

# The White Stallion and the Divine Warrior

**Revelation 19:10** Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

<sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

<sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

<sup>15</sup> From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

<sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

(Rev. 19:10-16)

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# The Great White Steeds

There is a ubiquitous symbol found throughout ancient and modern mythology that often goes unnoticed. I was first fascinated by it as a little boy when, after having taken an astronomy class, I saw the movie *Clash of the Titans* (1981). In that movie, the hero Perseus, tames the great white winged horse **Pegasus**, and then rides it high into the heavens as he's off to save the day. I had just learned about Pegasus as a constellation, and now I couldn't stop thinking about this amazing horse.

The hero riding **the white horse**. From Bellerophon mounting **Pegasus** to defeat the Chimera, to Odin entering Valhalla on **Sleipnir**, to Napoleon Crossing the Alps on **Marengo**, to Gandalf leading the charge of Helm's Deep on **Shadowfax**, to the Lone Ranger saving the day on **Silver**, it's found around the world, in both ancient and modern times. Why?

Some of the imagery is obvious. The white horse is **majestic, mighty, fast, fearless, and pure**. Tolkien, who seemed almost obsessed with the magnificent creatures in the telling of his stories, captures some of these things in lines from *The Lord of the Rings*. **“There is none like to Shadowfax.**

In him one of the mighty steeds of old has returned. None such shall return again.” “Like a shadow among the willows.” “He spoke a word to Shadowfax, and like an arrow from the bow the great horse sprang away. Even as they looked he was gone: a flash of silver in the sunset, a wind over the grass, a shadow that fled and passed from sight.”

## Riders of the White Horses in Ancient and Modern Mythos

Nepal/China	India	Greece	Medieval Christian
 <p data-bbox="159 1041 467 1108">Buddha Riding Kanthaka Unknown</p>	 <p data-bbox="571 1041 847 1180">Kalki Riding White Horse Gouache on mica. Unknown. 1800-1899.</p>	 <p data-bbox="912 1041 1188 1180">Bellerophon Riding Pegasus to defeat the Chimera (425-420 BC)</p>	 <p data-bbox="1269 1041 1513 1146">St. George and the Dragon Novgorod, 15<sup>th</sup> cent.</p>
Sweden	France	America	Middle Earth
 <p data-bbox="100 1554 526 1621">Odin entering Valhalla on Sleipnir Tjängvide image stone (limestone)</p>	 <p data-bbox="571 1554 847 1768">Napoleon Crossing the Alps on Marengo Jacques-Louis David (1802) Kunsthistorisches Museum</p>	 <p data-bbox="889 1554 1211 1579">The Lone Ranger on Silver</p>	 <p data-bbox="1286 1554 1497 1659">Gandalf Riding Shadowfax Weta Workshop</p>

But there was more for Tolkien. The beast was **untamable, elemental, alive!** “But Shadowfax will have no harness. You do not ride Shadowfax: he is willing to carry you—or not. If he is willing, that is enough. It is then his business to see that you remain on his back, unless you jump off into the air.” “Fast by the **wind.**” “**Fire** flew from his feet.” “... as a swift stream [of **water**].” Waging a battle on the **earth** with his hooves.<sup>1</sup> This was a unique creature of creation, fit only for the most righteous of souls, and only such a one would dare ride it.

Of course, as Napoleon demonstrates, sometimes he who thinks himself most pure is anything but. Nevertheless, the imagery is often used to convey the ideas of a **righteous warrior** riding his mount into battle to fight a just and holy war. “Shadowfax tossed his head and cried aloud, as if a trumpet had summoned him to battle. Then he sprang forward. Fire flew from his feet; night rushed over him.” As Genesis sang in their first album: “**And the heads they are a**

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<sup>1</sup> These quotes and ideas are collected in the fascinating article, **Dana Miller**, “Horses of Agency, Element, and Godliness in Tolkien and the Germanic Sagas,” *Graduate English Association New Voices Conference* (2007): [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1026&context=english\\_conf\\_newvoice\\_2007](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1026&context=english_conf_newvoice_2007). She cites another interesting article on horses in Revelation, **Nickel Helmut**, “And Behold, a White Horse ... Observations on the Colors of the Horses of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 12 (1977): 179-83. [file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/And\\_Behold\\_a\\_White\\_Horse\\_The\\_Metropolitan\\_Museum\\_Journal\\_v\\_12\\_1977.pdf](file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/And_Behold_a_White_Horse_The_Metropolitan_Museum_Journal_v_12_1977.pdf).

rolling | Cause the conqueror is on his way | And the justice day is coming | For the conqueror is on his way.”<sup>2</sup>

## Revelation 19:10-16—Context and Structure

The **Divine Warrior riding the White Stallion** to victory over his enemies is the setting of our passage today. It opens not with the Rider, but with his horse. “I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse!” (Rev 19:11). This introduction is meant to take our minds back to a chapter we discussed long ago—the **Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse**. “And I looked, and behold, a white horse!” (6:2). “And out came another horse, bright red...” (4). “And I looked, and behold, a black horse!” (5). “I looked, and behold, a pale horse!” (8). In their trail followed plagues and death and hell.

