of Christians think through the implications of what all that's going to look like when the day finally gets here. And that's what Revelation is all about. It's kind of setting the table for what life on earth is going to look like when that day comes. Before we get to Revelation chapter 19, though, I want you to put your thumb there and turn to Acts chapter 1.

Acts, for those of you who are not super familiar with Bibles, it's in the New Testament after the four Gospels. So go to the New Testament, flip over a bit, and you'll see the book of Acts. It's after the Gospel of John before the book of Romans. And as you're turning there, I want you to imagine with me if you were one of those first followers of Jesus. You were in the original band of Twelve. You saw him teach, you saw him garner crowds of thousands of people, you saw him do miracles like feed the five thousand, heal the sick, cast out demons; you saw all of these magnificent things.

You were pretty firmly convinced, like Peter, Jesus is the Messiah, he's God's anointed, he is the fulfillment of all prophecy. You were crushed then when you saw him crucified by the Romans. Your dreams of grandeur were shattered, and now you were in despair, hiding in a cave for your life— probably not a cave; in a house, locked doors, for your life— thinking the

Romans are going to come crush us at any minute because of this revolutionary we attached ourselves to. And then wonder of all wonders God raises Jesus from the dead.

He appears to you in the flesh. You think to yourself, Whoa, did I smoke something? What's going on? You realize that God did raise him from the dead, that Jesus did make good on his promises, that everything Jesus said is true, will be true, and that if God raised Jesus from the dead, then there's nothing that Jesus can't accomplish. And imagine hanging out with Jesus after all that takes place. What question would you ask him? Knowing the possibilities are unlimited. The first question out of your mouth, what would it be?

And if you've got that question in your head, I want to show you what their first question was. Because I have a feeling the question that they ask is probably not the question you might have asked. Look what they say. It's Acts chapter 1, verse 6. The disciples of Jesus, post-resurrection, hanging out with the glorified risen Christ, they say, "Lord, are you" now "restoring the" what? "Are you" now "restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" Now remember they're under Roman occupation, the Romans are kind of controlling them. They're asking Jesus, essentially, are you now going to overthrow Rome? who basically ruled over the whole known world at this point?

And are you going to establish God's kingdom on the earth so that the promise to Israel in the Old Testament is finally fulfilled? How many of you, that was your one question? Okay, probably not a lot of us, right? But that was their question. Why? Because that was their bread and butter. They grew up reading the Old Testament, they grew up eagerly anticipating Messiah. Because when Messiah comes, he's going to deliver his people— not just forgive us of our sins, which Jesus accomplished on the cross, but deliver us from our oppressors, deliver us from this tyrannical government establish a kingdom on earth where he rules as king and we are his citizens.

Now we didn't grow up with that, but that's what they grew up with and that's the question that they ask. And look at Jesus's response in Acts chapter 1, verse 7. "He said to them"— basically, not now—"It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority." But you need to focus on being a witness. You're going to "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

So, question: Jesus, are you going to establish God's kingdom on earth now? He says, no, not now. In fact, you don't need to mess with that right now. What you need to focus on is taking this good news gospel that has changed your life and preaching it to the ends of the earth. And to help you do that, I'm going to send the Holy Spirit. Ready? Three, two, one. As he was speaking these things, look at this, verse 9, "as they were watching, … a cloud took him out of their sight."

And we know from the gospels when Jesus ascends into heaven, he sends the Holy Spirit. So they're just standing there, looking. Wow. And then suddenly two men clothed in white appear to them, and they say, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven"—look at this—"will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven." In other words, he left earth on a cloud, going up into heaven. And when you've done what he's asked you to do, which is go and make disciples of all nations, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost ends of the earth, when that task is finished, he's going to come back down the same way you saw him go up.

He's going to go up on a cloud, he went up on a cloud, he's going to come down on a cloud. And that coming down on a cloud is exactly what we see in Revelation chapter 19. And that vision of Jesus coming soon on a cloud to establish the kingdom that they asked him about. That was their all-consuming motivation for why they lived radical, sacrificial, obedient lives committed to the Great Commission, no matter what the cost. You read the rest of the book of Acts, you see the disciples do amazing things for the glory of Christ.

