

Guest Preacher - Mr Donald Macaulay

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Preacher: Mr. Donald Macaulay

[0 : 00] Let's turn back then to the chapter that we read. The book of Revelation chapter 19 and we can read again at verse 11.

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 he is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which he is called is the word of God and the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen white and pure were following him on white horses 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 on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written king of kings and lord of lords and I want to consider that passage with you this evening and to put it in the context of the whole chapter and the situation in which John finds himself at this particular time and you will remember from previous studies that we've done in Revelation that the vision of John what John sees the apocalypse that he sees is one continuous vision and you see that again if you look at the beginning of chapter 18 and then the beginning of chapter 19 you see each time after this I saw after this I heard so it's not a series of visions but one particular vision that John is given and you remember

I'm sure you remember I don't need to go through all the details of where John is at this particular time we're told that in chapter 1 where John is in chapter 1 in verse 9 I John your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches and so on and that lays out clearly for us the whole purpose of the vision that John is given there are many people nowadays who attempt to interpret the book of Revelation according to current circumstances in the 21st century and while many of the things perhaps that John saw are applicable to our own time we have to bear in mind the context in which he is set and which he is writing

John had been exiled from Ephesus to the island of Patmos it's easy enough to look up Patmos on Google these days and if you want you can take a guided tour of Patmos virtually and you can see supposedly the cave where John lived while he was there and apparently where the vision was given to him as well and whether that's true or whether it's just tourist talk that's open to debate of course as well but that he was on Patmos there is no doubt and that he had been exiled there around about the year 97 probably by the emperor Domitian who carried out a major persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire and you have to bear that in mind because in the context of that persecution then you see what John is writing and as we are told in chapter 1 when Jesus appears to him that he is to write these things to the seven churches seven churches in Asia Asia of course is modern day Turkey and you will remember that again there is much symbolism throughout the whole of the book of Revelation there were more than seven churches in Turkey and Asia at that particular time the figure seven is particularly significant throughout the book the vision that John is given it's seven angels seven trumpets seven peals of thumb etc etc and we see from scripture that seven is the perfect number God's perfect number but here at the beginning of chapter 19 he heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out hallelujah and if you look again in verse 3 you see once more they cried out hallelujah and in verse 4 the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped

[5 : 54] God who was seated on the throne saying amen hallelujah now hallelujah simply means praise the Lord and it's found more in this chapter than anywhere else in the New Testament in fact the only other place in scripture where you find the word hallelujah is in the book of Psalms praise the Lord salvation and glory and power belong to our God for his judgments are true and just for he

has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with our immorality and has avenged on earth the blood of his servants now this is referring to the previous couple of chapters where Babylon is overthrown and Babylon symbolically referred to Rome you will find in the letter of Peter that he talks about the church at Babylon as well and it is of course again couched and this is where we have to be clear with the context couched in the situation that was going on in the

Roman Empire at this particular time I came across something this week I'd never actually read it before never found it before and according to Tertullian a Roman historian writing about 200 AD he writes that John was taken from Ephesus to Rome and boiled in oil but he didn't die in fact it had no effect upon him at all I'd never come across that before and I found it in several places when I came across it by accident when I started to look at Tertullian it's very clearly written there I mean whether it's true or not another question altogether but tradition has it that from Rome after this event where they failed to kill him that he was then exiled to Patmos because they thought that he could do no harm there to the

Roman Empire and again you bear in mind the persecution that was going on throughout the Roman Empire it's amazing when you consider it like so many other things in scripture that John is the only one of the twelve apostles who survives and dies a natural death in his old age all the others are martyred in various places and so we see in verse 2 has avenged on her the blood of his servants and so on and we read this through to the invitation to the marriage supper of the lamb in verse 6 I think we spoke about that before a number of couple of years ago here and I want to look particularly at heaven being opened and the rider on the white horse and you see in verse 11 that John says then I saw heaven opened and you notice unlike the previous times that he has mentioned this chapter 4 for example in verse 1 he had seen a door opened in heaven but it's no longer a door it's the whole of heaven being opened and why is the whole of heaven being opened because the rider on the white horse and his army is now coming forth and they're coming forth into what is the beginning of the final battle that will take place we'll see the next part of it in chapter 20 and then what happens after that in 21 and 22

