

Pictures of Our King's Glory

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[0:00] Revelation 12, verses 1 through 12. A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

! She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven. An enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his head.

His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for twelve hundred and sixty days. And there was a war in heaven.

[1:08] Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.

They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore, rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them. But woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has gone down to you.

He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short. You, I'm sure, have seen the picture.

[2:24] One man with a grocery bag in each hand, standing in front of a line of tanks. After weeks of protest in the summer of 1989, the Chinese government mobilized their military and declared martial law in the capital city.

They were going to crush this cry for freedom. So 13 tanks came down the Avenue of Eternal Peace, is the name of the street, and one man, apparently on his way home from shopping, decided to do something.

And so there he stood. You know the picture I'm talking about. The tank turned right, and the man moved to the right. And the tank turned left, and the man moved to the left.

It only lasted a few minutes, a few moments, but that picture continues to live on. It lives on in the Western mind.

It lives on in our minds, those of us who have seen it. It's interesting that in China, very few people have any idea of that picture.

[3:42] They've never seen it. The entire incident, every copy of that picture has been scrubbed as far as they can from the internet, the Chinese internet.

It was never published. It was never seen. Why is the Chinese government so serious about this one picture, of this one man from so long ago?

Because sometimes nothing is so powerful as a picture. A picture says, and a picture moves us, and it carries emotions that words can't carry.

A picture can give resolve. It can give courage. It can give hope, where a thousand words will not do it. And so tonight, we are going to look at three pictures of our King's glory.

In these evening services, we've been going through a series on the glory of Jesus Christ. Last week, we saw that he was exalted. We saw the glory of his exaltation.

[4:52] And tonight, we want to look at the glory of him being our King. So Revelation is all about pictures. No matter what tack you take on the book, it's obvious that the pictures are the central theme.

What's going on is being conveyed to us in these images. And they're images that are designed to give you courage, to give you resolve, to give you hope.

And so tonight, we're going to look at three pictures of our King's glory from the book of Revelation. And the first picture is of a dragon thrown down. The second is a picture of a loyal army.

And then the third is a picture of a white rider. So our first picture is from what our brother Charlie read, of a dragon thrown down to the earth.

It's a picture of Jesus beginning his reign, of him as he begins to be the King of God's kingdom.

[5:57] And I know that you are probably not, most of you are probably not very comfortable with this whole idea of angels fighting demons.

It's not an idea that I'm entirely comfortable with, understanding that. But we can see the main idea here, can't we, in Revelation 12.

It begins with a picture of a woman. And she's symbolizing Eve, or the Old Testament Israel, a combination of Eve and Israel, and maybe Mary, all thrown in.

And she is crying out, in labor, and she's getting ready to give birth to a son. And the son is opposed by a red dragon.

Now isn't that one of the main themes of the entire Bible? This conflict between the seed of the woman, the son of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, and the serpent.

[7:02] So it's this conflict. And in this, we see, in this vision we have here, we see it's not just the dragon and the sun, it's the dragon with a third of the stars, a third of the angels.

It's all of them against this one boy. And the emphasis is put on the boy's vulnerability.

He's just born. What can be more vulnerable than that? He's just born. He's a child. He's meant to rule the nations, but arrayed against him.

Against him in every way is this monster set on murder and his entire hellish crew. But unexpectedly, he's snatched from earth to heaven, and then, and then, there's war.

The son's arrival in heaven sets off a conflict in heavenly places. Now, I don't want to read into this too much. I'm not able to read into it very much, but it does seem like, from this passage and other passages, that Satan has some legit, had some legitimate place in heaven, in the courtroom, as long as sin remained unpaid for.

[8:23] We looked at this a few weeks ago. As long as he had the law on his side to condemn us in our sin, as long as our sins were against us, he had some legitimacy to his accusations.

to having a place in God's courtroom. But when the son comes victoriously, comes victorious back from the grave and from death, Michael, the great archangel, and all of his angels declare war, there is this conflict, and they hurl Satan out of heaven.

And this is the beginning of his defeat. And then, when he is hurled down to heaven, there is this great shout of triumph.

Now have come, you read it in verse 10, now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ for the accuser of our brothers who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down.

So something new has happened. Christ's kingdom has begun. And with one fell swoop, Satan is hurled to the earth. Satan loses his place in heaven, whatever that place might have been, and Jesus' kingdom begins.