You read the rest of the New Testament from Romans all the way to Revelation. It's a manual for how Christians can become disciples themselves and how they can make disciples that faithfully do all that Jesus commanded them to do as they eagerly wait for the day when Jesus comes again. The four words that shaped their lives more than any other were not just Jesus died on the cross for our sins, but that Jesus is coming soon. You look at the way they lived, you look at the things that they said, their lives were totally shaped and controlled by that one consuming passion.

My question, before we read our passage, is, What happens in your heart when you hear those words. When you hear the phrase, Jesus is coming soon, what happens in here, if anything at all? Is it, as Spurgeon said, music to your Christian ears? Or is it, in your mind, wishful, fanciful thinking of a man or woman who's watched too much YouTube prophecy? They're kind of cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs. They're so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good. They're all caught up in that Jesus-coming-back rapture nonsense. Which one more closely resembles your reaction?

And really your reaction to those four words, Jesus is coming soon, that's really a good barometer, I think, of where you're at spiritually. If you're in right relationship with God, if you're walking in obedience, you're full of the Holy Spirit, your heart is his heart, then there's a sense in which you resonate deeply with those four words. You think, Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus, come today. I'm ready. Establish your kingdom now. I am tired of this brokenness and despair. On the other hand, if you're not in right relationship with the Lord, maybe you're doing things you know you ought not to be doing, living lives you know you ought not to live.

Maybe the idea of Jesus coming back brings about shame. It brings about guilt. It brings about regret because I really wanted to do X, Y, and Z thing. It's a good barometer of whose kingdom you're living for, whether it's the kingdom of this world or the kingdom of heaven. What we're going to see in Revelation chapter 19 is what the world's actually going to look like when that day comes. Again, I think most Christians believe Jesus lived, he died, he rose again, he ascended to the Father, and He's going to come again.

But past that basic framework, they're kind of agnostic. You know, I don't really know. I've never really read the Bible much about those kind of events. And what we're going to see in the book of Revelation, I think, will be shocking to you because it lays out in pretty vivid detail not only what Jesus is going to look like when that day comes, but what he's actually going to do on the earth when that day arrives. And it is both glorious and shocking all at the same time. So let's read the passage, Revelation chapter 19, starting in verse 11.

John says in verse 11, "Then I saw heaven opened." Notice in chapter 4, he said, I saw a door to heaven. Now he sees the whole heavens. Just the sky split open. God, would you rend the heavens and come down? And when he sees the heavens open, what does he see? He sees a white horse. Which, I wondered, is that what he thought he was going to see? Or he's like, Man, I had bad mushrooms again. I meant to see Jesus and he didn't see Jesus, he sees a white horse.

But it's not just a white horse, the white horse symbolizing victory in battle. He sees a rider on the white horse. And notice the description of the rider. He doesn't call the rider Jesus, but he describes him as if he's Jesus. The rider "is called Faithful and True, and with justice he judges and makes war." In other words, Jesus is not a suffering servant when he comes again. He's a warrior king. "His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on his head. He had a name written that no one knows except himself.

He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. The armies that were in heaven followed him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. A sharp sword came from his mouth"—the mouth of Jesus—"so that he might strike the nations with it. He will rule them"—the nations—"with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty. And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Most times when I hear this passage quoted, it's raised in the context of someone asking the question: Can Christians have tattoos?

And they always point to this text that says, well, Jesus has tattoos. He has King of Kings on his thigh. Ergo, Jesus had tattoos, I can have tattoos. You get all the tattoos you want. That's not a good biblical reason, in my mind. And that's not the point of Revelation chapter 19. The point is to present Jesus in this striking glorious way as this triumphant returning king. And I think it kind of doesn't fit a lot of the categories maybe some of us have when it comes to what comes in our mind's eye when we think of the word Jesus.