I plan to do those and the next number of times that I'm here over the next couple of months to get the whole picture of this so who is the rider on the white horse horse and what's the symbolism again of a white horse again put it in the cultural context of the time and bear in mind that to ride on a white horse was only permitted to those who were conquering emperors either generals of the army permitted by the emperor or the emperor himself remember the contrast when Jesus entered Jerusalem he did not ride on a horse at all not even not a white horse but not even a horse at all but you remember that to fulfill the prophecy of the Old

Testament that he rode on an ass or a donkey the foal of an ass symbolizing peace but the symbolism here and remember that revelation is a book of symbols the symbolism here is that this is a conqueror who is coming that this is someone who is coming victorious the one who is sitting on it is called faithful and true and before John identifies who it actually is he gives these two names faithful and true who is faithful like the Lord Jesus Christ all his all his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus we read that in so many parts of scripture that nothing that

[11 : 51] Jesus promises these promises will never be broken and where is the truth well you remember what he said in John 14 and Philip said to him well Thomas said to him we don't know where you're going we don't know the way wouldn't he say I am the way and the truth and the life truth and we could spend a long time talking about what is truth exactly you remember that that was a question that Pilate even put to Jesus what is truth even nowadays of course it's a standard question for so many people what does truth mean my truth may be quite different to your truth but nevertheless there is an absolute truth and that absolute truth belongs to the

Lord Jesus Christ and the description that's given of him is anything but peaceful here he is not coming in peace he is coming in war this is the second the beginning of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and there are so many references in the New Testament even that Jesus himself makes and you remember that when he is taken up at the ascension that the angels say to men of Galilee why stand you here looking up into the heavens he will come again as he has gone before and so the promises that are given of the second coming of Christ run throughout the New Testament but this is not the same as the first coming the first coming was a coming of peace a covenant fulfillment a coming in order to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament a covenant that would sacrifice himself on the cross at Calvary so that his blood would be shed to cleanse his people where are his people now well at this particular time there are

some in heaven and there are some of course still on earth many still on earth but when we look at this rider and we see the difference between the white horse the four horsemen of the apocalypse that we saw earlier in a much earlier chapter there is a considerable difference here in the rider on the white horse in righteousness he judges and makes war a judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ in righteousness is not something that surprises us that is there from the beginning of scripture right through to the end but he makes war and this is the one who had been promised us peace bringing peace to the nations and if you remember so many things so many times it said as he says in John 14 and so often my peace I give you but this is different this is him coming like not in peace but in war his eyes are like a flame of fire that in itself is frightening enough and on his head are many diadems or as the av puts it many crowns and that again signified the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ over all the nations of the world you remember that that in Roman times was a particular mark of the emperor that he wore a golden diadem a crown on his head to indicate his position but you notice how superior the rider is there are many diadems and he has a name written that no one knows but himself but thankfully we are not left there we are told in the next verse what the name is he is clothed in a robe dipped in blood there are different interpretations of the robe and its dipping in the blood some think that it means the blood of the cross others think that it means the blood of the martyrs and others still think that it refers to the robe of victory that it is the blood of his enemies that it is dipped in whichever it doesn't matter but it reminds us that it is through the blood that was shed on the cross that the victory has been achieved and then the name by which he is called is the word of God this was the same name as was given to Christ at the beginning of the gospel of John the word the logos that that was what was important the name by which he is called is the word of God and the armies of heaven arranged in fine linen white and pure were following him on white horses who are the armies of heaven well some commentators and interestingly enough