[9:45] The son takes over the kingdom. If you look back at chapter 11 and verse 15, you can read it there. The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.

Now, whatever we make of the details, the big picture is clear. Jesus has the right to rule the nations.

He has taken over in some way an effective leadership in the nations. The dragon and his rule is effectively over, and so for a time his fury is vented on the earth, all over the earth, but his authority over the nations is now illegitimate.

He has no right to this power because now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, and so the dragon has been thrown down, and everywhere on earth he falls back.

He is defeated again and again under the power of our king. What has been happening in our world for the last 2,000 years? Jesus has been asserting his reign all over the world.

[11:02] Now that changes the way that we look at evangelism. That should change the way that you look at evangelism and the way that you look at missions because evangelism is the church asserting the crown rights of King Jesus.

Evangelism isn't out there, you out there all by yourself. And sometimes I think we feel that way. We feel like, oh, God has told me to do this and here I am and it's just me.

We need to see what's behind this call to evangelism. God's heart is here. He has invested his son with authority over the nations.

This is the spirit's desire. Wherever the gospel goes, the spirit comes and changes men. So should we be afraid? Yes, it is difficult. Yes, we will be challenged.

But God is on our side and the decisive victory has already been won. And so we are the light of the world. As we are in Christ, we are the light of the world.

[12:08] So does the light hide from the darkness? Does the light hide from the darkness? Does the dark put out the light? So you go into a room and you turn on the light.

And once it was dark, it now becomes light and the darkness flies away. Let me ask you, does it come back? Does it come back as long as the light is on?

Does the dark creep out of the closet and start filling the room, start putting out the light? No.

Wherever the light shines, it wins.

it triumphs. So our Jesus reigns. And evangelism is us asserting his reign in the face of the false claims of the dragon, in the face of the darkness.

We aren't, in one sense, begging people to become Christians. In another sense we are, but in one sense we are not begging people to be Christians. We aren't like people selling magazines door to door, just desperate for something.

[13:16] We aren't standing there with our noses running, begging the big kids to be on our team. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

So what do we do? Go and make disciples. So with grace and mercy and winsomeness and kindness and courage, we say, this is the good news.

Repent and believe. believe. So let's have some confidence in our Savior. He came to his throne by throwing Satan down.

He's powerful. So let's have some confidence in him. We don't need to spend so much time thinking about our weakness and our inability. He has strength to spare.

Jesus has strength to spare for us. David didn't need Saul's armor. Gideon didn't need 10,000 men. What was God looking for?

[14:16] Someone who was willing. Someone who would believe him. Someone who would trust in him. All they needed was a willing heart. And so take heart. Jesus, our king, has thrown down the dragon.

Now, that's our first picture. The glory of our king. He takes his kingdom by crushing Satan. Here's the second picture. Turn over to chapter 14.

Revelation chapter 14. And this is the picture of the lamb's loyal army. So is our king glorious?

How do you tell the glory of a king? How do you see the glory of a king? The glory of a king is in his army. Who will carry out his will? Who will live for him?

Who will die for him? And the glory of a king is measured by the number and the quality of the men who will die and suffer for him. So how glorious is our king? We see a picture of them.

[15:17] We see a picture of his army in Revelation 14. Verse 1. Then I looked and there before me was the lamb standing on Mount Zion and with them 144,000 who had his name and his father's name written on their foreheads.

And I heard a sound from heaven like a roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders.

No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women for they kept themselves pure.

They followed the lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the lamb. No lie was found in their mouths.

They are blameless. Now you say, I don't see the army here. How is this an army? I can see that they're saved.

[16 : 25] I can see that they're worshipping, but how are they an army? Well, John has already shown us that they are an army. Back in Revelation chapter 7, we met these 144,000 for the first time.

The first time we saw them, we saw them come to us in the form of a census. It said, from the tribe of Judah, 12,000 were sealed, and from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000, etc.

It goes on until the full number, 144,000, were counted. Why a census? Why does it come to us like that? I think it helps us to understand the Old Testament background.

In the Old Testament, they took a census. Why? To number the fighting men. To number the army of Israel.

We don't have time to go there, but you could go to Numbers chapter 1, and it says this again and again. All the men 20 years old or more who were able to serve in the army were counted, enlisted by name.