Look at the description again. There may be some people who think this is not Jesus. I don't know how you get away from the fact that this is clearly a reference to Christ. He is called Faithful and True, if you look there in verse 11, same title given to Jesus at the church of Laodicea in chapter 3, verse 14. His eyes are a flame of fire. That's indicative. This was also in chapter 1, verse 14. It's indicative of his penetrating gaze, that nothing escapes his gaze. The secret intentions of the heart, all of it's laid bare.

It's like the eye of Mordor in The Lord of the Rings. He literally sees everything. He is wearing many crowns, as contrasted with the seven crowns of the beast and the dragon in chapter 12 and chapter 13. This crown is unlimited in its sovereignty. He controls all, not just a region. He has a name that nobody knows. I read this week that some believe that's a reference to back in the ancient world, if you knew somebody's name, you could have power over them. Kind of like people do the voodoo dolls today and make a doll that looks like the person they're trying to torment and they poke it with needles and all this stuff.

Oh, I know what you look like so I can torment you. Similar kind of nonsense back in the ancient world, but they're saying Jesus has a name nobody knows, so nobody has any kind of authority over him. His unknown name is accompanied with the well-known name, the word of God, which is what he is called in John 1:1. "In the beginning was the" Logos, "the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And then of course on his robe, the clear giveaway, he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the same title that was given to him when he destroyed Babylon in Revelation chapter 17, verse 14.

The title that in the Old Testament was reserved for Yahweh alone, God and God alone was Lord of Lords. Now that title is being placed on Jesus, indicating that he is God in the flesh. He is one with the Father and with God the Holy Spirit. So when you think of the word Jesus, what comes to your mind's eye, and does it have any relationship whatsoever with this description of Jesus in Revelation chapter 19? For a lot of Christians, when they think Jesus, they think— you remember that Will Ferrell movie?

Sweet little baby Jesus in the manger, tiny little baby. I love that show. That's what a lot of people think of when they think Jesus. They think sweet little baby Jesus in the manger. And because they're like Christmas-only Christians, or Chreasters, Christmas and Easter Christians. That's what they think. Or maybe for you it is when I think Jesus, I think Rabbi on the hillside, teaching the masses, thousands of people wowed by his wisdom and insight into the Torah, into the Old Testament. Maybe when you think Jesus, you think miracle worker, healing the blind, casting out demons.

Maybe when you think Jesus, you think sacrificial lamb, atoning sacrifice, dying on the cross for my sin. I love you this much. He laid down his life. And all of those are true portraits. They're not wrong. He was born in a manger. He was God in flesh. He was an amazing teacher who wowed people with his wisdom and insight. He was a miracle worker and he

was our atoning sacrifice on the cross, but he is also this warrior. And a lot of Christians have an incomplete picture of who Jesus is.

And I want to challenge you this morning to make some room in your theology for this portrait of Jesus. Because this is who Jesus is today. He's not sweet baby Jesus in a manger. He's not even the crucified Messiah. Certainly he may still have his scars, but he is glorious. He is seated at the right hand of God with this majestic appearance, king of kings and Lord of Lords. And we've got to make room in our theology to see Jesus as the warrior messiah. So if you're taking notes, many Christians have an incomplete picture.

And we need a picture of Jesus not just as the sacrificial lamb, but also as the warrior messiah. Not only is his appearance different, if you read Revelation 19, you also come to understand that Jesus' second coming will also be very different than his first coming. The first coming of Jesus, he's born in a manger, God in flesh, dependent baby, nursing at his mother's breast. The second coming of Jesus, he will not be dependent whatsoever. He will be independent. He will be the ruler of the universe, glorious in all of his majesty.

He first came with a single star showing the way. The wise men followed the star of Bethlehem. At his second coming, what you see is that every star in the sky flees the heavens are opened, the skies split apart, and every eye will behold him. His first coming, only a few people beheld him, the wise men, the magi, the people who were there, his mom and his family, but at his second coming every eye will see him and they will mourn. At his first coming he rode on a donkey into Jerusalem to die on a cross as our suffering servant.

