

Revealed Series / #4: Conqueror, Judge, Friend

September 6, 2015

Anybody watch football yesterday? UK, Louisville, Oregon last night? I'm pretty sure Jesus is an Oregon fan. But real football starts next week. The Steelers and Patriots on Thursday – one of the rare times in my life that I will be a Steelers fan. And next Sunday, the Cowboys and the Giants at 8:30. I know Jesus is a Cowboys fan. That's why their stadium has a hole in the roof – so heaven can watch.

Now I love watching football. I enjoy a good college game; I love a good NFL game. But I have to tell you, I'm pretty weird when it comes to the Cowboys. I've been a Cowboys fan since about 1968 – nearly 50 years. There's been some really good years, and ... a whole lot of other years. But I'm not going to quit on them now. But here's the deal: I hate to see them lose. I mean, I really hate to watch them lose. So I don't. I'll start watching the game next Sunday, but if they start losing, I'll turn it off. And then later on, I'll go check the score. If they win, I'll go back and finish watching the game. If they lose, I'll delete the recording. In fact, sometimes on a really big play, I'll wait till they get to the line of scrimmage, and then I'll switch channels – for about 10 seconds or so. Then I'll switch back. If the Cowboys are cheering, I'll rewind a bit and watch the play. If the bad guys are cheering, I won't watch it. Isn't that pathetic? In fact my favorite way to watch a Cowboys game is to record the whole thing, check the score, and watch it later. Some guys don't want to know the score before they watch the game, and that's how I am with most teams. But I want to know the ending before I click play. That is pathetic, isn't it?

And here's what happens. When I'm watching the game knowing how it ends, I never get distressed when bad things happen. In fact, it's kind of fun to see them go 10, or 15, or 20 points down. Because I know they're coming back. And I just can't wait to see how! It's so cool! I love to see them come from behind. And when I know it's going to happen, it takes all the pressure off, doesn't it?

Well ... God thinks so too. I'll get back to that. We're going to wrap up today a short little series on images of Jesus in the book of Revelation.

- We started out by looking at the picture of Jesus in chapter 1: he has white hair, blazing eyes, feet of bronze, a voice that thunders like pounding ocean waves, a sword comes out of his mouth. Powerful and glorious!
- Then we looked at the Jesus of chapter 5: the lion of Judah, who looks like a slaughtered lamb. And the worship of this Jesus: “Worthy is the lamb who was slaughtered, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” It is incredible stuff!
- Then we looked at a very different picture of Jesus in chapter 12, when God took the staggering risk of sending his Son, in the form of a baby, into harm’s way. It is a very different Christmas story, with a dragon (Satan) waiting to devour the child, and a war breaking out in heaven. It is a picture that reveals how hard it is to be a Jesus follower in a world that is at war with God.

But today we are going to wrap this series up with 3 different images of Jesus in the last chapters of Revelation. With these 3 pictures of Jesus, God gives us a peek at the final score. We know how the game is going to end. And it takes the pressure off. You see, it makes all the difference when the game doesn’t seem to be going well. So if you have a Bible with you, or a Bible app on your phone or tablet, find Revelation chapter 19. We’re going to jump in at verse 11 in just a minute. Revelation 19.11 (it will be on screen as well).

Now remember, the book of Revelation tells its story with pictures, with symbols, with metaphors. What’s coming is beyond our words, it’s beyond our imaginations. So the old apostle John sees these fantastical scenes that give us just a hint at how extraordinary it will really be. John says (11), “It’s like heaven itself opened up, and there he is, sitting on this magnificent white horse.” It’s quite the contrast to the Jesus of Easter. Do you remember the scene where Jesus told his disciples to get a donkey, so he could ride into Jerusalem on it? And people were all excited, waving palm branches and putting their coats on the ground in front of him? You see, they had this tradition that if a king was coming in peace, he’d ride in on a donkey. If he was coming for war, he’d be on a horse, a warhorse. Well on Easter Jesus came to make peace. But someday he’ll be coming back to make things right, once and for all. Do you believe that?

It says (11), The rider of the horse was named faithful and true, because he will judge perfectly (perfect justice, we'll get to that one in a few minutes), and when he fights – and he will – it will be righteous: no meanness, no malice, he's just going to set things right, once and for all.