[17 : 28] And then it says in Judah, 57,000 something. And then it goes tribe by tribe by tribe. The number of men who were able to fight were counted, enlisted, and this is their number.

So what was the census for in the Old Testament? What is John drawing from? It wasn't just for general knowledge. Remember, David took a census. He wanted to know how many fighting men he had.

It was to measure the army of Israel. And so in Revelation 7, you see the lamb's army, and then here they are again. They're going to show up another time, but here they are again.

And so look at this army. They have their name. They have God's name on their foreheads. They're sealed, is what Revelation 7 says.

They're sealed with his name. A seal was a protection. It was a guarantee of this is a legitimate.

This is the real deal. This is really me. This was really my letter.

[18 : 32] I really said this. This belongs to me. This army is each sealed with his name. He says, these are mine. Jesus says, these are mine.

These are my men. Every single one of them lives even though he dies because I protect them. As long as they're in my care, nothing can hurt them.

They're invincible because his name is upon them. You go to the end of the story, you go to the end of Revelation, and they're all there.

Not one of them was lost because he protects them. They're absolutely safe with his name upon them. They're dressed in white. They're pure and undefiled.

In ancient Israel, the fighting men were to refrain from being with a woman when they were fighting against their enemies. They were supposed to keep strict ceremonial cleanliness in their warfare because their war against God's enemies was holy war.

[19 : 38] They fought for God and they fought with God and that demanded ceremonial cleanliness. So remember Uriah the Hittite. David says, go home and be with Bathsheba, and he refuses.

He was saying, my brothers in the army, they can't. I can't. That's the idea here. And you see that in verse 4.

These are they who did not defile themselves with women for they kept themselves pure. They're holy warriors. The point is not to say something about perpetual virginity or something about it's bad to be married.

It's a picture, it's a symbol. The Lord's army, the Lamb's army, they're completely devoted to him. They're completely devoted to this holy war.

They've given themselves completely body and soul to him. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. He's won their heart. He bought them, they're his.

[20 : 39] He went into the jaws of death for them. And they will follow him even into the jaws of death. So how do you see the greatness of our king?

How do you see the glory of King Jesus? Will his army gladly die for him? Has he won their hearts? You remember David had three mighty men.

He had lots of mighty men, but he had these three special mighty men. He was thirsty one time. And he said, oh, that I could have a drink from the well in Bethlehem.

It was an offhand comment. It wasn't a command. It was just the bare wish of his heart. And what's next in the story?

Three men strapping on their armor, strapping on their swords. They attack the entire Philistine garrison in order to give their commander a drink.

[21 : 44] That was David. And one greater than David is here. David's Lord and David's son. Will David have what Jesus lacks?

David had his three mighty men who will go into the jaws of death for him. And Jesus has millions. Every single one of his faithful will die for him.

So, dear Christian, take heart. Sometimes, maybe you don't. Sometimes I worry that if things get so bad, I'll be alone.

God's people will abandon him. But his army follows him wherever he goes. Days of trouble may be coming. It may not be.

But when the husk falls off, the kernel stays. When the false believers, they will fall away when times of trouble come.

[22 : 46] But God's people won't. His army won't. And so you won't stand alone. God's people have never stood alone. They've always had brothers and sisters.

Some may walk away, but his army will be true to the end. He's a great king and this is his glorious army. They're glorious because he saved them and he's changed them and he's purchased them.

He's bought them out of slavery. And so that's why they are singing the song of the redeemed.

They're singing of Jesus even as they fight their battle.

Now, before we move on to the third picture, let me say one final thing about this one, Christian.

Brothers or sisters, this is a picture of you.

It's meant to be a picture of you. Are you living up to it? Have you girded yourself for battle?

[23 : 44] Are you in the fight? Or are you somewhere in the back, somewhere on the sidelines, trying to manage to live a peacetime existence in war?

This is a picture of you. Here's your true identity. Here you are. Live up to what God says about you. Live up to what this picture shows of a people holy and undefiled, ready to give themselves to King Jesus because he saved them.

Now what will help us do that? What will give us the courage and the stamina and the faithfulness and the loyalty to our king in order to stand with him through thick and thin? I think it's our third picture.

Turn over to Revelation chapter 19 and verse 11. 19 11. And it's a picture of a white rider. 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.