At his second coming, he will be riding on a stallion on the clouds to rule as king, as sovereign forevermore. And I know that when you hear those things and when you think of this picture of Jesus, maybe for some of you it makes you squirm a little bit. It makes you a little bit uncomfortable. And even when I was preparing this sermon this week, I thought to myself, I still don't know if this is going to fly, kind of drilling this home; a lot of people, it's going to make them uncomfortable.

And then I thought to myself, we should be uncomfortable. This picture of Jesus should make us uncomfortable. And do you know who else it should make uncomfortable? It should make human traffickers uncomfortable. And it should make extremist Muslims like ISIS who cut off the heads of Christians uncomfortable. And it should make drug dealers who are trafficking fentanyl and hooking a generation on opiates uncomfortable. And it should make the Chinese Communist Party, or any other authoritarian communist government who persecutes Christians with all sorts of tyranny— it should make them uncomfortable. And any person who inflicts any sort of evil in this world, seeming like they're going to get away with it, like nobody cares, like vengeance will never come.

It should make those people uncomfortable, and it should make us glad that the king we worship, the God we say is going to save and deliver, is not some toothless pansy who has no power whatsoever to make any difference in the world, but rather a powerful, sovereign king who when he comes, takes all of that off the table. When a lot of people think about social justice warrior, when you think social justice warrior, depending on your politics, something comes to your mind. And I was thinking about that this week, that Jesus is bringing justice, social justice— social, meaning how society functions.

He is bringing absolute justice to the earth. He is the social justice warrior in the truest sense, not some broke millennial in his basement typing on a keyboard, defending the world from all of the oppressors, or some protester carrying a sign, engaged in the political process, doing whatever they do. This is someone who can actually make a difference. None of those things, as appealing as they are, will ever bring true justice to the world, not as it needs to be brought about, but this Jesus, this warrior, Messiah, can, and he will.

He first came as a sacrificial lamb, he will come again as a ferocious lion, a Messiah who will take out the enemies of God and of God's people. That's the rider. That's his identity. The next symbol I want us to look at is the robe. The rider, the robe, and the rod. When it comes to this robe, if you look at verse 13— can you throw that up on the screen again? "He wore a robe dipped in blood"—that's interesting—"and his name is called the Word of God." He has armies behind him, this robed Messiah.

They're up in heaven. They're also on white horses. They wear pure white linens. And then this Messiah has a sharp sword that comes from his mouth, so that he might strike the nations with it. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty. So when it says that he has a robe dipped in blood, I think most people when they read that, they immediately assume, well that must be the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. I mean that's your kind of initial assumption.

There's no shame in that game. That's all right. When I first read this, I thought, oh, that's the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. That's the blood that forgives us of our sins. It's kind of a reminder that this reigning, powerful Messiah was also our substitutionary sacrifice, but it's not his blood that's on his robe. If you read this passage and you look at the Old Testament source text for this passage, you quickly come to understand the robe that's covered in blood— it's the blood of his enemies, not his own.

Let me show you this. Verse 11 says, with justice he judges and makes war. He has the armies that are in heaven, warlike imagery, strikes the nations with a sharp sword. Now, some take that metaphorically as the word of God because it's coming from his mouth. Others say, No, it's symbolic, but it's symbolic of literal warfare. He's striking the nations, he's ruling the nations, he's trampling the winepress of God's anger, all of that imagery is warlike imagery.

And when I say warlike, I don't mean like spiritual warfare. We battle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.

This seems to be something much different than that. This seems to be physical, literal warfare. And the source text is Isaiah chapter 63. In fact, if you were an Old Testament— I'm sorry, if you were a first-century Jewish person listening to Revelation 19 being read to you, your mind immediately would have gone to Isaiah 63. Because Isaiah 63 talks about the Messiah who has blood stained garments. Let me read this to you. The question is raised, "Who is this coming from Edom"? Edom was just north of the Red Sea, right under Moab.