We saw back then that we **could not identify** with certainty the first rider on the white horse, but given that there are many white horses in our passage (14), this is no big deal. What matters much more is that the White Rider of Revelation 19 is **very clearly identified** and to the chagrin of many today who think him a soft sage of kisses and hugs, a

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis, “The Conqueror,” *From Genesis to Revelation*, written by Tony Banks, Peter Gabriel, Anthony Phillips, and Mike Rutherford, Decca (1969).

man who roamed around the ancient world in Birkenstocks to show people how to live moral lives or find the Christ-within, or the best-friend/girlfriend seemingly sung about in so many contemporary Christian songs, this Rider comes to put an end to wickedness on earth, and he has deep roots in the Old Testament.

Before we get to that, let's get ourselves [situated in the passage](#). We will begin with an introduction that takes us back to ch. 1. In both passages, John falls at the feet of a man in his vision.

A. Vision of Jesus, 1:12–16

[B. John falls at Jesus's feet, 1:17a](#)

**C. Command to "Write," 1:19**

**C.' Command to "Write," 19:9**

[B'. John falls at angel's feet, 19:10](#)

A'. Vision of Jesus, 19:11–16<sup>3</sup>

After this, our Rider is introduced. This comes at the end of [the sixth cycle](#) of the book, between the two suppers of God. Those suppers, while having partial fulfillments throughout history, indeed, while having [a sacramental counterpart](#) in the Lord's Supper, take place in their final manifestation at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. As such, our Rider is situated [right in the middle](#) of these End Times meals.

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<sup>3</sup> [Peter J. Leithart](#), *Revelation*, 2:247–248.

The Rider is deliberately paralleled here at the end of the cycle with the Harlot who sits on a scarlet beast at its beginning. That parallel pits the two together in mortal combat. Who will come out victorious?

**17:1–19:10**

Harlot sitting on scarlet beast, 17:1–8

- name on forehead, 17:5
- reigns over kings of land

Babylon fallen/birds, 18:1–3

- angel with glory, 18:1

Mourning kings and merchants, 18:9–20

Babylon tossed into sea, 18:21

Bride prepared, wedding supper, 19:1–10

**19:11–21:8**

Rider on a white horse, 19:11–16

- name, 19:12, 13, 16
- rules the nations

Feast for birds, 19:17–18

- angel standing in sun, 19:17

Rulings saints, 20:1–6

Satan into lake of fire, 20:10

Bride revealed; new creation, 21:1–8<sup>4</sup>

The Rider also comes near the end of a very deliberate structure that goes from ch. 12-20. There is [something hidden here](#) in the parallels with John that I find so interesting, I will come back to it at the end.

- a. Dragon introduced, 12
- b. Beasts introduced, 13
- c. Harlot introduced, 17**
- c'. Harlot destroyed, 17–19:10**
- b'. Beasts into lake of fire, 19:11–21
- a'. Dragon into lake of fire, 20<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Leithart, 2:166.

<sup>5</sup> Leithart, 2:167. Also William H. Shae, “The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20,” *AUSS* 23.1 (Spring 1985): 54 ..... 37-54.

And, of course, there is that imagery that links us to the Four Horsemen, which ends up moving us back to the beginning of the book as we make our way to its end:

- A. Epistolary introduction, 1:1–8
  - B. Promises to overcomers, 2–3
  - C. Heavenly throne room, 4–5
  - D. Four horsemen, 6:1–8**
  - ...
  - D'. Rider on white horse, 19:11–16**
  - C'. Martyrs enthroned, 20:4–6
  - B'. Bridal city, including gifts to overcomers, 21:1–22:5
- A'. Epistolary conclusion, 22:6–21<sup>6</sup>

Into chapter 19, we see the Rider **paralleling the worship of Christ** at the beginning of the chapter.

<b>First Half (Rev 19:1-9)</b>		<b>Second Half (Rev 10-21)</b>	
A. Heavenly Declarations Worshiping Christ (1-8)	Declaration: X. "Worship God"	A. The Rider Rules (11-16)	
B. The Wedding Supper of the Lamb (9)	(10)	B. The Great War Supper of God (17-21)	

Meanwhile, the Rider forms **its own literary unit** with the center being the bloody robe of its rider. This has a rather **unexpected meeting with the John parallel from Rev 12.**

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<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1704&context=auss>.

<sup>6</sup> Leithart, 2:275.



