

CHAPTER 11

The Return of the Rider

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 makes war. 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. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. The armies of Heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of His mouth comes 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. On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

—Revelation 19:11-16

There are no prizes for guessing who is being described here. The name Jesus does not appear, but there is an abundance of evidence to indicate that this is none other than the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We saw Him riding out victoriously at the beginning of the book, and since the moment He rolled the scroll out (see Revelation 5), He has been busy riding through the earth bent on conquest. He has been bringing lives in submission to His lordship. He has been turning nations to the ways of the truth. As He rides forth now in all His splendor, He is crowned with many crowns because He is the King of Kings. Other kings have surrendered their crowns to the Christ. Just as the elders, who adore Him, cast their crowns before Him, the rulers of this world—the principalities and powers that govern our society—must fall at His feet and cast their crowns before Him. And He takes each crown and sets it upon His own head.

He is taking up the crowns of the nations because God had made an offer that He could not refuse. God had said, "*Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter*" (Ps. 2:8-9). Can you imagine that Jesus would refuse such an offer? He has borne the sin of the world, taken upon Himself the curse of creation, obliterated sin through His death on the cross, made propitiation for all men everywhere, and accomplished all the work God gave Him to do. He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. This joy was like the joy of the harvest, for there would come a great ingathering, and nations would bow to His lordship.

We have not yet seen this in its fullness. There have been fleeting moments in history. There have been seasons of revival

where whole nations seem to have been moved and swayed by the wind of the Spirit, but there is coming a day when whole nations, policy makers, politicians, and social engineers, everyone of influence in the nations of the world, will be bowing to his lordship. The process has begun, and it has been in operation for over 2,000 years. It will come to a glorious climax, for the end will come when this Gospel of the kingdom has been preached as a testimony to all nations (see Matt. 24:14). Jesus sent out His followers and said, "*Make disciples of all nations*" (Matt. 18:19). When Jesus comes again and judges the world, He will separate the sheep from the goats. The sheep and the goats are not individuals; they are nations. There is a time coming when nations will turn to Christ. This does not necessarily mean that every citizen of that nation will be born again, but it does mean that a critical mass of believers will have such influence, such authority, and such power that others, if they know what is good for them, will listen to and heed their voice. This will not be a time for the church to flex its muscles and show how clever it is, but it will come about because "*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people*" (Prov. 14:34).

The King and His Army

I sometimes like to go into art galleries. I like art that is dramatic. You may go into a gallery and see one of those huge paintings, almost like a mural, so many feet long, high, and wide, a great panoramic view. I like to look at those that depict battle scenes. The drama is all there: the smoke, the flashes of the cannon in the distance, the horses clearly ready to advance, and all the weapons drawn. You see the great chief, the leader of the army. You recognize him not just by his noble stance but by the size and the stature of the horse that he is

sitting on; and you look and think, "What a hero! What a fine figure! What an inspiring leader!" You get close and look at the detail, but then you step back to see the panorama of the view, and as you step back, you see that although he is the focus of attention, although he occupies center stage, and although he is the one around whom everything else revolves, there are others in this picture. As you step back, you see that he is a leader, but he has an army. They, too, are poised to move forward; they have weapons drawn, and they also have the glint of warfare in their eye.

The rider on the white horse does not go alone; a multitude goes with him. As you look closer at those who are arrayed in his train, awaiting his command, you begin to recognize them, too. You look at the leader, and you say to yourself, "I know Him! It's Jesus." But this is not just a portrait of Jesus; it is also a portrait of us, the church. We are included in His triumph. He has a heavenly army that obeys His will and an earthly army that follows the Lamb wherever He goes. The armies of Heaven are following Him. It is *armies*—in plural—because the Lord has two armies. Our fight is not against flesh and blood. The earth is the battleground of our Gospel enterprise, but we wrestle against principalities and powers in the heavenly places. We need to constantly remind ourselves of this, though some believers in our generation seem to be obsessed with it. When we ride out, the angelic army accompanies us. There may be demons in the world, but there are angels with the church. There is an unseen host sent forth by Jesus to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. He will give His angels charge over you in case you strike your foot on a stone.

When Elisha was in Dothan, an enemy king wanted to capture him because he had been giving away the king's secret strategy. What the king plotted in secret Elisha heard in the Spirit, and so the king decided that if he was going to win the war, he needed to get rid of the prophet. He sent a whole army to capture this one man. Early in the morning, the servant of Elisha went out to the front door, and he caught a glimpse of a strange and unusual glint in the hills and the mountains that surrounded the prophet's house. As he looked more closely, he saw that it was nothing less than the early morning sun reflecting on spears and shields of a vast army that had come to capture the prophet of God. He ran back inside to tell the prophet that they were in trouble, but the old man simply made a request of God. He asked the Lord to open the young man's eyes. Of course, the young man's eyes could not have been more open. They were out like organ stops! He was like a character from a cartoon. It was not the eyes of his head that needed enlightening, but rather the eyes of his heart. God opened his eyes, and the servant saw that all around the prophet were the fiery chariots of God. Of course, Elisha knew they were there all the time. The old man had said to his servant, "*Those who are with us are more than those who are with them*" (2 Kings 6:16).

