

Does Christ Ride upon a White Horse at His Bodily Second Coming?

Daniel 12:1-3; Revelation 19:11-16

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In our study of Daniel, why turn to the Book of Revelation? The visions given to John in Revelation are in many cases parallel to those in Daniel, using the same symbols (e.g. the beast with ten horns), or using the same time indicators (e.g. a time, times, and half a time), or covering the same prophesied events (e.g. Christ going forth as a mighty warrior to save His people and to judge His enemies before His millennial reign from heaven over all the nations of the earth). Since Revelation covers much of the same territory as Daniel, Revelation can confirm our understanding and interpretation of Daniel. We are not really leaving Daniel in going to Revelation, but are rather confirming the interpretation of Daniel by going to Revelation—the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is Scripture.

In Daniel 12:1, we have seen how Michael, the great Prince, who is the Lord Jesus, will stand up to judge His enemies and bring unbelieving Israel as a nation to salvation (which Paul also addresses in Romans 11), which salvation will then flow into a blessed time of gospel prosperity and peace throughout the whole world as all nations are brought to serve the Lord as He displays His mighty power from heaven (the millennium of Revelation 20). Then in Daniel 12:2 the vision turns to the simultaneous bodily resurrection of the just to everlasting life and the unjust to everlasting punishment, which then in Daniel 12:3 leads to the New Heavens and New Earth which is the end of our salvation in glorifying and enjoying the Lord forever and ever. Now is this order of events likewise confirmed in the Book of Revelation? I do believe it is.

We see here in Revelation 19 a great battle wherein Christ defeats Satan, and his chief agents: **the civil beast** (along with all the nations of the world confederated with the civil beast) and **the ecclesiastical false prophet** of the Church of Rome. I submit Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 19:11-16 are speaking of the same events.

What we seek to know is this: Is this prophetic language of Christ riding as King of kings on a white horse to save His people and defeat His enemies speaking of Christ's bodily Second Coming or is it speaking of Christ coming spiritually in the power of His Word and Spirit to save His people and defeat His enemies? I submit that neither Daniel 12:1 nor Revelation 19:11-16 prophesy the bodily Second Coming of Christ. There are several reasons I submit to you that cast doubt in my mind and lead me away from the view I once held many years ago that Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 19:11-16 both describe the bodily Second Coming of Christ.

I. Reason #1: The Book of Revelation Is Filled with Many Symbols.

A. The Book of Revelation is filled with a great number of symbols that represent truths the Lord intends to convey to us. From the very beginning in Revelation 1:12-16 (the vision of Christ) to the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22, all sound interpreters must reckon with what each of these symbols mean (that what it means to interpret the Scripture literally—it is to interpret symbols as God intended). We must start there as we come to Revelation 19:11-16.

B. Revelation 19:11 begins with these words, "And I saw heaven opened." John is not outside this vision but is a participant in it.

1. In this vision, heaven was not opened so that Jesus might bodily descend at His Second Coming. Heaven was opened in order that John might behold this revelation of the victorious Jesus. Heaven was opened for John's benefit, not for Christ's benefit.

2. Very similar language is used in Revelation 4:1, when the Lord reveals to John by vision the glorious throne room of the Lord in heaven, using many symbols to describe that heavenly throne room. Just as this door into heaven was not opened so that the throne room of God might come to the earth, but so

that John might see by vision the things revealed by God (as if he were standing in heaven itself), so likewise, we are prepared by the Holy Spirit (in Revelation 19:11) to anticipate (by way of many symbols) Christ, the King of kings, demonstrating His almighty power in subduing His enemies by His Word and Spirit.

II. Reason #2: Similar Language Is Used in Scripture for Non-Bodily Comings of God in Judgment.

- A. **Isaiah 63:1-6** refers to the Lord coming in the historical judgment He brought in decimating the Edomites (ca. 110 B.C.) by the agency of the Maccabees (John Hyrcanus).
- B. **Micah 1:1-7,16** refers to the Lord coming in the historical judgment He brought against Israel by means of the Assyrians, who destroyed the capital of Israel, Samaria, and led Israel into captivity in 722 B.C.; and the coming of the Lord in the historical judgment He brought against Judah by means of the Babylonians, who destroyed the capital of Judah, Jerusalem, and led Judah into captivity in 586 B.C.
- C. **Habakkuk 3:1-15** refers to the Lord coming in the historical judgment that He brought against heathen nations at the time Israel possessed the Promise Land.
- D. **Revelation 2:16** refers to the Lord coming (not bodily, but spiritually) in judgment upon certain false teachers in the Church of Pergamos unless they repent.
- E. Thus, I submit that as we consider what type of coming of Christ is in view in Revelation 19:11-16 (whether a bodily or spiritual coming), we should not be hasty to conclude that this clearly refers to the bodily Second Coming of Christ. We should be cautious because this same type of graphic symbolic language is used in the Old Testament for non-bodily comings of the Lord in historical nations at that time.

