

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. ¹² 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. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (NIV84)

Theme: Christ’s Ascension: His Victorious Coronation

1. He has fought and won the battle
2. He sits on this throne

On June 2nd 1953 Queen Elizabeth II was crowned as the United Kingdom’s Monarch at a coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey in London. An estimated three million people lined the streets of London to catch a glimpse of the new monarch as she made her way to and from Buckingham Palace. Countless millions more watched the ceremony on T.V. or listened to it on the radio.

Many are interested in people who hold positions of power. Even in America (a country which rebelled against the absolute rule and authority of a king), many people are obsessed with royalty. Princess Di got married to Prince Charles in 1981 in what was been dubbed as “The Wedding of the Century” and 750 million people watched worldwide on their t.v.’s. And all of this attention for a monarchy that is more about social duties and tourism than it is political power. Only the Monarch has any political power (and that is more theoretical than real); although she is essentially a figure head, yet many people are obsessed with her and all the royal family.

This past week has been full of “special days.” All week has been teacher appreciation week. Wednesday, May the fourth is known as “Star Wars Day.” Thursday was Cinco De Mayo, yesterday was 142nd

running of the Kentucky Derby—the greatest two minutes in all of sports, and finally today, of course, is Mother’s Day. There were a lot of things vying for our attention this past week that you might have missed the most important thing of all. Most people probably missed, even many of you in our congregation probably didn’t even realize, or perhaps didn’t give it much of a thought. Thursday was 40 days after Christ rose from the dead on Easter and that means that Thursday was the day of Christ’s Ascension. The Ascension of Christ is his coronation day. After defeating sin, death, and the power of the devil by his perfect life, death, and resurrection, Christ entered heaven as our victorious king and took his spot on the throne of God.

We read Luke’s account of Christ’s ascension in our gospel this morning. He elaborates a little bit more in the first chapter of his other book, Acts. It was 40 days after Jesus rose from the dead on Easter. He was on a mountain outside of Bethany, near Jerusalem, when he began to ascend into heaven. Soon the clouds covered Jesus and he was gone from there sight. But both of those accounts look at Christ’s ascension from an earthly viewpoint. Here in chapter 19 of Jesus’ Revelation which he gave to John, we get a different perspective. We see what the day of Jesus’ ascension was like in heaven.

First of all, we see Jesus’ entering into heaven on a white horse—a stately magnificent war horse, not the lowly beast of burden on which he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Jesus is in his full divine glory, not in his state of humility. His clothes are white, his eyes like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns—diadems, crowns worn by kings who also claimed to be god. So these many crowns that Jesus wore indicate divine rule.

And as we take a look at Jesus we notice something odd. His white robe has blood on it. Why is a victorious king entering his coronation with blood all over his pristine white robe? Because he just got done fighting a battle.

Even today our President is known as the Commander-in-Chief, the leader of our military. He is the one who is ultimately responsible for making many of the major decisions when it comes to our military. The leader of a country has also been the leader of the military for centuries. Kings would often go the battle field and lead the army from there. And at time, especially during Biblical times, the Kings would actually lead them in battle and fight alongside their men.

That is what Jesus did; he joined the battle too. He came down from heaven and lived as one of us on this earth so that he could fight our battle. For over 30 years he faced the same temptations that we face, but not once did he fall into temptation. He then took the fight to the cross, upon which he nailed our sins; and as he suffered through the eternal damnation that our sins deserved. With our sins removed and paid for by Christ; he gave us his perfect and holy life so that we are pure and innocent in the eyes of the Lord. And then he died, only to rise from the dead three days after his death, winning the victory over death, assuring us of a perfect and eternal life with him. And so he crushed Satan's head; the devil thought that he had struck the fatal blow to Jesus, but Jesus died willingly, Satan only struck his heel. For Jesus rose and completely destroyed the devil and his work.

We may think that the blood on Jesus' robe is his own blood after all it is by the shedding of that blood that our sins paid for. But it really isn't his blood; it is the blood of Satan as he crushed his head; it is the blood of Jesus' enemies that he crushed with vengeance.