[24 : 53] 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. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and his name is the word of God.

The armies of heaven were following him riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen white and clean. 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 wine press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. And on his robe and on his thigh he has the name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Why does his army follow him? Why will they die for him? Because he's glorious. He's awesome.

Look at his names. He's called Faithful and True. He's the great witness for God. In these last days God has spoken to us by his son.

[26 : 08] Jesus revealed, he gave his testimony and martyrs have given their lives for the sake of what Jesus said about himself. He's faithful and true. They trust him.

They trust in what he said about God and what he said about himself and so they give themselves to him. And so now in this picture he rides for them. He rides in vengeance for them to enforce his truth.

And then he has a name that no one can know. That's an interesting thing to say. Why say something if you can't say what it is? He has a name that no one can know which is a way of saying that no one has power over him.

No one can get a hold of him to bring him down. He is invincible. In the ancient world, to know someone's name, it was thought, was to be able to control them, to have power over them.

Remember, Jesus said to that one man who is filled with demons, what is your name? We are legion. And he drives them into the pigs. Jacob was wrestling the Lord.

[27:13] Jacob asked, what's your name? And he said, why are you asking for my name? In other words, you can't have my name if you're going to try to use it against me somehow.

Jesus has a name that no one knows. No one can control him. No one can stop him. When he comes to make war, he is invincible. His enemies have no hold on him.

They have no power over him. He does everything that he wants to do. Then his name is the word of God. Now think about that. What does God's word do in the Bible?

What does God's word do in the Bible? God creates with his word. He judges with his word. He gives life with his word. He rules with his word. He decrees with his word. He destroys with his word.

He sends snow with his word. Everything that God does, he does through his word upon this earth. And so here he is. Do you see what Revelation is saying?

[28:12] Jesus is the living embodiment, the living breathing word of God. Through him, God creates. Through him, God destroys.

Through him, God judges and rules. When God speaks, Jesus happens to people. However he comes to them is what happens to them.

He breaks upon them and no one can escape him. And that's what you see coming. Heaven is standing open. Heaven and earth are face to face and Jesus is coming down.

And he's happening to men. He's treading the fury of the wrath of God almighty. And he's the king of kings and he's the lord of lords.

That's just to say that he can call kings to account, that they're his to rule.

[29:13] He calls kings to account. Think about that. How many kings has Jesus called to account, called to his judgment seat? It's no great thing for him to summon presidents to his judgment seat.

He speaks the word and there they go. Great among men and now into his presence they go. It's no great thing for him to summon emperors and dictators to his judgment seat.

Men who had total power over their realm in this world. The word he calls them and he says tell me what you have been doing. He lifts up, he throws down, and he destroys them in their strength.

And that's what you see here. Him coming to the great and destroying them in their strength. Aslan in the silver chair said this, I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms, said the lion.

It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

And in Revelation 19, you see him coming.

[30:39] And he's the white rider, and he comes to make war on God's enemies, and with justice, he judges. And with justice, he makes war, and he judges the nations, and then he carries out the execution.

And so even now, his judgments are breaking out. Even now, his judgments are coming upon this earth. Jesus is not quiet in heaven. Someone said to me last week after our big storm, for you who are visiting, we had this very violent thunderstorm.

They said to me, we were sitting on the edges of his power. We're sitting on the edges of Jesus' power, and even now the storm is breaking in upon us.

The first waves are coming upon the shore, and we're sitting on the edges of his power. Read Revelation 6. Jesus begins to open the seals, the ripples of a coming storm, the first wind, the first sign of the wind, the first rumbles of the thunder, conquerors, war, famine, death, ripples, ripples of that coming storm, ripples of Jesus coming in, tremors promising an earthquake that will shake heaven and earth.

So why do those things happen? there could be very many reasons why conquerors, war, famine, death happen, but one of them is because Jesus is reigning, and he is judging the world of men, and even now the king is angry at the world of sinners, and he's saying doom is coming, judgment is coming, and so I would say flee the wrath to come.

[32:34] if the first tremors are bad, what will the full earthquake be? Flee, or you're a madman.