"In crimson-stained garments from Bozrah"? Bozrah was right on the edge between Edom and Moab. "This one who is splendid in his apparel"—just like we read of Jesus in Revelation 19—"striding in his formidable might"? Who is it? And then the answer is given: "It is I"—the Messiah—"proclaiming vindication." In other words, my saints have suffered long enough, it's time for me to vindicate them and avenge their blood. "It is I, proclaiming vindication, powerful to save." Then the prophet raises another question: Messiah, "why are your clothes red, and your garments like one who treads a winepress?"

You remember the winepress, what they would do: they'd get the cleanest feet in Palestine and they would fill a vat full of grapes and— they weren't clean feet, by the way. Those nasty, nasty feet would be smashing that grape juice and the juice would splatter up on their garments. Symbolic of God's wrath, God's anger, and this person who's treading it is not treading grape juice, it's treading blood. I tread the winepress alone; their blood got up on my garments. Let me read it to you. "I trampled the winepress alone, and no one from the nations was with me.

I trampled them in my anger and ground them underfoot in my fury; their blood spattered my garments, and all my clothes were stained." That's not symbolic. And even if it is symbolic, it's symbolic of blood. Real blood. He goes on, verse 4. "For I planned the day of vengeance, and the year of my redemption came. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I was amazed that no one assisted." So the Messiah crushes the nations alone. "So my arm accomplished victory for me, and my wrath assisted me. I crushed nations in my anger; I made them drunk with my wrath and poured out their blood on the ground."

Revelation 19 is clearly pulling from Isaiah 63. Revelation 14 does the same thing. And Revelation 14 talks about the big battle of Armageddon and how God unleashes his wrath and that the person treads the wine press, the Messiah treads the winepress, and that blood flowed for 180 miles. That's Revelation chapter 14, verse 20. And so when Christ returns, what seems to be the case from Revelation 19 is that he is going to bring literal war on actual nations that results in physical death of wicked people. And I know it maybe makes you uncomfortable to think of Jesus bringing violence to the earth.

But that's exactly what the Old Testament and New Testament say is going to happen when Jesus comes again. It won't just kind of be a magical poof and everything's okay again. It will be violence that vindicates the saints. And why does Jesus bring violence? It's not because he delights in violence. The Bible says that our God in heaven does not delight in the death of the wicked, but that he's a God of justice, he's a God of righteousness, and he by no means clears the guilty. We have a sense of righteous anger when unjust acts are gotten away with in our world today.

We say that person should pay. Despite the debates about death penalty and all that stuff, when someone goes to prison for something they did wrong, there's a sense in which we go, that's right, that should happen. That is put in us from God because we are made in his image. He's a righteous God. And when he comes again to establish righteousness on the earth, the only way that righteousness can be established is if the wickedness is removed. And that wickedness will not go because you ask it nicely. Have you ever asked an evil person to stop doing evil things?

Evil people don't say, Well, if you say so. No, they resist, they fight, they mount an offensive, just like you see in the book of the Revelation. The beast gathers the armies, they conspire against the Lord and his anointed. And so violence will be visited upon them when Jesus comes again. This is why a lot of people interpret Revelation symbolically. Maybe you're like, I want to be one of those again. It's a little less offensive to your modern sensibilities that it's just going to be some kind— the sword is the word of God, and this is about the Christians preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth and the kingdom of God advancing spiritually in the hearts of men and women.

And there is a sense in which that happens today spiritually. To a degree, but there also seems to be when you read these prophecies, Old Testament and New Testament, that it's going to happen literally, physically, historically when Jesus comes again. Now you say, well, why don't you take them symbolically? Well again, you can take them symbolically to a degree, but the reason I don't take the ultimate fulfillments of these prophecies symbolically is because the first coming of Jesus, which was prophesied about in the Old Testament, that first coming was fulfilled literally, historically, and physically.

And so if the prophecies around the first coming of Jesus were fulfilled literally, historically, and physically, then to me it seems at least reasonable that the prophecies around his second coming will also be fulfilled literally, physically, and historically. And yes, it may make us a little bit squeamish to think of Jesus bringing violence to the earth, but he doesn't bring violence on those who are his own, he only brings violence to the wicked. And you notice the way he described the earth? It was thoroughly corrupt. He said, no one was there to assist me.