## Two Structures Centering on the Bloody Robe of the Rider

- A. (Introduction) Heaven opened
- B. White horse
- C. Rider
- D. Eyes are flames
- E. Many diadems on head
- F. Name that no one knows
- G. Robe dipped in blood**
- F<sup>1</sup>. Name is word of God
- C<sup>1</sup>. Armies clothed in linen, white and clean
- B<sup>1</sup>. Following on white horses
- D<sup>1</sup>. Sharp sword from mouth
- E<sup>1</sup>. Rule with rod of iron
- G<sup>1</sup>. Treads wine press**
- F<sup>2</sup>. Name: king of kings, Lord of lords<sup>7</sup>

- A. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True
- B. he judges and makes war
- C. His eyes were are like a flame of fire
- D. on his head are many crowns
- E. he had a name written, that no man knew himself
- F. 13 And he was clothed with a robe dipped in blood**
- E'. his name is called The Word of God.
- D'. 14 the armies in heaven followed him upon white horses
- C'. 15 out of his mouth comes a sharp sword
- B'. with it smites the nations and rules them
- A'. 16 on his thigh a name: KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.<sup>8</sup>

## The Divine Warrior of the OT

As I said earlier, the Divine Warrior is a theme **rooted deep in the OT**. Unfortunately, many people either do not know

<sup>7</sup> Leithart, 2: 276.

<sup>8</sup> RS, "Revelation 19:1-16," *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (July 3, 2018), <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2018/07/03/revelation-191-18/>.

their OT or they misunderstand who the Warrior is, if they see him at all. **Moses sings about him** just after the Red Sea:

I will sing to *the LORD*, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is *my God*, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is *a man of war*; the LORD is his name.

(Ex 15:1-3)

In many ways, it is in the days of Moses that the Warrior makes his first appearance. This is because God's people had been taken into slavery in Egypt and **he was now fighting to free his people**. Throughout the days of Moses and on into the days of Joshua, the Warrior fights for his people. Deuteronomy begins, “The LORD your God who goes before you *will himself fight for you*, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen ...” (Dt 1:30-31).

The enemies of Israel knew it too. The Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for *the LORD fights for them* against the Egyptians” (Ex 14:25). “The chiefs of Edom [are] dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread

fall upon them; because of *the greatness of your Arm*, they are still as a stone, till your people ... pass by” (15:15). God had said, “I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you” (23:27). Thus, when the spies went into Jericho and met Rahab the prostitute of the evil city she declared, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you” (Josh 2:9). With God as the Divine Warrior, Israel conquered Canaan, and even throughout the days of the Judges and Kings of Israel, he continued to fight for them.

Before moving on, it is vital to see a couple of things that we have just read, but perhaps some have passed too quickly over what they heard. It is *not just “God”* who fought for Israel. “God” is more specific. Moses declares, “*The LORD is his name.*” YHWH. Medievals and Reformers called him *Jehovah*. Jews say *Havayah*. Modern Christians often say *Yahweh*. Whatever the case, this is his name, and it is important to see this, for *the “name” comes up* in our passage.

The first time the name appears as a revelation from God himself is to Moses in *the Burning Bush*. Moses said to God,

“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is *his name?*’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, ‘*I AM WHO I AM.*’ And he said ‘Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ God also said to Moses, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: ‘*The LORD*, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ *This is my name* forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations” (Ex 3:13-15). “I AM” is a form of the verb “to be,” *hayah* in the Hebrew. Curiously, *yhwh* is an early form of this same verb in the third person singular (“he is”).<sup>9</sup> In other words, the name of God is somehow related to the verb of being and essence. God is, was, a forever will be. The first and the last.

What escapes the notice of so many when they read this chapter, however, is that this God is identified even more specifically. It says, “*And the Angel of the LORD* appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (Ex 3:2). Curiously, in a passage we saw above, when God said, “I will send *my terror before you*” (23:27), just a few verses earlier it said, “Behold, I sent *an angel before you...*” (20). Importantly,