It says (12), “His eyes were like flames of fire (which means he means business, he's going to get it done), and on his head were many crowns.” That means, I think, that anyone with any kind of power or authority will be accountable to him. Every leader will answer to him. Every king, president, prime minister, dictator; every senator, judge, candidate; every general, admiral, warlord; every CEO, manager, foreman; every movie star, sports star, musician – they will all answer to him. But that includes us too: every pastor, every husband or wife, every dad or mom, every teacher, every cop, every doctor, every nurse ... we will all answer to him. That day is coming. On his head are many crowns – all of them actually. Every community, every corporation, every family – we'll answer to him. Do you believe that? It's coming. Are there parts of your life that you don't want to give over to him? Is there unforgiveness or bitterness that you don't want to relinquish to him? Guys, you'll be answering to him, and it's better now than then.

It says (12), A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. I don't have a clue what that means, except that it's pretty cool! Apparently we serve a God who will never, ever fit into these puny little brains. And apparently Jesus likes tattoos! The name is written on him ... sounds like a tattoo to me!

It says (13), He wore a robe dipped in blood. Now I kind of wonder whether that's his own blood. I wonder whether he's wearing a robe still stained by a cross. That would blow my mind. But I kind of think it means the blood of those who still choose to fight him. Someday all those who oppose him ... will lose. Someday he's going to win. Because he is God, and we're not.

It says, (13-14) His title was the Word of God, and it says that the armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. And it says (15-16), From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. (And) He will rule them with an iron rod. (And) He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a

winepress. (And) On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords... Wow!

Guys, this is so big! Knowing the final score makes a difference. I don't care how tough life gets for us here – God is giving us a peek at the ending. Sometimes it gets really hard. Sometimes it looks like the bad guys are winning and the good guys are losing. It's not going to end that way!

There are so many stories that draw their power from this story. Almost every epic you have ever read, almost every epic you have ever watched echoes this same theme. It looks bad; it looks like the good guys aren't going to make it; it looks like evil is going to win. But they come back! Every Rocky movie, every one of the Lord of the Rings flicks, Star Trek, Star Wars, The Gladiator, Braveheart, The Patriot, Apollo 13, Saving Private Ryan, Schindler's List, Cinderella Man... They grab our hearts because they are echoes of the greatest story ever; because God has planted this hope in our souls. He's coming back; he's going to win!

But it's more than just knowing that in the end he'll win. God is telling us that someday justice is going to be served. And that's so important, because sometimes, guys, life isn't fair. Sometimes that's really tough to take. Sometimes good people go down because they are good. Sometimes bad people get ahead because they are bad. Sometimes people just don't get what they deserve – good or bad. Life just isn't fair ... yet. But that's easier to take when you know that someday justice is coming.

It was back there in verse 11: The rider of that white horse was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly – he judges fairly -- and wages a righteous war. If you skip forward to the next chapter there is this sobering scene in chapter 20, verse 11. John says, "I saw a great white throne (it's more of a judge's bench) and (I saw) the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. (No evading justice on that day.) (And) I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books." (11-12) Have you ever thought about what that day will be like? It's worth pondering.

Now John doesn't tell us whether the one on the throne was the Father or the Son. But even if it is the Father, Jesus is there. The Bible tells us so over and over. Luke says, "Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead." (Acts 10.42) Every one of us will give an account to him. The apostle Paul says, "We must all stand before Christ to be judged. ..." (2 Corinthians 5.10) There will be no appeal to a higher court. Even Jesus said it. He says, "The Father judges no one. Instead, he has given (me) the Son absolute authority to judge." (John 5.22)

And guys, there are 3 things you need to know about this day of judgment.

- #1: It will be completely fair, and you will know it. There won't be any slick lawyers looking for loopholes in the law, there won't be any evidence that is suppressed, there won't be any witness tampering, there won't be any favoritism shown to the rich or the famous or the powerful. It will be completely fair, and you will know it.
- #2: His decisions will be final, and the sentence will be carried out. Guys, there will come a day when evil will be finally, and utterly destroyed. There will come a day when all will be seen, and all will be set right. There will come a day when it will be perfectly clear that no one will get away with anything. Does that take your breathe away? It should.

Can knowing that make a difference in how you do life today? I think it can. You see, I don't need to "get even" when I know that someday he'll make it right – perfectly. I don't need to be the one to hold the one who wrongs me accountable. Because I can trust that someday he will sort it out way more perfectly than I can. It makes it a whole lot easier to let go of my "right to get even," or my bitterness when I can't.

But it's also kind of sobering. Because you need to know that when he makes everything right, some of the wrongs he's going to make right are yours, and mine. I've hurt a lot of people; I've wronged a lot of people. There are people who have every right to get even with me; people who have every right to be bitter because of something I have said or done. You? Yeah; you too.

