

The Lamb of God Lives 4) To Trample All My Enemies

Revelation 19:11-16 • May 19, 2019 • Fifth Sunday of Easter



When I'm selecting a movie for my children to watch, I usually take care to see what it is rated.

We're all familiar with the system developed. The G, PG, PG 13 and R rating system helps us know how mature a viewer ought to be in order to handle the content of the video. Sometimes it is rated for violence, adult themes, or for other content. Obviously, I wouldn't want to show my four-year-old a Rambo movie rated R for violence. He couldn't properly respond to it. He's just not ready to process and understand video violence like an older child might be. What about the Bible? What type of pictures does God present in his Word? Are we able to handle the violent content, or does his Word stick to only friendly-neighborhood general audience? Today we continue our series looking through parts of the book of Revelation. And in chapter 19 we see a picture of Jesus that you probably won't find depicted in any children's Bible. But as we see it, we learn an important and sobering truth: Our God fights for us and he fights a battle we never could. THE LAMB OF GOD LIVES 5) TO TRAMPLE MY ENEMIES.

We've jumped forward a few chapters. I mentioned last week how the seven visions in the book of Revelation are like a multi-canvas photo. In the same way that a seven-part canvas print of a photograph reveals the same scene, each vision in Revelation is essentially showing us the same scene. It reveals the world's history from the time of Jesus' ascension until Jesus' return in glory. But each vision reveals a little bit more of the picture for us as we approach the scene of the last day and eternity. We've looked at the first few chapters already and have seen that God controls all of history. And we've seen that despite all the tribulation, persecution, and tears, God leads his flock. He is our Good Shepherd. Today we take a look at the end of the sixth vision. More of the final picture of this earth revealed. And with it more of Jesus' full true self is revealed.

Often the picture that comes to mind when people think of Jesus is the Christmas and Easter side of him. They see a baby born in a stable with humble and lowly origins. They see the life he led in all humility and gentleness. The Jesus that comes to mind has assuring and calm eyes and a warm smile. He is the Jesus who identified with the downtrodden, who forgave the despairing, and fed the hungry. And don't get me wrong. We see him that way because he truly is all that. That is one of the amazing things about Jesus. He is all those things. He is gentle, humble, patient, kind, forgiving, and gave himself as an offering for the sins of the world. That is the Jesus Scripture presents us with because that is exactly who he is. He is the general audience Jesus who does not cry out or strike out but welcomes little children into his arms and blesses them. He is our Savior God who came in lowliness to give his life for his sheep. He is the compassionate one who said "Don't cry" to the weeping mother of a dead son. He is the gentle man who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He is the lowly man who allowed the soldiers to arrest him, bind him, beat him, and kill him. He is so very loving and gentle that we hear him cry "Father, forgive them!" He even says that while being subjected to one of the worst types of torture and humiliation mankind devised. Even after he raises back to life, he is still the kind, gentle Savior who says, "Peace be with you!" to his troubled disciples. He assures them of his presence and his love as he ascends into heaven. He blesses them and then is lifted behind the clouds. He is the loving and living Lamb now ascended into his position of glory. Isn't that the side of Jesus we most often picture?

But Jesus has another side. That's the side that John here describes. John shows us what takes place after Jesus' ascension until his return. For some, singing Christmas carols about the lowly baby born in a stable is about as far as they are comfortable to go. But those who picture him only in lowliness will find more in Jesus' own description of himself. He spoke of his holiness and glory with his angles at his side when he returns in glory. The prophets foretold a Savior-King who would rule over his enemies with an iron scepter. The prophets all said he would act with swift and righteous judgment over all evil. This is the side of Jesus that the book of Revelation reveals for us and what we see today in chapter 19.

Jesus is revealed as our warrior king! If we were to depict the scene, it would have to be rated for violence. The unbelieving world refuses to see this side of Jesus entering the battle. Injustice, immorality, and all kinds of evil go on. They reason that there is no warfare coming down from God against them. They are comfortable with their lives and assume God must be comfortable with their sin too. This is a side of him that must be made clear. Jesus will come to wage war. Jesus does not tolerate sin. He takes it most seriously. And all sin calls for bloodshed and the wrath of God.

Maybe you and I might begin to fall into accepting the inaccurate one-sided picture of Jesus. Like some of the churches written to earlier in this letter we might only see the patient, forgiving side of Jesus. Instead of trembling over the sins we commit we get comfortable basking in God's patience for the world. We assume that as long as life is going well God doesn't mind the sins which we get comfortable with. But this vision helps make one truth in Scripture once again very clear. God is patient. But the patience God shows sinners must never be mistaken. It does not mean he is lenient with sin or cares little about it. It does not mean he will not act in judgment against all sin and every evil. The punishment which he is now holding back will one day be carried out in full on all who do not repent.