John Gill thinks for example that the armies of heaven are the saints in heaven those who have died but the majority of commentators disagree and I think I disagree with Gill here as well that these are angels this is the armies of angels arrayed in fine linen fine linen of course and we see if you look back at verse 8 it is granted that the church can clothe herself in fine linen bright and pure for fine linen is the righteous deed of the saints and the fine linen signifies holiness and purity now at this particular time of course the resurrection has not yet taken place the souls of the saints are in heaven but not the bodies that is still to come we'll see that next time when we look at chapter 20 and here the armies of heaven white and pure are following him on white horses now it's interesting that they also are on white horses why is that because they are reigning along with the Lord [19:10] Jesus Christ these are the angelic host and it signifies again not only their purity but remember that fine linen of course was something that was given to the priesthood and the priesthood here is symbolic of what the armies of heaven will be like huge army we have no idea how large the army of angels is we've already seen war in heaven once john had mentioned to us in revelation seven that there had been war in heaven between the devil satan and his angels and michael and his angels and it was from there that satan had been thrown out of heaven even jesus himself had mentioned that that he had seen satan fallen as lightning from heaven but we're in the intermediate period now where satan has ruled over the earth and this is the final battle that is now about to begin and if you look at the weaponry that is being used in verse 15 from his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations now this is exactly the same image as we saw as john had seen at the beginning if you go back to chapter 1 and verse 16 you will see that when he sees and turns and looks at the voice that is speaking from between the seven golden lampstands he sees one like the son of man and he's described in verse 16 in his right hand he held seven stars from his mouth came a sharp two edged sword and his face was like the sun shining in full strength here he is now riding on the white horse and leading the armies of heaven and he will rule them with a rod of iron and again you notice the significance of this it was common in the

Roman Empire that the emperor held a golden sort of rod that showed his authority and much of the justice system of Rome without going into it in great detail again was symbolized in sort of rods like this as well but this rod is more significant because this rod is much more powerful than any earthly rod he will tread the fury he will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the almighty he's done that once already but he did it alone he did it alone at the cross of calvary but he is no longer alone here he is now coming with his forces and in that is the wrath of God the almighty and you

notice that the God the almighty here and who John had almost mistakenly worshipped when he worshipped the angel he had been told you must not worship worship
God worship God refers to the fullness of the trinity the father the son and the holy spirit the wrath of God the almighty the Lord Jesus Christ is the conquering instrument but the wrath comes from the fullness of the Godhead itself he had thread the wine press before as he went to the cross and you remember that the full fury of the father had been poured out on him in order that you and I might be able to find peace with God and forgiveness for sin and then we see that he has a name that is given the first name was the word of God but now on his robe and on his thigh he has a name written king of kings and lord of lords absolute sovereignty is given to the Lord Jesus Christ and you remember that that was the case when we saw in Matthew 28 before his ascension he said all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me and this authority is now being displayed king of kings and lord of lords and the final section of the chapter then brings us into the first steps of what happens in this battle in the final battle which is always referred to as the battle of Armageddon and you see the angel standing in the sun and in a loud voice calling to the birds to come and gather together to eat the flesh the great supper of God and it's interesting that you see here in verse 19 I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army but what follows there's no battle description the king of kings and lord of lords is supreme and he is able to defeat the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies without even as much as a struggle and you see that the beast and again if you remember going back to the beast that had risen out of the sea in previous chapters the beast and those who worshipped its image are thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sarva and the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse and all the birds were gorged with their flesh absolute victory victory and not only absolute victory but victory it seems without even a battle having to take place there is such power in the rider and the white horse that no conflict as such is necessary the forces of evil have been allowed for a great period of time and we'll see that next time in chapter 20 for a period of time to dominate the earth but now we come to the point where they are utterly annihilated by the Lord Jesus Christ and it seems almost as you look at it here that there is no need for the army that accompanied him that he himself as we see in verse 21 the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse that Christ himself is sufficient to overpower all the earthly and spiritual forces that have come against him and remember that there are spiritual forces we often tend to forget that there is constant strife going on in heaven as well not in the sense that there is a war against heaven but certainly that the devil and his angels are constantly striving against the people of God against you and I and the struggles that Satan carries out with his [27 : 39] I was going to say his army but they're not really an army but nevertheless they're probably far more than we can imagine because we see in a previous chapter that when the dragon that is Satan is cast out of heaven you remember that his tail draws a third of the stars with him and the symbolism of that means that a third excuse me this is what it's taken to mean that a third of the angels the original angels in heaven rebelled and followed Satan and were thrown out of heaven if the number of angels is innumerable how many followed Satan and were thrown out again it's impossible to calculate but he wasn't alone and he isn't alone and these are the ones that appear as demons etc and all the evil spirits that we see throughout the new testament