Bottom line, my only hope on that day, your only hope on that day is grace. If you think you're going to make it because you are more good than bad, you are clueless. If you think you are going to make it because there are people a whole lot worse than you are – you are hanging on to the wrong hope. I'm not going to make it through that day because I am good enough, or better than anyone else. Neither are you. The only shot we've got is the grace of a Jesus who bore our sins on that cross. If you have not accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that is going to be the worst day of your life. If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior ... well, you ain't seen nothing yet!

Because there is one more piece to this last picture of Jesus in the book of Revelation. He is coming back as a warrior who will defeat everything that stands against God; he is coming back as a judge who will make all things right. But he is also coming back ...

I told my class on Wednesday night that we have two longings hard-wired into us by God. #1: We want our life to matter. We want to know that it has meaning, purpose, value. And #2: We want to belong; we want to be loved. We want to be known ... and loved anyway. Wouldn't it be amazing to take off your mask, to let someone see those parts of you you are so good at hiding, and discover they value you anyway? Well, I'm going to tweak that one a bit. #3: If there is a God, we want to be accepted, we want to be loved by God. I can't imagine anything more exquisite than to look into the eyes of the one who knows every piece of me, and discover once and for all he loves me anyway, he accepts me anyway. You? I know I'm a hypocrite; I fear that way too often I'm a fraud; I know the gifts and opportunities he has given me and how often I have underachieved; I know all too painfully the sins I have battled – sometimes for decades. I cannot imagine anything more precious, anything more exhilarating, more life giving than to look into the eyes of God and discover, once and for all, I'm his kid, and he loves me ... anyway.

Have you ever wondered what heaven is going to be like (or to be more precise – the new earth)? Have you ever wondered what will make heaven heaven?

- Will it be the “no more pain” part? Revelation says, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death (no more) or sorrow or (no more) crying or (no more) pain. All these things are

gone forever.” (21.4) That’s a good start! For some of you guys, that’s huge!

- Will it be the “no more want” part? Nobody will be hungry any more. Nobody will be homeless. Nobody will want for anything they really need. Revelation 22 paints this picture of heaven. It says, “Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.” (Revelation 22.1-2) No more want, no more discord.
- Others have much tinier imaginations. Heaven will be heaven, they think, because there will be an endless buffet of perfect food, with no calories. Or heaven will be heaven, they think, because you can play any golf course you want, free, and there are never any slow golfers in front of you. Or heaven will be heaven because the weather is always perfect, and Kentucky always wins.
- Others long for heaven because there are so many questions they want answered. And maybe many of them will be. But I doubt all. I doubt our minds will ever comprehend all of God and God’s ways.
- Others look forward to the adventure, to the exploration – maybe we get to wander the galaxies if we want. I don’t know. Or maybe we will have jobs to do – jobs that matter, jobs that fulfill us perfectly.
- A lot of folks look forward to the reunions. They look forward to seeing that child, again, or that mom or dad, or that husband or wife, or that friend. I think those reunions will be very different that we expect. We won’t see them as they were, I think; I think we will see them as they were meant to be. Amazing creatures, bearing the unblemished image of God. Can you imagine a place in which all of us are stripped of our imperfections. No more dull, or superficial, or selfish, or cantankerous twits. Some of you guys are hard to be around ... here; you won’t be ... there.

But none of that is what makes heaven heaven. Listen to what it says. It says, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.” Guys, we will see the face of God, and not die. We will look into the face of God and see, not disgust, not disappointment, not disapproval – but acceptance and love. Can you imagine the peace you will feel, the joy you will

experience when you no longer dread his presence, or fear his frown, or his disappointment? He will be with us, without restraint, without a veil...

Because, right now God is so restrained, so veiled, almost maddeningly so. How many times have you wished God would just ... just be a little more vocal, a little more demonstrative?

- “God, make him listen to you!”
- “God, make him come back to us, and to you!”
- “God, we need your help, he’s dying!”
- “God, fix her, make her love me again!”
- “God, stop them from picking on my boy, or my girl!”

He’s got all this power, he’s supposed to be so good, he told us to ask him for things; well we’re asking, and he’s not answering ... it seems. Right now he is so restrained, so veiled, so shy. Because, I think, because he won’t force himself on us. Because, I think, he wants lovers, not subjects. He values our freedom, more than he values our obedience, because he wants us to love him back. So he holds back, giving us time to choose him freely. He holds back, because he wants us to walk by faith, not by sight. Because trust -- trust – is absolutely necessary for love.

But some day he will pull down the veil. Someday he won’t be so shy. Someday he will use his outside voice. And we won’t have the freedom to disbelieve any more, or the freedom to disobey any more. But then it will be too late. Then he will honor the choice you make now. C. S. Lewis put it like this. He said, Either you say to God, Thy will be done, or someday God will say to you, Thy will be done.