Jesus' robe may have been bloody, but not the armies who are with him. Notice that the army of angels that trailed him still have clothes that are white and clean—not a spot of blood on them. How can that be possible? Because they didn't fight the battle for us. Christ fought and won the battle alone! And if the angels didn't fight this battle for us, than that means that we don't fight the battle either. In fact there is nothing we can do to remove our sins, to overcome death, or to defeat the power of the devil.

Christ fought this battle for us and he fought alone. Christ alone utterly crushed the devil's head, he removed our sins, and he defeated death by rising from the dead. He was victorious and so are we since he gave us that victory. Because of Christ our sins will not count against us or condemn us; and because of Christ we know that we will rise from the dead and we will enjoy a perfect and eternal life in heaven!

So now at his ascension, after he won the victory over our enemies, Christ enters in to heaven as our victorious king. And as the king he takes his spot at the right hand of God. The majority of chapter 19 is the welcoming of Jesus into heaven with all the saints and angels singing Hallelujah and praising his name, and the feast that followed.

Hallelujah's rain throughout the halls of heaven. That word means, praise the Lord. That is what the people shouted again and again as Christ the king entered heaven. Everyone knows Handel's Messiah, it is considered one of greatest musical accomplishments of all time. You often hear portions of it over Christmas. Some may think of it more as an Easter work. But it really depicts the entire life and work of Christ. The Hallelujah Chorus is the most well-known song of the entire piece and many people may think of the angels singing Jesus' praises on the night he was born. But really the words of the Hallelujah Chorus are taken from the book of Revelation, and most of the lines from our chapter—chapter 19. It is a depiction of the chorus of saints and angels greeting their king by shouting "Hallelujah." Just listen to the songs of the heavenly choir as John recorded them singing, **Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God... "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.** And you may also recognize the name of Jesus recorded in our last verse, **King of Kings and Lord of lords!**

After his return Jesus took his rightful spot on the throne of God, ruling over his entire creation. He rules over all things—every king and president, and everyone else. He is a gracious and merciful Lord; but he is also a just judge. And he is one who will completely destroy his enemies. John writes, **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.**

John isn't just talking about the devil and his demons. He has already defeated them and sent them to hell to suffer for eternity. This is describing how the Lord will bring swift and full damnation on those who reject him. Those who don't believe in Jesus will be punished with eternal condemnation. And there is nothing we can hide from this king—he isn't just one of us, he is also God. He knows all things and there is no thought or attitude of the heart that he isn't aware of. And when the Day of Judgment comes he will bring down upon all unbelievers the full wrath of God.

But let us not forget that the one who judges us is also the one who gave up his life for us. That the one who sits on his throne over the

entire world is the one who also saved us. Sure he will punish all who don't believe in him, and we cannot chose to believe on our own; but he promised his Holy Spirit who works through the gospel to bring us to faith by which we receive everything he has done for us.

Jesus may be our judge, but he is also fair and just. He never punishes someone who doesn't deserve it. And we all deserve it. That is why our judge gave up his life and died for us. The Lord doesn't want anyone to perish; he takes no delight in the death and condemnation of anyone. That why he rose from the dead. So that we may live. He extends our lives time and time again, giving us more and more chances to hear of his saving work and believe and to share that message of forgiveness and eternal life with others that they too may believe.

In these five short verses of Scripture we see six different names of Christ which describe just our great and glorious he is. He is called Faithful and True—because he is faithful and true in all he does and promises. He is called the Word of God because it is through Jesus that God speaks to us his message of love and compassion.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords because he has won the victory over all things and rules over all things. And there is one more named mentioned in this portion of Scripture; but we don't know what that name is. John says in verse 12, **He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.** We, as part of God's creation, can't completely comprehend everything about Jesus. He is so great and magnificent that we can't possibly understand everything there is to know about him—even one of his names is too much for us to understand. That is how great our king is—and yet he came down to earth to fight and win that battle for us!

This week was a busy week—there were a lot of special days that vied for our attention. But there is one day that stands out—the day of our Lord's Ascension, his coronation as the king of Kings and Lord of lords. We live in a society that loves royalty, despite the fact that they are more about pomp and grandeur more than any actual power; but not so with Christ. He fought and won the ultimate victory for us and now he rules and reigns over his entire creation from his throne in heaven. And so we rejoice now on earth at Christ's ascension and long for the time when we will join the heavenly choirs in singing Hallelujah's to our king and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.