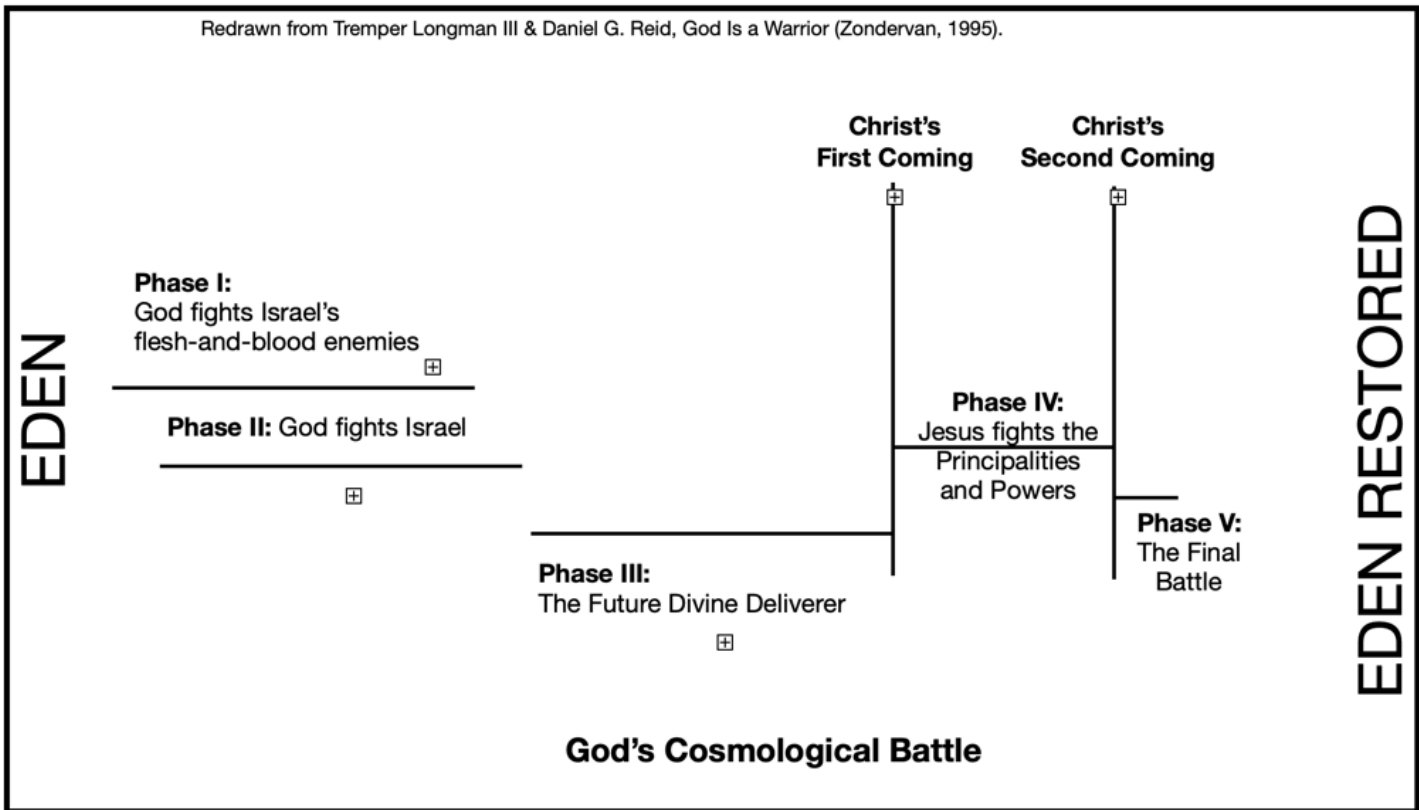
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<sup>9</sup> Noel D. Osborn and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 68.

they were to “pay careful attention to him and *obey his voice*; do not rebel against him, for he will *not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him*” (21). There’s the name again, and it is associated with the Angel of the LORD in both places. In fact, his name simply is YHWH.

This is why something else often unnoticed in the passage I began with says, “The LORD is a *man* of war, the LORD is his name.” A man. This is exactly like Jacob who “wrestled with a man” (Gen 32:24), but soon thereafter, after asking his name, was told, “You have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed” (28). And Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered” (30). Simply put, the Angel of God *is* God. But, he is also “a man,” a heavenly being, the Divine Warrior and Commander of the armies of heaven. This is why when Joshua sees him, he takes off his sandals because the ground was holy (Josh 5:15), exactly what Moses did at the burning bush (Ex 3:5).

The Angel fighting for Israel is vital to understand. He is the Divine Warrior of the Exodus and the Conquest. However, this is only *the first of five stages* that the Divine Warrior comes in the Scripture:



The **Second Stage** begins almost immediately after the conquest. It starts off the book of Judges. The same Angel of the LORD comes in the sight of all the people of Israel (the only time this happens in the entire OT) and says, “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break *my covenant* with you, and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have *not obeyed my voice*. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (Jdg 2:2-3).

In fact, he promises in the prophets, “I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath” (Jer 21:5). We saw this hand/arm language earlier, and it is the language of the king’s Captain, his war-chief, the Right Hand of Power who leads the armies into war. God had actually done this as early as the days of Moses. “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them” (Isa 63:9-10). And, because of this great stubbornness and refusal to repent of their sins and turn back to the Living God, we learn, “He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire” (Lam 2:4).

God, through Christ, thus gave Israel over to its enemies. In this stage, he fought against his own people. But, though it often felt like it, he would not leave them forever. Thus, the third stage of the Divine Warrior’s activities are

also found in the prophets. And this stage is that of a [promised Divine Savior](#).

- The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; *he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away*. And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” ([Isa 49:1-3](#))
- *Gird your sword* on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty! In your majesty *ride out victoriously* for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let *your right hand* teach you awesome deeds! *Your arrows* are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever*. ([Ps 45:3-6](#))
- He shall *strike the earth* with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips *he shall kill* the wicked. ([Isa 11:4](#))
- You shall *break them* with a rod of iron and *dash them* in pieces like a potter's vessel. ([Ps 2:9](#))
- Who is this who comes from Edom, in *crimsoned garments* from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who *treads in the winepress*? “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I



*trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.” (Isa 63:1-3)*

It is into this that I now want to turn to our passage.

