

Revelation 19:11-16 - *“I saw heaven standing open, and there was a **white** horse! Its rider is called **Faithful and True**, and he judges and makes war in **righteousness**. His eyes are like blazing **flames**, and on his head are many **crowns**. He has a **name** written on him, which no one knows except he himself. He is also clothed in a **garment** that had been dipped in **blood**, and his name is the **Word of God**. The armies in heaven, which were clothed with white, clean, fine linen, were **following** him on white horses. Out of his mouth comes a sharp **sword** with which to strike down the nations. He will **shepherd** them with an **iron** staff. He himself is going to trample the winepress of the fierce **anger** of the Almighty God. On his garment and on his thigh this name is written: **King of Kings and Lord of Lords.**”*

Today is **Easter Sunday** - a day to celebrate the **Victory** of the great warrior who is pictured in our text - our Lord **Jesus**. But first let's consider another picture. There is a **painting** entitled “**The Race Track**” in Cleveland's Museum of Art. Its **subtitle** reads, “**Death on a Pale Horse.**” The horseman is all alone on the track, and he's wielding a huge **scythe**. But perhaps the most interesting thing about the picture is that the rider is going around the track **clockwise** - the **wrong** way. You can probably figure out **why**. The rider is **Death** - and he's riding in the **opposite** direction so he can pick off everyone **else** as they race toward the finish line. We know that's the way it works. **Death** is coming after **all** of us. He's got our friends and our family in his sights, and he's going to catch **us** too. There is **no escaping** Death. Death always **wins**, or so it would seem.

But now let's go back to the picture in our **text**. The rider on a **white** horse is the **King** of kings and **Lord** of lords, and He looks pretty **scary**. His eyes are like blazing **flames**, and a sharp **sword** is coming out of His mouth. But we also notice His great **power**. He overcomes **everything**. He wins the **Victory**. This is the **final image** of the warrior we have been talking about throughout the Lenten Season. So, on this Easter morning we **celebrate** our Lord's **Victory** over **Satan** and **Death**.

Jesus is the greatest warrior **ever**. But on Good Friday we left Him hanging on a **cross**. Jesus had just declared, “*It is **finished**,*” and then He voluntarily gave up His **life**. His body went **limp**, and His heart **stopped**. So, we might wonder, “How can He win the **Victory** if He's **dead**?” Our text has the **answer**. “*I saw heaven standing open, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war in righteousness.*” I hope you noticed that this rider is not a **statue** carved out of **marble** or cast in **bronze**. He's **alive** - He's **powerful** - and He's actively waging **war** against our enemies. We know that this

rider is **Jesus**, and it's obvious that things have completely **changed** since Good Friday. Jesus is no longer a **captive** being **humiliated** by soldiers. He is no longer being **beaten** and **whipped**. His head isn't **bowed**, and His body is not in a **grave**. But rather, as Paul wrote in the great resurrection chapter of the Bible, "*Christ has been **raised** from the dead.*"

That's the **Victory** we celebrate today - the **Victory** over **Death**. This time Death **didn't win**, because Jesus **conquered** Death. Oh, there's no doubt that Jesus actually **died**. The Roman soldiers made **sure** He was dead. Jesus' **body** was then laid in a **grave**, and it was tightly **sealed**. But on Easter morning, that grave was **empty**. The **empty tomb** makes it clear that Jesus is **more powerful** than Death. Jesus **destroyed** the power of Death. He made Death **die**.

Jesus met Death **head on**. He offered the perfect **sacrifice** which was necessary to remove the **sin** and **guilt** of the entire **world**. But after He **died**, He **rose** again. Death had **no power** over Him, because Jesus is **stronger** than Death. He **lives**, and in our text He rides out on a white horse in **Victory**. The **battles** are **over**, and the **war** has been **won**.

There's **no doubt** about that fact, because the **proof** is overwhelming. The Bible records over a **dozen** different appearances of the **risen** Jesus, including one time when there were **over 500** people present. Most of the **Gospel** accounts, including **St. Paul's** account of the resurrection, were written during the lifetime of **thousands** of people who were alive at the time of the first Easter. If it were **not** true, they would have **said** so and **written** so. But the **fact** is, that Jesus **actually did rise** from the grave.