That is still true today. There may be demons, there may be principalities and powers, and there may be hideous hordes let loose in our world bent on corrupting our society. But here is the good news: there are more with us than there are with them! "*The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands,*" David declared (Ps. 68:17). We do not need to work out the number with a calculator. What he is telling us is that they

are innumerable! The numbers of the angels that we saw surrounding the throne and worshiping the Lamb are myriads and myriads, and these angels are with us. God has sent them to minister to us, to camp around us, to watch over us, and to be part of the great advancing and unstoppable army of Heaven that is determined to fill the earth with the glory of God.

The Name that Nobody Knows

I like the mystery that there is a name written on Jesus that nobody knows but He Himself. As soon as I read that, I wanted to know what the name is. My wife used to tell me that I am nosy. I used to tell her that I am just interested. There are certain things that make my fingers itch. Letters that come through the door addressed to somebody else that say "Private and Confidential," or doors that say "Strictly No Admittance." So as Jesus rides forth with this unknown name and the great armies of Heaven following behind Him, if you hear a thunder of hooves moving faster than the rest, the flash of a rider going past you making his way to the front of the column, it is only me trying to read the name that nobody knows but Jesus Himself!

I like the fact that He has got a name on Him that nobody knows. I still want to find out what it is, but I thank God for the mystery that there still remains about the Son. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that God would open the eyes of their hearts so that they might know Him better. We speak about coming to know Jesus, but that is just our first encounter. There is an eternity of relationship with Him, and eternity will not be long enough to fathom all the mysteries of Christ, because in Him "*are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (Col. 2:3). Some people say, "What are you going to do in eternity? How

are you going to fill up all that time?" I will tell you: finding out more about Jesus, discovering new facets of the Lamb, walking in the paths of the good shepherd, beholding His radiant glory! I will follow Him, and I will follow Him as closely as I can because I am trying to read the name on Him that nobody knows but He Himself.

You can get books that explain the hard sayings of the Bible, but I like the lingering mystery. I like the spiritual uncertainties that remain in the Word of God. I do not think we are supposed to understand it all logically. The writer to the Hebrews said, "*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command*" (Heb. 11:3). There are some things we understand even though we do not know them. One day Elijah the prophet came to Elisha. He threw his cloak around him, and Elisha was changed forever. All Elisha asked was to go home and kiss his mother and father good-bye, and then he would follow the prophet. Elijah said to him, "You do what you like. What have I done to you?" Elisha did not know, nor could he explain what had happened to him deep on the inside. He could not put it into words. He could only say "I just know that I was touched, and I will never be the same again." There are communications in the Spirit that defy our understanding.

Paul said that he communicated with spiritual people in spiritual ways:

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words (1 Corinthians 2:13).

One version speaks of "speaking spirituals to the spiritual." There is a communication that goes on in the Spirit that has

nothing to do with logic. There is a communication that goes on in the Spirit that has nothing to do with intellect. It is deep calling unto deep.

I could not stand up with Professor Hawkins and have a physics debate and prove to him by my superior knowledge how the world came into being. I simply understand by faith that the worlds were made by the Word of God. I have a spiritual understanding. I am not suggesting that as believers we need to kiss our brains good-bye. God gave you ability and an intellect, and you should pursue it to the ultimate. But when you and I speak in tongues, when we pray to God in the Spirit, our mind is unfruitful, though in the Spirit we are speaking mysteries. That is why you can receive a revelation that is totally new to you and yet somehow it is strangely familiar. It is like an old friend you have never met before, but you have been spiritually prepared and so welcome him without fear.

We know Jesus but still we want to know Him. Consider how Paul puts it in Philipians. He is categorizing and cataloging all the things that were assumed to be beneficial for him in his chosen career in religion: a Hebrew of the Hebrews, circumcised on the eighth day, a Pharisee, guiltless as far as the Law is concerned, persecuting the church in his zeal—and then he says this:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my

own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:7-11).

The actual language here is very colorful, and Eugene Peterson brings it out in *The Message*, when he has Paul comparing everything that was gain to him as if it were dog dung. That is actually a good rendition of what Paul is saying here. “*When I consider everything that was to my account,*” he says, “*it is like so much dog dung compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*” (Phil. 3:8 TM).

I guess you would have to know Jesus pretty well to be able to consider everything that the world thought was worthy as dog dung. You would need to have more than a nodding acquaintance with Jesus. He must have known Jesus intimately. But then he says, “I want to know Him!” You know what he means. Those of us who know Christ have one burning passion—we want to know Him. Jesus said, “If you eat the bread I give you, you will never hunger. If you drink the water I give you, you will never thirst” (see John 4:14; 6:35). That is true, but He did not tell us that we were going to get addicted to the bread and the water. You thought if you took just one sip and one nibble then that would be enough for life; but it created a greater desire, a deeper longing, and now you find yourself wanting to drink at the living fountainhead and eat the bread of life. You have an appetite for it although you are not hungry. You have a desire for it although you are not thirsty.