So we're getting on Christmas time, and it's good for us to think of Jesus, meek and mild, because he is, he's humble, he's gentle, but that's not all he is, and that's what you see in Revelation, and

that's what Revelation is, struggling to show us in every way that it can, Jesus is a mighty king, and the future of this world, and his future coming into this world is even now sending shocks, bringing men to judgment, so how terrible will it be when he mounts his horse and he rides?

How terrible will it be when his army comes, and how terrible will it be when the angels join his throng, and when heaven invades, the earth.

Revelation 19 says it will be a supper, it will be a supper, a feast. There's not only the feast of, the wedding feast of the lamb, there's this feast that comes first, a feast for the vultures, verses 17 and 18, and I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men of horses, and of their riders, and the flesh of all people free and slaves, small and great.

This is our king. He's going to have a royal feast. the people sitting down, the vultures will dine on royal fair.

[34 : 24] They will eat the flesh of kings and emperors, and generals, and mighty men, and small and great. That's our king. So now he's on the throne of grace.

He's receiving sinners. He's saving sinners. He's not slow in coming. He's patient, waiting for you to come, not wanting you to perish, but to repent and find life.

But he will come, he will mount his horse, he will come and destroy. He's a mighty king, and he will not be rebelled against forever. So do you see his glory?

Do you feel his power? If you don't look at these pictures again, read them again and again until and even as you do pray, pray, Spirit of God, show me, fall fresh on me, show me Jesus.

Now two quick lessons before we're done, before we finish. Lesson one, Christian, you have no right to be depressed about the way things are going in this world.

[35 : 27] And what I mean is there's probably lots of reasons that you could be sad. Lots of things, lots of sin, lots of grief, and yes, in a certain sense, it's right for us to be sad about those things, and I'm not negating that at all, but I'm saying it's not right for that to be the prevailing movement of your heart, for you to be depressed for very long, at the state of our country, at your place in the world, really about anything.

And I'll tell you why, your king is on the throne. This is your husband, and he is awesome in power.

And so if this has happened to you, your depression isn't dealing with reality.

It's leaving the most important person out. It's blindness. Here's the truth. Jesus threw down the devil.

Jesus has a loyal army, and Jesus is awesome in power, and he's coming again. So believe him, and rejoice, take heart. Lesson number two, you must live for him.

He's your king. Kings are to be obeyed. Not just when you want to. They are to be obeyed all of the time because of their position.

[36 : 48] He has the right, and he has the power to rule. His commands are not options. When we start saying, oh, I think I'll obey, or it's not that important, I won't do obey so much here, or I won't try so hard here, or when we start juggling commands and weighing them and saying, well, asking ourselves what we're going to obey, we've totally confused reality.

Jesus is king. He has issued commands. They are to be obeyed. obeyed. And so we all have to press into further obedience.

You're in his army. You're in his army. Is disobedience an option? It's not. How would that go over if you were in the American army?

Think about that. if you were in the army of the United States of America, would that kind of obedience, would the kind of obedience and the kind of effort that you give to King Jesus, would it fly or not?

I don't know. Examine your own heart. Would the sergeants, would the lieutenants of the United States army say, the kind of obedience that you offer to Jesus is the kind of!

[38 : 09] that we're looking for? Is it good enough? We have to press into further obedience. We have to start dealing more and more with this reality that Jesus is King.

He's my King. So should the men of this earth, the sergeants and the lieutenants of this earth, get less or get more than the King of Heaven?

Should they get more obedience, more earnestness, more zeal, more enthusiasm, more of a gung-ho attitude than King Jesus?

If our army treats our sergeants in a certain way, then we should at least treat our King in that way. So should the men of this earth get more than the King of Heaven from your life? Well let's sing a closing hymn 678, Christ shall have dominion, hymn 678. Let's stand as we sing. [39 : 15] Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending your Son. Thank you for your plan of salvation for us.

Thank you that you raised him to the highest place and that he is our King. Thank you that we are joined to him. and in some way we are even now seated with him in heavenly places. Help us to live and understand that mystery, to live in it, to not be discouraged or overwhelmed, not to lose sight of Jesus, not to lose sight of his coming and his glory, not to lose sight of his power and his authority, but by faith to take that in and bring it into our lives more and more, that we could live lives that are pleasing to you, encouraged and obedient, assured, and yet zealous for good works. Pray, Lord, that you would help us, correct our thinking, rebuke us, work in us, save, and forgive. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.