One that day, he will defeat evil – decisively, utterly, finally. On that day he will judge all men, he will settle all wrongs, he will make all things right. On that day we will final do life with God without veils, without walls. We will experience life as it was meant to be.

Knowing that ... Does that make a difference in how you do life now? You know what the final score is going to be. You know how it ends. Do you think that knowledge, that “hope” can you give you a little swagger?

Listen to how the apostle Paul put it. Paul had a tough life – tougher than about any of us. Here’s what he says. He says, “What we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.” (Romans 8.18)

The Phillips translation puts it like this: “Whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us.” Do you buy that?

Make a little list of what makes your life tough in this world: persecution, fighting, finances, family issues, loneliness, disease, pain, death. Those are the sufferings of this present time. Think about your deepest hurt, your worst loss, your most difficult relationship, the place in your heart that is the most breakable, your deepest disappointments. You see, Christian hope is not that you get a free pass from the sufferings of this present age. We live in them, you and I. Christian hope is that you can trust God tonight, right now. You can take your broken heart to him. Today, right now, you can keep obeying him. Tomorrow morning when you wake up, you can keep trusting him, because one day, Jesus is coming back, and he’s going to defeat everything opposed to God, and he’s going to make all things right, and he is going to look you in the eye and wipe away every tear. And God will hold you as his son or his daughter, and say, “Honey, honey, I know, I know.” And I don’t know how he will do it, but every aching heart will be made whole, every emotional wound will be healed, every tear duct will be surgically removed because you won’t need it anymore — not there. Sadness will be gone -- not through denial or ignorance, but because God will set everything right and you will taste joy for all of eternity to the marrow of your bones. Does that sound good to anybody in here? Well, that’s going to happen.

It’s Jesus’ line. He said, “I’ll be back ... No more cancer, no more evil, no more broken hearts, no more lonely marriages, no more unloved children, no more failed friends, no more regrets, no more guilt, no more being defeated by sin, no more saying the wrong thing, no more addictions, no more pain, no more suffering, no more death.” Guys, If you really believe that, that ought to change the way you walk out of here today, that ought to change the way you do life tomorrow.

Worship Team: Names of Jesus in Revelation

So listen to some of these titles for Jesus from the book of Revelation:

- "He's the Living One." "He was dead, and behold, now He is alive forever and ever."
- "He's the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, The One Who was and Who is and Who is to come."
- "He holds the keys of death and Hades." "He is the one who sits on the throne."
- "He is the one whose name is Faithful and True, Who judges the living and the dead, the great and the small."
- "He is the Lord God Almighty, the King of the ages, the Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings."
- "He is the lamp that lights up heaven."
- "He is the Bridegroom that rejoices in His bride."
- "He is the Comforter who will wipe away every tear."
- "He is the destroyer of death, the jailer of Satan."
- "He is the Lion of Judah, the bright morning star."
- "He is worthy. Especially he is worthy for he is the Lamb that was slain. And with his blood he purchased for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nations."
- "Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing."

Wrap Up

The book of Revelation ends with these words: He who is the faithful witness to all these things (that's Jesus; he) says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Schwarzenegger just stole that line. It was Jesus' first: "I'll be back!" And we responded, "Amen! (We believe it, we trust you,) Come, Lord Jesus!" And then it says, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people."

There are over 300 references to the return of Jesus in the New Testament. That's a bedrock of our faith. And when it happens, nobody is going to miss it, and life as we know it will be over. And for those who have chosen – before that day – to be Jesus followers, it will be infinitely better. Do you buy that?

Guys, the longer you follow him, the bigger he gets. The closer you get to him, the bigger he gets. There's a wonderful scene in the Chronicles of Narnia where Lucy, after a period of time has elapsed, sees Aslan again. He's the Christ-figure in these books of C. S. Lewis. And she says to him, "Aslan, you're bigger." And he says, "That's because you're older, little one." She says, "Not because you are?" And Aslan says, "I am not, but each time you grow, you will find me bigger."

I hope because of this series you've grown, your understanding of Jesus has grown, and you have a bigger God. I hope our worship will be richer, I hope our life with God will be sweeter, and lighter, I hope our determination to take as many with us as we can has deepened. He'll be back ... No more cancer, no more evil, no more broken hearts, no more lonely marriages, no more unloved children, no more failed friends, no more regrets, no more guilt, no more being defeated by sin, no more saying the wrong thing, no more addictions, no more pain, no more suffering, no more death. Go live life with a swagger this week. You know how the story ends.