## **The Divine Warrior of Revelation 19**

While our passage technically begins in **vs. 11**, we have not yet dealt with **vs. 10**, which itself needs to be prefaced by the last of the five songs in **vs. 9**. “*And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true words of God’*” (**Rev 19:9**). The last angel we saw<sup>10</sup> was at the end of Ch. 18 and he was hurling a huge stone into the sea. I said that this angel is **most likely Christ**. However, the last angel that spoke to John was in ch. 17 (**7, 15**), and this was **certainly not Christ**. This is important for what comes next.

As John hears the songs and the words of this glorious creature, he is tempted. “*Then I fell down at his feet to worship him...*” (**10**). This parallels the worship he gave to

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<sup>10</sup> Technically, “angel” is not in the Greek, only “he” as a third person ending to “says.” It does make the most sense that “he” refers to an angel rather than one of the voices singing the songs.

**Christ 1:17**, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.” In this place, we learn that it was clearly the Lord himself who John saw, and Jesus accepted the worship, laying his hand on John and saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last...” But something quite different happens here. “But he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God’” (19:10). How interesting that John who knew the Lord so well could not seem to tell the difference between these angels. Even more interesting, is that as we near the end of the book we have a created angel refusing to accept worship; this is the opposite of the Fall of our parents, where it appears that Satan wanted to be worshiped. Perhaps the chief difference between the fallen angelic host and their counterparts in heaven is that those loyal to Yahweh will not accept worship. That tells you just about everything you need to know about the gods of the nations and how “good” they are.

But what sense does this short exchange between John and the angel have in our passage? Beale thinks it serves as the conclusion to the Babylon section beginning at 17:1 and

as an introduction to the Last Battle,<sup>11</sup> but this doesn't seem to make good sense of the tightly woven nature of the chiastic structures which seem to necessitate that they be read together rather than chronologically. Others seem to think that because this so closely parallels 22:8-9, that vv. 9-10 are a later addition, probably to counter the temptation to worship angels amongst the seven churches.<sup>12</sup> But it seems to me that these verses stand as a perfect meeting point between the two suppers. Specifically, they reintroduce us to “the word of God.”

Back when John worshiped Christ in ch. 1, he told us that he bore witness to the “word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw” (1:2; cf. 9). Of course, “word” is one of John’s favorite OT images of Christ himself (e.g. John 1:1, 14; 1Jn 1:1, etc.), but he has not made this clear yet in Revelation. In telling John about all who are invited to the wedding, he is recalling Jesus’ parable of the Wedding Feast. But by adding, ‘These are the true words of God’, he is pointing us to the One who spoke them. That is, not himself, for he is only a messenger. It was

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<sup>11</sup> G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 406.

<sup>12</sup> R. H. Charles, *Revelation* vol. 2 (Edinburgh: 1959); 129.

Jesus who originally told us in that parable, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

The word “testimony” appears twice in vs. 10 and also takes us back to 1:2. We all hold to “the testimony of Jesus” and “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (see also 17:17). Again, he is pointing us to Christ. We have just heard Christ sung about and we are about to see him in a very different way than we have before. Not as the Lamb, but now as the Divine Warrior who is “The Word of God.”<sup>13</sup> In this way, vv. 9-10 act as the perfect middle between Christ sung about as king and Christ the Conquerer.

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse!” We’ve discussed the horse. Now we think about its Rider. John gives an appropriate list of 12 phrases that describe him,

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<sup>13</sup> As Ford explains it, “This idea of Lordship would seem to have relevance to the text under discussion (Rev 19:10d). Before our verse are placed three hymns of praise sung after the downfall of the harlot (19:1 - 2, 4 - 5, 6 - 7), the last of these exalts the Kingship and Lordship of God (v 6b) and announces the advent of the marriage of the Lamb and his bride (vv 7 - 8). After our verse occurs the only pericope in Revelation which presents the ‘personification’ of the Word of God, namely, under the guise of the Rider on the White Horse, and it ascribes to him Kingship and Lordship ... In Rev 19:11 - 16, therefore, the Word of God is clearly proclaimed as Lord. This might explain why in our context there lies the prohibition against angel worship.” J. Massyngberde Ford, “For the Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy” (Rev 19:10),” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 42.4 (1975): 241-58. [file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/Irish%20Theological%20Quarterly%20Volume%2042%20issue%204%201975%20\[doi%2010.1177\\_002114007504200404\]%20Massyngberde%20Ford,%20J.%20--%20'For%20the%20Testimony%20of%20Jesus%20Is%20the%20Spirit%20of%20Prophecy'%20\(Rav%2019-10\).pdf](file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/Irish%20Theological%20Quarterly%20Volume%2042%20issue%204%201975%20[doi%2010.1177_002114007504200404]%20Massyngberde%20Ford,%20J.%20--%20'For%20the%20Testimony%20of%20Jesus%20Is%20the%20Spirit%20of%20Prophecy'%20(Rav%2019-10).pdf)

appropriate because this is the God who cares for his disciples:

1. And behold a white horse.
2. And one seated, called Faithful and True.
3. And judges and wages battle in justice.
4. Eyes a flame of fire.
5. And on his head, many diadems, with name that only he knows.
6. And clothed in a robe dipped in blood.
7. And called Word of God.
8. And armies of heaven follow him on white horses, clothed in white.
9. And sword from his mouth to smite nations.
10. And shepherds with a rod of iron.
11. And treads the wine press of the wrath of God Pantokrator.
12. And robe and thigh have a name, King of kings and Lord of lords.