In other words, the righteous, the saints, they were no longer able to mount an offensive because the world had gotten thoroughly spiritually sick. The wickedness was great. No one could stop it except Christ and Christ alone. And so that's what the robe represents. The robe dipped in blood is the blood of his enemies, and it is indicative of the war, the literal war Jesus will bring when he comes again in judgment. Now we don't have time to get into all of this, but there are people, and I'm not going to say where I land one way or the other, because I don't know.

But there are people who suggest that Jesus, when he comes, he is on the earth and he's the one calling down these bowl judgments of hail and the boils and all the other kinds of stuff that he inflicts on the kingdom of the beast that Jesus himself is in Bozrah and he's in Edom, and he has his 144,000, and they're marching up towards Jerusalem to fight against the beast and his armies. All of it playing into this imagery of Jesus bringing war against the beast. Some say, No, he's just going to appear from heaven on that day, the day of Armageddon, and finish the battle with one fell swoop.

Different people disagree, but they seem to me more literal than symbolic. The last symbol I want us to look at is the rod. So we've seen the rider, we've seen the robe. Now let's look at the rod. Revelation chapter 19, verse 15 says that Jesus will rule the nations with an iron rod. When you hear the word iron rod, you probably think nothing, but when they would have heard the word iron rod, they would have immediately thought Psalm chapter 2. Because again, they were first century Jews, they were steeped in the Old Testament, and Psalm 2 is a messianic psalm that every Jewish person had committed to memory because it was telling what would happen when the Messiah comes to deliver, this is what it's going to look like.

I want to read you Psalm 2, just so you see. It's almost a perfect summary of what happens in the book of the Revelation. The psalmist opens in Psalm 2, "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?" The kings of the earth take their stand against the rulers— or, "The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together against the Lord and his Anointed One." Remember in Revelation chapter fourteen and fifteen, the beast conspires together with other nations to create a coalition that advances against the saints and against the people of God and the Lord's anointed.

So those people who are in league with this final evil ruler say things like, "Let's tear off their chains"—the chains of God—"and throw their ropes off of us." We no longer need to live under the strictures of God's divine design. Let's get rid of those rules. And then God in heaven laughs at them. "The Lord ridicules them. Then he speaks to them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath." Then he says in verse 6, "I have installed my king on Zion." You've got your kings, you've got your A game; now I'm bringing "my king on Zion, my holy mountain."

And then that king declares the Lord's decree: "He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'" So it's a clear reference to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah. The Father says to the Son in verse 8, "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with an iron scepter; you will shatter them like pottery." So Psalm 2 talks about the iron rod. But when it talks about the iron rod, it says that you're going to break them with an iron rod.

What did Revelation 19 say? Anybody remember? Revelation chapter 19 says that you are going to rule them with an iron rod. There's a big difference between breaking something and ruling something. In fact, in chapter 19, the word rule here is the Greek word poimaino, which means shepherd. You're going to shepherd them with an iron rod. And you ask the question, what on earth does a shepherd need with an iron rod? Well, shepherds, the rod of a shepherd was not just for shepherding the sheep. The rod of the shepherd was used to protect the sheep from wolves.

It was used to take out the opposition, the threats of harm, and that's what Jesus will do when he comes again. Jesus is the good shepherd. Remember, in the Gospels, Jesus would look out over Jerusalem and he would weep, because his people were like sheep without a shepherd. In John chapter 10 he says, I'm the good shepherd. The sheep know my voice and I know them by name. Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 23: he is with me. His rod and his staff comfort me, because I'm protected, because he's my defender.

Jesus, right before he goes to the cross, he says to his disciples, these fools are going to strike the shepherd. The Romans are going to crucify me, they're going to strike the shepherd, and when the shepherd is struck, the sheep are going to scatter. That's exactly what happened in the Gospels. Jesus is crucified, his disciples run for their lives. But now Revelation 19 is saying that stricken shepherd is going to return. And when the stricken shepherd returns, the stricken shepherd is going to strike. And when the stricken shepherd strikes, every evil will be abolished, and righteousness will fall from the sky like rain.