III. Reason #3: The Same Kind of Symbolic Language Is Used in Revelation 19:11-16 to describe this coming of Christ.

- A. Christ was riding upon “a white horse” (Revelation 19:11)—Jesus comes as mighty conqueror—the Roman emperors (Habakkuk 3).
- B. His eyes were as “a flame of fire” (Revelation 19:12)—Jesus comes as the one who sees all and knows all in righteousness—nothing can be hid from Him (Revelation 1:14).
- C. Upon His head are “many crowns” (Revelation 19:12)—not a single crown, but many for He rules over all nations as King of kings.
- D. He is clothed in a vesture that is “dipped in blood” (Revelation 19:13)—the blood of His enemies whom He has crushed beneath His feet (like that of Isaiah 63).
- E. “A sharp sword” proceeds out of His mouth (Revelation 19:15; Revelation 1:16; Revelation 2:16)—which signifies that He judges and conquers His enemies by His Word, His gospel, His truth, His doctrine, His commandments.
- F. He treads the winepress of His holy wrath in crushing and defeating His enemies (Revelation 19:15). He will either convert His enemies or destroy them (Isaiah 63).

IV. Reason #4: When referring to the bodily Second Coming of Christ, this kind of symbolic language is not used: Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2.

- A. When we contrast the graphic symbolism of the Lord’s non-bodily coming in historical judgments with His bodily Second Coming which seem quite straightforward in the language used, I submit this coming of Christ upon a white horse to be more likely a non-bodily coming to judge His enemies before bringing all nations on earth to worship/serve Him (which is what we see in Revelation 20).
- B. For those reasons I submit that Revelation 19:11-16 most likely does not refer to the bodily Second Coming of Christ.
- C. So back to Daniel 12:1. When we read there that Michael, the Prince (King Jesus) shall stand up to judge His enemies and to save Israel and all nations (Daniel 7), I believe this is likewise what is revealed in Revelation 19:11-16—but I submit that in neither case should we conclude that it is the bodily Second Coming of Christ that is revealed.

1. It is indeed a very real spiritual coming of Christ in judgment and in salvation (in both Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 19:11-16), even if it is not a bodily coming.

2. Is Jesus warning about a real coming and yet a non-bodily coming in Revelation 2:16? Yes, indeed—it is a real spiritual coming! Is Jesus promising a real coming and yet a non-bodily coming in Revelation 3:20? Yes, indeed—it is a real spiritual coming! Is the real presence of Jesus with us as we partake of bread/wine at the Lord's Supper? Yes, indeed—not His bodily presence, but it is a real spiritual presence.

D. Application

1. The coming of the Lord spiritually must be taken very seriously, even if it is not a bodily coming of Christ. Jesus comes to us as His Church and spiritually walks among us (as He did in the vision given to John in Revelation 1). We don't worship and serve a God who is millions of miles away and has no connection with us now. We worship our Savior and King who is among us spiritually (really among us, truly among us, yet not bodily among us, but spiritually among us). That is a truth that transforms our Christian life, our daily life, our family life, our prayer life, and our communion with Him. He is truly with us. Let us not treat His spiritual presence with us any less important than His bodily presence with us at His Second Coming.

2. The non-bodily coming of Christ in Daniel 12:1 and in Revelation 19:11-16 will be a very sobering coming in judgment upon His enemies and yet a blessed coming in salvation to Israel (and to all nations as they are brought in faith to Jesus Christ). Jesus will conquer His enemies, subdue His enemies, and convert His enemies by the Word of God and by the power of His Spirit. That's how Jesus works salvation of individuals, families, nations—by His Word. We are called to be people of the Word, who know it and love it so that by it He brings reformation and transformation. Where His Word is faithfully preached, taught, received, loved, and practiced, there the Lord Jesus will be to bless.

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