**Two** (eyes like flame and sword from his mouth) were already seen in ch. 1. Importantly, many are taken from the OT, specifically in passages that refer to the Divine Warrior. How could that be if Jesus was not the same Warrior from the OT?

“The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True” (**Rev 19:11**). “Faithful and True” found only in **Revelation 3:14**, “The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.” Jesus. What Jesus predicts in

prophecy is *faithful*—that is exactly what he has heard from his Father. What Jesus predicts in prophecy is *true*—that is exactly what is going to come to pass. He is not guessing. It is just like his works, “The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; they are established forever and ever” (Ps 111:7). This is why he is the Amen. You can fully trust him in all his works and all his words.

“... and in righteousness he judges and makes war” (Rev 19:11b). Now we see the Divine Warrior theme spring forth in our passage very clearly. It is Jesus who is *the Judge*. “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son” (Jn 5:22). It is Jesus who *makes war*. “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt 10:34). Is this the Jesus you hear about these days?

“His eyes are like a flame of fire” (Rev 19:12a). This continues the picture of judgment. We saw Jesus described this way to the church in Thyatira where it immediately said, “I know your works ... I have this against you ... I will throw her onto a sickbed ... I will strike her children dead” (2:19-23). Jesus not only *sees* every hidden and secret thing

that you do, to him has been given all judgment. You will have to stand before him one day. How will you plead?

“And on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself” (12b). The ESV makes this look like it is two separate clauses, but the second “and” is not in the Greek. Young’s makes the meaning clear. “Upon his head *are* many diadems -- having a name written that no one hath known, except himself” (YLT). This is important, because the idea here is **not that his name is a secret**. The name is written upon his head or perhaps the diadems themselves. The diadems are in stark contrast to the Dragon (12:3) and beast (13:1) who also have them. These are the jewels of the crown. But his is not like theirs, for to them judgment has not been given. The secret here is **Christ’s actions in judgment**, for it is upon the gold of the turban worn on the forehead that the High Priest had the name of God written,<sup>14</sup> and the priest’s job was to **make right judgments** in spiritual matters. That name was YHWH, which is the very name of Christ himself.

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<sup>14</sup> Wis 18:24 says, “Your majesty [= YHWH] [was written] on the diadem of his [the high priest’s] head.” See G. K. Beale and Sean M McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1143.

“He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood” (Rev 19:13a). This comes from the divine warrior scene in Isaiah 63 (above) where the Warrior has come from Edom with crimsoned garments spattered in the lifeblood of the people. This one is the center (along with perhaps the 11<sup>th</sup>) and it is so important to understand properly that I’ll return to it with the parallel.

“The name by which he is called is The Word of God” (13b). “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). The Word is a “he.” The word is associated with the Divine Warrior, especially in the Targums (through the Aramaic equivalent: Memra). “*We will give thanks and praise before the Lord, who by his Memra takes revenge of every one who exalts himself before him: horse and riders, because they had exalted themselves and had pursued after the people, the children of Israel, he cast them down and drowned in the Sea of Reeds*” (Ex 15:1 Neofiti). The same is true in the NT. “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ... no creature is hidden from his sight” (Heb 4:12-13).

“And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses” (Rev 19:14).



This is because **he is the Commander** of the Armies of the LORD. He is LORD Sabaoth, LORD of Hosts. At the beginning of his Passion Jesus said, “**Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?**” (**Matt 26:53**). He was claiming there to be the Angel of the LORD. The **white robes** have been foretold to the seven churches (**Rev 3:4-5**); the elders wear them (**4:4**); the Lamb wear them (**7:9**). It is presumable that Christ himself wears them as he rides his white horse. It is the color of purity. His holy angels fight his holy war following their Commander into battle. “**Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**” (**Matt 13:40-42**).

“**From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations**” (**Rev 19:15a**). The **sharp sword** comes from the Divine Warrior passage in **Isaiah 49:1-3** (above). “**He made my mouth like a sharp sword.**” There is a reason Hebrews uses the same idea of the Word of God being a sword. **This judgment comes from the mouth**, not

the hands or the arm. Suddenly, we have a twist that perhaps some were not expecting. The proverb that “**The pen is mightier than the sword**” is the same idea that the Word is much more powerful than violence could ever be, and it cuts far deeper, even dividing the soul itself. These are the reasons that the Divine Warrior in Isaiah 49 is called the Servant of God. The Servant of God is a figure who actually ends up dying for the sins of the people! That’s quite a way to wage a war!