And he will vindicate his saints. And so to those people who perpetrate evil in the world today, ISIS, human traffickers, drug dealers, authoritarian governments. I always say to them, Do what you're going to do. Yeah. Get it all in while you still can. Cut as many heads off as you're going to cut. Silence as many Christians as you're going to silence. Persecute and alienate through your authoritarian government as much as you possibly can. Because there's coming a day when the shepherd's coming back, and when the stricken shepherd returns, he's going to strike, and he won't be pushed around anymore.

And this evil that seems like— people who just get away with whatever they want to get away with scot-free, there's no punishment whatsoever. That day will be over and vengeance will be had. And vengeance will be taken by Christ and Christ alone because it belongs to him and him alone. I think that is probably the only thing that makes me feel a little less

squeamish about a passage like this. It's easy when you read a passage like Revelation 19 to think to yourself, oh my, I just wanted my sins forgiven.

I just didn't want to go to hell when I died. I don't want to enlist in some army. You know, am I going to get a gun? Do heavenly guns run out of bullets? Do they just go, go, go, go, go? You think all these— or at least I think of these thoughts of, you know, physical warfare. That is an improper interpretation of this text. Christians themselves are not doing the violence. The violence is done by one person and one person alone. Isaiah 63: I tread the winepress alone. No one was there to assist me.

You say, what about the armies? Where are the armies? They're up in heaven. What are they doing? They're watching. They're standing behind the white rider. That's impressive. Wow, I didn't see that one coming. They're not participating in the warfare. So listen, there are Christians today who use a passage like Revelation 19 to say let's install a Christian government. Let's kill the communists. Let's kill the Nazis. Let's rid the earth of these authoritarian losers. Let's inaugurate the kingdom of God. We can establish it on the earth. I just think that is incorrect.

And it's dangerous. And it's totally unbiblical because Romans 12[1] says vengeance belongs to the Lord. Christ and Christ alone brings the violence because you know why? We're not a just judge. He's the only just judge. But you can be comforted that the one who sees everything by no means clears the guilty. Which leaves the question, What about us? Because we're guilty. Maybe you're not a human trafficker or a drug dealer or a murderer or the head of a communist government, but you know deep down my sins have separated me from a holy God, that if I were to have to atone for my sins, I wouldn't stand a chance.

That if only perfect people go to heaven, I'm never going to go. What do you do? You say, I don't want to be with those. I'm not with the beast, but I'm not with the Son either. I'm not wearing a white robe. I want you to see how Psalm 2 closes. It gives an invitation to the people of God. Psalm chapter 2, verse 10: "So now, kings, be wise; receive instruction, you judges of the earth." Then he turns to God's people and he says to them, "Serve the Lord with reverential awe and rejoice with trembling."

Here's the verse we're going to capitalize on. "Pay homage to the Son." The original Hebrew says, kiss the Son, like you would kiss the ring of a king. It's deference, it's reverence, it's respect, it's saying, you're the king, I'm not. You're the boss, not me. Even if you were a king from a different region, a political threat to the other king, it was your way of saying, I'm no threat, I'm not going to mount my offensive. I'm removing my independence. I'm submitting to you. That's what it meant to kiss the Son.

Kiss the Son. Submit yourself to Jesus Christ or suffer his wrath— "or he will be angry and you will perish in your rebellion," because the wages of sin is death. "His anger may ignite at

any moment. All who take refuge in him are happy." So my final application, if you're taking notes, revere the Son, and you'll find refuge. Revere the Son, kiss the ring, say to the king of kings and the Lord of Lords, Your will be done, not my will. I've been a rebel, I've been doing things my own way, my life is a mess as a result.

I'm tired of trying to be in charge. I want you to be in charge of my life. That's what repentance is. Repentance is a change of mind. It's your way of saying, God, you're right, I'm wrong. Your ways are better than my ways. And so I'm going to turn from doing things my way. And I'm going to do things your way instead. And then faith is essentially saying, I'm with you. I want you to be my protector. I want you to be my defender. I'm not living for this world. I'm not living for the things of this world.