That fact is vitally **important** to **all** of us, because we **know** that death is coming for **us** too. Even though people might try to push it away, and spend millions of dollars a year in the United States alone trying to treat **cancers**, and **heart** disease, and most recently **covid-19**, the fact is that we can't stop **death** from coming. There's only **one solution** for **death** - and that's our **Savior**.

The empty tomb of Jesus **proves** that Jesus' words about death are true: "*I am the **resurrection** and the **life**. Whoever believes in me will **live**, even if he **dies**. And whoever lives and believes in me will **never perish**.*" That's **us**. At some time, maybe sooner than we think, we're **all** going to die. But it doesn't matter, because Jesus has promised that when we **die** we will **not perish**. Instead, we will **rise** from death to **live again**. We will simply close our eyes in **death**, just as **Jesus** did, and fall asleep only to **rise** again in glory. We **must** put off this **mortal** life, so we can

rise again to inherit an **immortal** life. And it will all happen, *“In a **moment**, in the **blink** of an eye, at the last **trumpet**. For the trumpet will **sound**, and the dead will be **raised** imperishable, and we will be **changed**. For this **perishable** body must put on **imperishability**, and this **mortal** body must put on **immortality**.”*

The apostle’s words bring us back to our victorious **Lord** riding the white horse. He has the power to **do** everything He has **promised**, because our living warrior has **all authority** on the Last Day. Again we read, *“His eyes are like blazing **flames**, and on his head are many **crowns**. He has a **name** written on him, which no one knows except he himself. He is also clothed in a **garment** that had been dipped in **blood**, and his name is the **Word of God**. The armies in heaven, which were clothed with white, clean, fine linen, were **following** him on white horses. Out of his mouth comes a sharp **sword** with which to strike down the nations. He will **shepherd** them with an **iron** staff. He himself is going to **trample** the winepress of the fierce **anger** of the Almighty God. On his garment and on his thigh this name is written: **King of Kings and Lord of Lords**.”*

The awesome power of Jesus is portrayed with a sharp **sword** and an iron **staff**, as He carries out the fierce **anger** of the Heavenly Father. Notice that Jesus’ garment is dipped in **blood**. We immediately think of **His** blood - the blood He shed on the **cross**. But the Prophet Isaiah helps us to understand that this is actually a very graphic picture of the **battle** Jesus fought against His enemies. Isaiah wrote, *“Why is your clothing so **red**? Why are your garments like those of someone who has been trampling **grapes** in a winepress?”* The one robed in splendor proclaimed, *“I stomped on them in my **anger**, and I **trampled** them in my **wrath**, and **their juice** splattered on my garments. I **stained** all my clothing.”*

Sure and certain **judgment** will come to Satan, and to all those who **follow** him. They have worked **against** the King of kings and Lord of lords. They have **rejected** His gifts, and have **mocked** our Savior and His people. They will be **judged** by the one pictured here as riding on a white horse. The Psalmist said, He will *“**smash** them with an iron rod, and **break** them to pieces like pottery.”* But at the same time, those who are **with** the rider on the white horse are **safe** forever.

On earth there will always be **some** people who refuse to **honor** Jesus, and they will be **judged**. But there will always be some who are **believers** in Jesus **too**, and by the grace of God, **they** will be heirs of **heaven**. Because Jesus **rose** on Easter morning, we will **also** rise from death, and we’ll **join** the angels in **praising** our gracious Savior. Every voice will join together to **praise** the rider on the white

horse, who used His power to **save** us - **cleansing** us with His blood, and **covering** us with His righteousness.

That **confidence** takes away any **fear** that we might have of **death**. Sin and guilt can't **harm** us. There is no **hopelessness** - no **wondering** - because we **know** that when our soul leaves our body, it will enter into a life of inexpressible **joy**. Our soul will be at **home** in heaven, in the presence of **Jesus** - our **victorious** warrior - the **King** of kings and Lord of lords. And we **also** know that when Jesus **returns again** to the earth on the Last Day, He will raise our **bodies** from the grave, and we will live **with** Him - body **and** soul - in **love** and **peace** and **joy** forever. Jesus **lives**, the **Victory** is **won**. Amen.