John once again looks at heaven opened. He sees a rider on a white horse heading out to wage war. Most unbelievers would be quick to scoff at the notion of a battle to come against them. When the humble Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, he posed no threat to any kingdom. His enemies mocked him. When Jesus was crucified the Romans had no real fear of any "King." A sign hung over Jesus' head—in mockery. But now in this vision he rides a horse making war. His eyes are not gentle, but fierce and burning like flames of fire. He has no crown of thorns, but he wears royal crowns as God over all. And the name "King of kings" is clearly written upon him for all to see.

The vision in revelation reveals what we have witnessed over the ages: Satan and his forces working to kill and destroy the people of God. In this vision we have the attacks of the great prostitute, called Babylon, which wages war with the saints. By the destructive forces of what is called the beast from the sea, the evil one attacks the saints. Governing authorities set themselves up over all and even end up claiming divine honor for themselves. From the pharaohs of Egypt, to the Kings of Assyria, to the Caesars of Rome the governments of this world have been after believers. The very reason that our church body and many like it exists is due to the pressures of governing authorities in Europe many years ago. They pressured the Lutheran churches to blend with false teachings. Groups left for America to worship in freedom. Still today, in a land of justice and no religious fear, there ought to be fear for the agenda of our enemy. He seeks to overwhelm our ranks. The one called the beast from the earth attacks God's people as well. False teachers infiltrate the church and misdirect it and destroy it. There's a campaign of obfuscation and covert attempts to overthrow Christ in the hearts of his people. God's flock is deceived, persecuted, mocked, and killed. It's a war! And we see now Jesus riding out to put an end to it all. He's leading the charge into the battle.

We see a vision of Jesus, coming from heaven above. And he comes to fight the battle against our enemies. In the vision the rider comes on a white horse – a symbol of victory by a king. This rider comes riding out of heaven. Our source of help is still there. He has not left us. We knew he hasn't left us! Because he is "Faithful and True." He told us when he left that he would always be with us. He told us that he held all authority. He said he would come back.

From heaven he comes to wage war with justice and to judge. The unbelieving world might think it can get away with wickedness. The lies of Satan and his demons will say it is just to kill the unborn and to persecute the Christian church. But true justice is found in this judge. Nothing escapes his eyes as they burn with fire. He sees all and knows all things. There is no crime, no guilt that will be hidden from him.

He is done with being trampled on by the insults of this world. He is done with allowing the enemy to rage against his own. He comes to make all things right. His robes are dipped in blood. Some prematurely conclude this blood must be his own. They are mistaken. This blood that stains the hem of his garments is like the wine that stains your feet when you trample over the grapes. This is what the Christ was prophesied to do after he had suffered and was raised to life. This is what chapter 14 of Revelation depicts in horrifying and violent imagery. God tramples down all his enemies in a bloody defeat. He comes to trample the winepress of God's wrath as he tramples his enemies underfoot. It fulfills what was long written down by Isaiah, (Isaiah 63:1-6) Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? ³ "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. ⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. ⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. ⁶ I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

This battle is already over. Jesus is white in glorious garments and splattered with the blood of his enemies. He has already trampled down the enemy. His garments are already bloody with their defeat. Jesus, the Word of God, wins the battle. Notice the armies of heaven have clean white clothes. They didn't have to do any of the trampling. God himself did it all. Neither you nor God's angels get your garment stained to win the day; you follow his victory in clean garments of his holiness.

And he will do it all with the power of his almighty Word. The sword is most always used to symbolize his Word and its power. He will make his judgment and his enemies will fall defeated. He will fulfill the prophecy in Psalm 2 as he rules over all – crushing all his enemies. In this vision he does not wield a two-edged law and gospel sword like we saw earlier. It is the piercing sword of judgment. He pronounces his just decree of justice and punishment on sinners.

So what do we do now while God's patience for sinners runs on? We wake up from spiritual slumber and repent when sin has a hold in our lives. But take care to remain humble! We might then think that it is our job to do away with evil and to turn the tide of the war against sin. But it is not. We might view ourselves as riding on a white horse ready to make justice reign as we fight against evil. But we can't. Some churches will teach that if you just join together in the ranks with other Christians then the world's problems will be solved. Others downplay sin and preach merely friendship with the world instead of repentance. But we can't just wish away the enemies of God or try these hopeless solutions. This vision is another reminder of our only solution for sin and all its evil. His name is faithful and true. We repent and humbly follow him in faith.

And we remember his name: King of kings and Lord of lords. We ourselves are seated with him. You and I are royalty in his kingdom. And he is our ascended king. Just as he visibly left us, he will come down once more! It isn't our job to defend him, to get rid of the enemies of God's flock. It's his job. And we look to him, the Word of God, who now holds all power and will come in conquering power. Sin and every evil will forever be slain by him.

It's a striking image. All our enemies trampled down in a bloody mess. But we are prepared to handle the content of this vision. Our God, our hero on a white horse, will come. He will pour out his justice with the wrath of God on every sinner. But all who trust in him will be spared to live as kings and queens. We will follow his lead of victory over Satan and all who fought against the gospel. He wins the victory for us. He rules in might for us. The Lamb of God (lives 4) to trample all my enemies.