“**He will rule them with a rod of iron**” (15b). This comes from Psalm 2. Beale explains, “**In Ps. 2:8–9, 12 is foretold how God’s ‘son’ (2:7) will overthrow the ungodly ‘kings of the earth’ who ‘take their stand ... and take counsel against the Lord and his Messiah’ (2:2). The ‘rod’ here in 19:15, like the ‘sword proceeding from the mouth,’ connotes God’s word of accusation, which will condemn the ungodly and consign them to perdition.**”<sup>15</sup> The main point here is how **so much of this is coming from the OT** about the LORD or his Word or his Son or his Servant. That’s because that’s who Jesus is.

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<sup>15</sup> **G. K. Beale** and Sean M McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1144.

“He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty” (Rev 15:c). This is the parallel to “a robe dipped in blood,” and now it is time to discuss both. The question might be, why is his robe bloody and what is the winepress of the fury of his wrath? It refers to the coming judgment upon the nations depicted so clearly in the grotesque feast of the scavenger birds that immediately follows. He has judged them; they are slain; their corpses are food for the birds; their souls now become the prey for those hideous creatures that reside in the underworld.

And yet. We saw something with that feast last time that hints that perhaps the flesh is being taken away so that the soul might be saved on judgment day. So also here. **Today is not that Day of Judgment.** And this book is given as a warning to all who will listen. It is never too late ... until it is. That point will be self-evident. You need not perish like this on the Last Day or on the Day God has set for you to meet your Maker. This is why **the ancient church saw this winepress** of the fury of the wrath of God first, not in the Second Coming, but **in the First.** Jesus is both the treader *and the trodden.* **Gregory the Great** said, “**He has trodden the winepress alone in which he was himself pressed, for with**

his own strength he patiently overcame suffering.”<sup>16</sup> At some point, our artists began to depict it (see n. 16). Our poets began to pen it:

Who would know Sin, let him repair  
Unto Mount Olivet; there shall he see  
A man so wrung with pains, that all his hair,  
His skin, *his garments bloody be.*  
Sin is *that press* and vice, which forces pain  
To hunt his cruel food through every vein.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art: The Passion of Christ* (University of Michigan, 1971), 228. <https://archive.org/details/schillericonogra0002unse>.

**Going deeper.** At some point they began to depict this in the iconography. The oldest surviving depiction is from a small chapel in Comburg, Germany (see below). On the ceiling of Abbey Kleincomburg, it is dated to 1108 and presents a diptych of Christ crucified on top and Christ in the winepress on bottom. As art, these can be viewed to be the same idea or parallel ideas, much like Gregory is getting at.



Christ Treading the Winepress, Comburg, Germany  
Ceiling: Abbey Kleincomburg, St. Aegidius c. 1108

<https://www.360cities.net/image/comburg-018-kleincomburg-st-aegidius>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ\\_in\\_the\\_winepress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_in_the_winepress)

Who knows not Love, let him assay  
And *taste that juice*, which on the cross a pike  
Did set again abroach; then let him say  
If ever he did taste the like.  
Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,  
Which my God feels *as blood*; but I, *as wine*.

George Herbert (1593 –1633)<sup>17</sup>

What’s fascinating about this, to me, is how there is an ancient prophecy that seems to suggest this very idea. Jacob told his son Judah, “Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall

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<sup>17</sup> “The Agonie,” in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Everyman’s Library, 1974), 58. In **Mark A. Noll**, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 63–64 [I have updated the spelling].

<sup>17</sup> George Herbert, “The Agonie,” in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Everyman’s Library, 1974), 58. In **Mark A. Noll**, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 63–64 [I have updated the spelling].

The earliest English poem to do so seems to be from **John Lydgate** (1370-1451),

“Hit is I,” quod he, pat trade it al allone  
 (“It is I,” said He, “that trod the winepress, all alone”)  
With-outen felawe I gane þe wyn outpresse,  
Whane on þe crosse I made a deolful moone  
And thorough myn hert þe sperehed gain hit dresse,  
Who felt euer so passing gret duress? –  
Whane alle my freondes alloone me forsook  
And I my self þis iourne on me tooke.

**John Lydgate** (1370-1451), “A Seying of the Nightingale,” in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate* (New York: Early English Text Society, 1911), 227.

not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Gen 49:10). We've seen this prophecy come up earlier in Revelation when Jesus is called the Lion of Judah.

However, the prophecy continues, "Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes" (Gen 49:11). Bloody garments; the vine. What's even more interesting is that the Targum adds the winepress, "Binding his loins, and going forth to war against them that hate him, he will slay kings with princes, and make the rivers red with the blood of their slain, and his hills white with the fat of their mighty ones; his garments will be dipped in blood, and he himself be like the juice of the winepress" (Gen 49:11 JTE).