Babylon, the allure of Babylon, tempting as it may be, is a lie. It's deceptive. You're the only one who can deliver. You're the only one who can satisfy. You're the only one who can save. You are my refuge. And when you find your refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ, here's what happens: you become happy. You may not get rich. Your problems will still exist. I'm not saying becoming a Christian gets rid of all of your problems. But what you will discover is that there is a power at work in you.

There is a power at work around you that gives you a sense of confidence and peace and security, not because Satan's not a real threat, he obviously is, not because the brokenness of this world is not legit, it is, but because Jesus is a greater threat than any threat that faces you. And Jesus is a better protector. He's a better fortress than any fortress of this world. And so you find contentment, you find peace, you find happiness. Because you're resting in the Lord Jesus Christ. I love how Martin Luther put it in one of his hymns.

He says, "Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he; Lord Sabaoth his name"—Lord Almighty—"from age to age the same, and he must win the battle. And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him."

And that word is the word that the Word of God Jesus Christ speaks with the sword of his mouth and abolishes him forever. And so this morning we're confronted with a choice. If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, the invitation is to pay homage to the Son, to repent. To put your faith in Jesus Christ. If you've never done that with your life, you say I grew up in church. That doesn't matter. Have you ever committed your life to Jesus as Lord? You say, Well, I got baptized when I was four years old.

It doesn't matter. If your life is not representative of a life that is surrendered, that is fully yielded, then you have no confidence for saying that your hope is in the Lord. If your hope is in the Lord, your life will reflect someone who's trusting in the Lord. And maybe this morning, this is Jesus' way of waking you up and saying, the king is going to come someday, and when he comes, the invitation of mercy will be rescinded. All that will remain is wrath. And so if you hear the voice of the Lord today, repent and be saved.

Put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're a Christian this morning, I think the invitation for us is, on one hand, asking the Holy Spirit, help me to think biblically about Jesus. You know, I've got all these assumptions, and I grew up in church assuming Jesus was going to be a certain thing, act a certain way, and then I read the Bible and the Bible shocked me. And so do I want biblical thoughts about Jesus or do I want unbiblical thoughts about Jesus? Jesus, help me think biblically. Some of you this morning I know are discouraged.

Maybe you're even depressed because you look at the brokenness of this world and you think to yourself, I don't even know if God exists. And if he does exist, I don't know if he's any good. And this morning you need to be reminded that he sees everything. And vengeance belongs to him. And that when he comes, he will establish justice, not just for the unjust acts that have been committed in our lifetime, but the grapes of wrath that have been piling up for years and years and years and years. And when he comes again, he's going to tread those grapes.

And he's going to rid the world of evil forever. And the Bible says on that day he'll wipe away every tear from our eye because you won't have to cry any more tears. Because sin and brokenness and wickedness and wicked people have been abolished forever and ever. That's our blessed hope. That's what enables us to live sacrificial, obedient lives of love. Because we believe our God is sovereign, he is good, and he is just. And so I have to walk by faith in this day, waiting for the day when all will be revealed.

And so maybe you just say to the Lord, help me to have the faith I need, to trust you and to do what you're asking me to do even though it's difficult. However you need to respond, the altar's open. If you're not a Christian, you sense the Lord pulling on your heart to surrender your life to Christ. I want to encourage you to do it publicly, to come down to the front and say, I want to give my life to Christ. When Jesus healed people in the gospels, he always did it publicly.

They always had a public response. And so if the Lord draws you, then come. And we'll rejoice in you making that decision for the Lord. Father, we thank you for this time. We give you this invitation. Holy Spirit, would you move as only you can move? The words of a mere man are powerless to save. But the word of God, the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation. And so would you take the truth of the gospel and cause it to explode in our hearts

to create a crater of faith so that we can trust you and walk in obedience to what you're asking us to do.

And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Revelation 12"; "Vengeance belongs to me … says the Lord" is Romans 12:19 (quoting Deuteronomy 32:35). Source: Romans 12:19 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