Jesus casting them out and you remember that he wouldn't permit them to speak because they knew exactly who he was they knew exactly who he was if you look for example at legion when legion is cured that they ask for permission to go into the pigs because they know who he is and they know that they have have you come to torment us before the time they knew that a time was coming when they would be put into torment in hell and that's exactly what is going to happen here but Satan himself is not yet fully defeated and we'll see that in chapter 20 the next time we come to look at this we'll see the final defeat of Satan himself and you can see at the beginning of chapter 20 you see an angel coming down from heaven holding the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain and he seized the dragon that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the pit and shut it and sealed it over him so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended and after that he must be released for a little while now that is quite a complicated passage I'm not going to go into that tonight it's when we come into what's known as the millennium and the studies of the either a millennium or premillennium etc or post millennium and I plan to look at that in another few

weeks in this chapter in chapter 20 as to what exactly is involved in that but isn't it comforting for you this evening as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to see the rider on the white horse riding forth to final victory the victory over death was won on the cross but the final victory over the powers of evil is taking place even as we speak and still going on until the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and you and I are being prepared for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ what do I mean by that I don't mean by that that he may come while we're still alive he might who knows we have no idea when the second coming will actually take place but scripture is very very clear that there will be a second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and that is something for us to look forward to because with the second coming comes the defeat of Satan and of course the resurrection and with the resurrection as we see in chapter 21 a new heaven and a new earth and all these things fit together as the vision that John is given it's an amazing vision and yet it's a vision that should reassure you should comfort you should uphold you should strengthen you in your faith each and every day especially when you feel that things are going so badly for you when you feel that you are unable to live up to the holiness that God demands when you feel time and time sort of disappointed perhaps even disillusioned with your ability as a Christian to continue on the way but remember this it's not up to you as you heard this morning when Mr.

[32 : 45] McKinnon spoke a little bit about it he said that the one who was to come was the prophecy that sin would be overcome when he was speaking about the scarlet and the significance of the scarlet cord from the Passover onward and the blood that was shed and the finalization of the shedding of the blood of the cross is what we see in the book of Revelation the things that are to come may the Lord grant us that we would meditate on these things not only meditate on them and I know that there are many things in the book of Revelation that are quite difficult to understand in fact some of them almost impossible for us to see exactly what the meaning is of them but nevertheless it should be a constant encouragement to us of the second coming of the

Lord Jesus Christ that he will come it should be an encouragement to us of the resurrection that is to come and it should be an encouragement even like John himself for his faith and your faith and my faith to be strengthened and to go on in the daily difficulties of life that we have it was never promised that things would be easy for us isn't that what Jesus said in this world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer there's always a but be of good cheer I have overcome the world and that's what we see in the final chapters of revelation may the Lord bless these thoughts to us this evening let us pray our father in heaven we thank you that there is a time coming when you will rise victorious over all that the second coming of the

Lord Jesus Christ will bring not only fulfillment of your word but the blessing that your people are looking forward to to be finally with yourself in heaven and no longer to see through a glass darkly but to see there face to face be with us now as we conclude our worship bless us and pardon our sins in Christ's sake amen let us conclude by singing verses in psalm 68 on page 303 psalm 68 at verse 18 the single verses 18 to 20 thou hast oh Lord most glorious ascended up on high and in triumph victorious led captive captivity thou hast received gifts for men for such as did rebel yea even for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell and that's of course what happens in chapter 22 in revelation blessed be the

Lord who is to us of our salvation God who daily with his benefits as plenteously doth load he of salvation is the God who is our God most strong and unto God the Lord from death the issues do belong let's sing these verses verse 18 thou hast thou Lord most glorious thou hast thou thou Lord most glorious ascended upon on high and in triumph victorious let captive activity thou hast received gifts for men for such as did rebel give him for them that could the

Lord in midst of them I dwell blessed be be the Lord who is to us of our salvation God who daily rest benefits hath as plentieth in the Lord he of salvation is thy God who is thy God most strong and unto

[38 : 38] God the Lord from death he is should to belong grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever Amen