What's even more curious is that, if we remember how Revelation 12-20 forms a very nice chiasm (see above), there is an inverted parallel here in John's Gospel to the Horse. This inverted parallel is a direct parallel to Rev 12, perhaps around the very center of the book (vv. 9-10). It is a parallel that fulfills Jacob's prophecy. "And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 'Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!'" (Jn

12:14-15). John quotes Zechariah, but Zechariah got it from Genesis. This brings me back to a major reason why I've been meticulously going through John's parallels with Revelation. John is the earthly parallel in Jesus' ministry to the heavenly view given in Revelation. In this way, I believe we are meant to see not only the Divine Warrior riding the white horse, treading upon the grapes of wrath (which we saw back in ch. 14 is actually the saints), but the humble rider on the donkey, but less than a week later the treading upon of Christ who became the grapes, who spilt his blood that the judgment of God might pass over you. He is the Treader. He is the Trodden.

We finish the depiction of the Rider this way. "On his robe and on his thigh<sup>18</sup> he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:16). The robe is still in view, and therefore, at least to some degree, the cross. Isn't it interesting then that in the direct parallel of Revelation 19, John 19 tells us, "Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers

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<sup>18</sup> Someone asked me about the "name on the thigh." Names have been found written on thighs of statues representing particular individuals in the ancient world. However, there is a curious speculative emendation surrounding "thigh" and "girdle." The idea is that the original was a girdle "MITPON," but a scribe very early on mistook the "IT" for "H" and you get the word MHPON ("THIGH"). If this was true, the original could have been a parallel like Isa 11:5, "He will have his loins girded with righteousness and his sides clothed with truth." See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 964.

twisted together a *crown of thorns* and put it on his head and arrayed him in a *purple robe*. They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, *King of the Jews!*’ ... So Jesus came out, wearing a *crown of thorns* and *the purple robe* [now reddened in his own blood] ... Pilate wrote a title ... it is written, ‘Jesus is Nazareth. The *King of the Jews*’ (John 19:1-3, 5, 19) and “when they crucified Jesus, they took His outer garments ...” (23). Yes, even though judgment is in view, you cannot, you must not think of the coming judgment of mankind without also thinking of the Judgment of God that fell upon the Son of Man. This is no capricious, emotionally unstable Zeus we have judging. This is the one who was first bloodied and murdered so that he might offer a way out of the coming Judgment to any who would. And this is precisely why the Father has given to the Son all judgment. No one understands the ramifications of such a doom better than the one who was forsaken by his Father on the cross for something he did not do. All so that you could have eternal life. That’s the King of kings. That’s the Lord of lords. That’s the Divine Warrior. That’s the Word of God.

I said a while ago that there were *five stages* of the Divine Warrior’s work in the Scripture, and we have only looked specifically at three (he fights for Israel; he fights against



Israel; he is predicted as coming in the future). We are in the fourth stage presently, though how much longer this will last, no one but God himself knows, so you must not take this for granted. What is the White Rider doing now? As Longman and Reid explain, Jesus is fighting the principalities and powers of the air and darkness.<sup>19</sup> Thus, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12),<sup>20</sup> and “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom 16:20). This ongoing battle means that the supernatural entities that held sway over the nations for millennia no longer have the power or right to continue.

But as we will see in Rev 20, there is a time coming when Satan will be released (perhaps he already has), and there will be a massive and final battle to end all others. This is the fifth stage—the Final Battle. At that point, it’s all over. Do not wait. Turn to the Warrior whose robe is dipped in his own

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<sup>19</sup> See diagram above. From Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995). See esp. ch. 9.

<sup>20</sup> I did a series of sermons on the Divine Warrior from Ephesians 1 that set up how this book in particular carries this theme. See the four sermons at <https://www.rbnc.com/ephesians>.

blood as he fought and defeated the enemy and already won the war.

Come out of her my people. Follow the Divine Warrior out of the doomed city and do not look back. I cannot help but think again of Gandalf, who turns to Shadowfax and strokes him. “The Grey Pilgrim ... that’s what they used to call me. Three hundred lives of men I’ve walked this earth and now I have no time. With luck, my search will not be in vain. Look to my coming at the first light on the fifth day. At dawn, look to the East.” Do you see him? The Divine Warrior on his Pearly White Stallion? He’s coming. Be ready.

19:1-3 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a **crown of thorns** and put it on his head and arrayed him in a **purple robe** ... So Jesus came out, wearing the **crown of thorns** and the **purple robe**” [now reddened in his own blood].

19:19 “Pilate **wrote** a title ... it was **written**, ‘JESUS OF NAZARETH. THE **KING** OF THE JEWS.’ ”

19:23 “when they crucified Jesus, they took His **outer garments**”

Rev 19:12 “... on his head are many **diadems** ... He is clothed in a **robe dipped in blood.**”

19:3 “They came up to him, saying, ‘Hil, kilg of the Jews!’

19:16 “On His outer garment ... a name was **written, ‘KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS’** ”

19:16 “On his **outer garment** ... a name was written, ‘KING OF KINGS’ ”

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