Three Other Names

The strange thing about this short passage is that although it tells us that He has a name written on Him that nobody knows but He Himself, it also gives Him three other names. This just deepens the enigma. He has got a name that we do not know, but He is called...—and then we are given three names. John tells us this: “*I saw Heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True*” (Rev. 19:11).

Faithful and True

The one who leads us is faithful and true. Faithfulness is one of the watchwords of the Book of Revelation. It is an awesome quality. It is not faith, nor is it being full of faith. Faithfulness means loyalty. And it seems to me that God puts as much store in faithfulness as He does in faith. God is looking for those who are faithful and true. You see, the one we follow determines what we will be like. If we follow one whose name is Faithful and True, it is because God wants us to become faithful and true. We are looking for men of faith, but God is looking for faithful men and faithful women. The Bible asks, “*A faithful man who can find*” (Prov. 20:6). There are many who seek their own way, but God is looking for a people who are faithful unto death, a people who will not choose their own path, who will not determine their own future, who will not follow their own imagined destiny, but who will follow the Lamb faithfully. Jesus tells us Himself that He did nothing when He was here on earth except what He saw the Father doing. He spoke no word but the words that the Father gave Him to speak. How can we be sure that our faith is the right faith? Our faith is centered in the faithful one. He was not a

confidence trickster or a madman. He was not a religious fanatic. He was not someone who had been tipped over the edge in His own imaginings. He was not the crusader of a new cult. He was the Son of God who had come into the world to lead us faithfully into all truth. It is the very essence of His character. He is faithful and true.

The Word of God

As we continue reading we find that his name is also "the Word of God." This is one of the clues that connect the Book of Revelation to the Gospel of John, because this is one of John's great descriptions of Christ. When he described Jesus coming into the world in his Gospel, he began by telling us, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made*" (John 1:1-3). He is the great creative Word who came to reveal the Father to us: "*The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). Jesus has come down as God's ultimate word. The writer to the Hebrews says,

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe (Hebrews 1:1-2).

He is God's last word, and God's last word will last for millennia. It is not God's last word, and then there is no other word. Jesus is the eternal last word of God. There is nothing to

add after Jesus has spoken. There is no more revelation to come after Jesus has shone upon us. Everything that you and I can know about the Father is in the Son. Paul describes it like this: "*In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form*" (Col. 2:9). When Jesus came into the world He was the Son. We do not believe in three gods. We believe in a Trinitarian godhead. But everything you could know was in the Son. One of His disciples asked Him one day to show him the Father. Jesus replied, "*Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?*" (John 14:8-9).

If you want to know the Father, all you have to do is look at the Son. If you want to know the Spirit, look at the Son, because the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him. He is God in the flesh. He is God's last word, His great explanation. He came in bodily form because natural men cannot receive the things of the Spirit. I suppose Jesus could have come down here like the Holy Spirit, powerful but unseen. He could have come like some great divine influence among the nations, turning hearts, touching lives, and healing bodies. But that would have been like the wind. You can see what it does, but you do not know where it comes from, and you do not know where it is going.

To know God, to relate to Him, we have to see something, and so the Word became flesh and dwelled among us. He took on bodily form. Now interestingly, the only place in Scripture other than Colossians where the expression "bodily form" is used comes in the Gospels where God tells John the Baptist that the one who is coming is the Messiah, and John asks how he will recognize Him. He is told "*The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He*" (John 1:33). But how do you

see the Spirit? You can see the effects of the Spirit, but you cannot see the Spirit. So when Jesus came up out of the waters at His baptism, Heaven was opened, and the Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove. Why? Because John had to see Him. Now the world needs to see something, and just as Jesus in His earthly ministry was the fullness of the Godhead, the church must now be the fullness of Christ.

It must demonstrate the life of Jesus in a tangible, audible, and visual way to a world that has no clue about seeing spiritual things. We have to flesh it out. Just as He rides ahead of us as the Word of God made flesh, so we ride behind Him as the army of Heaven, His word made flesh in us so that men might see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit. They are foolishness to him. But you show him a sign and a wonder, you show him a community of faith and love, you show him a people of good works, and they will be cut to the heart and fall down and confess that God is with you.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Finally, we are told that Jesus has another name. In fact, it is so important that in my Bible it is in capital letters. It is so important that the Scripture says He has it written on Him twice. If I can say this reverently, it is as if Jesus is riding out in a tracksuit, ready for action. You see people who think they are ready for action. They come out in their tracksuit with "Adidas" across the chest and "Adidas" down the leg. That is Jesus. It is very confusing when people come out with "Adidas" across the chest and "Puma" down the leg. You are not quite sure who they are! But the name that is written on Jesus describes who He is, helps us understand what He is

going to do, and gives us confidence in the outcome of it all. He is called "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." He is the king of all those who are ruling and all those who are lording; and every king and every lord shall ultimately bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.