

“My dad can beat up your dad!”

The details are fuzzy. I don’t remember which of my classmates I was arguing with. I don’t remember what we were arguing about. I remember being in my kindergarten classroom. And I remember those classic little kid words coming out of my mouth.

I still remember saying it: “My dad can beat up your dad!”

I feel a little bit like that kindergarten version of myself again when I read Revelation 19.

Today we are celebrating Jesus’ ascent into heaven. Ascension is a big deal in the Christian life – it deserves to be right up there with Christmas and Easter, and Revelation 19 gives us one big reason why Ascension is a big deal.

Ascension was not Jesus’ retirement. It’s not Jesus riding off into the sunset of heaven because he is done with earth.

Ascension isn’t just some distant future hope either. I think we Christians tend to think of it this way. Like, he did his thing on earth 2000 years ago. He was done with that whole salvation earning thing so he went back to heaven and now we just have to wait; As if Jesus is up in heaven just twiddling his thumbs until it’s time for him to go back to work on Judgement day; As if God is somehow less active in this world today than he was when Jesus was walking around Israel; As if what Jesus did is all about heaven and the distant future, and not so much about the day to day and what happens now, in between his ascension and the return those angels predicted.

Ascension is a very real thing for you. Whoever you are, whatever you are going through, ascension has a very real and applicable message for you, a message that has to do with today and tomorrow, not just some distant future when Jesus comes again. There is a foundational message imbedded in Ascension. A message that can change the way you face each day.

And that message according to Revelation 19: my dad can beat up your dad.

We confess it all the time, the Bible says that Jesus ascended so that he could sit at the right hand of God the Father almighty. That’s not just describing the physical location of Jesus. Jesus at the Father’s right hand is a job description.

Jesus ascended so that he could put aside the limitations of manhood and take up again the almightiness of godhood.

Jesus ascended so that he could become a Revelation 19 kind of Savior.

John saw the visions of Revelation decades after Jesus ascended into heaven. Years after the clouds hid Jesus from John’s sight, God pulled back the veil and John got this incredible glimpse of just what Jesus started doing the minute he sat down at his Father’s right hand – and it wasn’t thumb-twiddling retirement. Jesus went to war.

“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 wages war. 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. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of kings and LORD of lords.”

And this, this hard-core, Marvel superhero-like, rider on a white horse is my Jesus. This isn’t fantasy. This isn’t fiction. This is my Jesus.

The Bible makes clear that the war he is waging is for me. Far from retirement, Jesus ascended into heaven to go to war. He ascended to begin ruling over everything for the good of his Church, the Bible says. The minute he got into heaven he marched out with this army to begin forcing this world to operate in the best interest of his Church. Which means, the minute he ascended into heaven he went to war for me. He had my beset interest in mind as he marched out with his blazing eyes, sharp sword, and iron scepter.

Anything that threatens to get in the way of him bringing me to heaven he will tread in the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. Anything that threatens to get in the way of him loving me will become one more stain on the bottom of his robe.

It gives me chills, thinking about this Jesus going to war for me!

I look at this Jesus in Revelation 19, I look at all of the things in this world that worry me, that threaten to overwhelm me and beat me down and I channel my kindergarten self: my dad can beat up your dad! My Jesus can beat up anything that gets in my way.

This isn’t some wishful thinking that maybe will come true when I get to heaven. *Already* his robe is dripping with the blood of foes *already* crushed. His head is *already* crowned with the crowns he has taken from the brows of other kings that stood in his way. This is what Jesus started doing the minute he ascended into heaven. We don’t always see the war going on, we don’t always see the foes he has and is conquering for us, but this is what he is doing right now. Behind what we can see with our eyes he is busy going to war against his enemies and our enemies.

It is a pretty awesome image of Jesus. This is what Ascension is all about. No matter what you are going through right now, no matter what this world throws at you tomorrow, this rider on this horse is fighting for you.

It channels my inner kindergartener, finding fierce pride and unquestioned trust in my Jesus... if only my faith could remain so child-like tomorrow morning... because that’s where the rubber meets the road.

Jesus promises us that all the pain, all the worry, all the suffering, and worries and fears, all of the ways that sin in hurting us, he is going to beat them up for us. He is right now, already, beating them up for us – forcing them to hand over their crowns and to submit to his rule.

But our experiences in this world can sometimes call that promise into question.

You see, if I were calling the shots, my life would be going a little differently than it is right now. There are some stresses, some pains, some suffering that if I were directing this rider on the white horse, I would have him snuff them out sooner rather than later. But God has made it very obvious in my life that I don't get to call the shots for this rider on the white horse. He may be listening to my prayers but my prayers are clearly not commands that he has to follow.

This rider is called Faithful and True. John says he is judging and waging war with justice. Which means: whatever this rider is up to right now, is the right thing to do. It means that whenever he decides to defeat your enemies is the right time.

And, if you are like me, this is where the rubber meets the road and child-like faith can get tested.

The thought of this Jesus going to war for me gives me chills, but this same Jesus proves to me that he wants my crown too.

He wants my crown. He wants me to submit to him, to his plan, to his rule. He demands it. This Jesus is wildly untamable. He does not submit to me and my ideas for how he should operate in my life.

And that requires child-like faith.

Because, as you may well know by now, the one who has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself sometimes operates in ways and for reasons that no one knows but he himself. God sometimes has a way of ruling things that we can't understand. God once spelled out this sometimes frustrating untamable-ness to Isaiah: **"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."**

The Jesus of Revelation 19 is ruling all things for your good, but make no mistake about it, he would rule you too. He would have you submit to his thoughts, his ways, his plans.

And that requires child-like faith.

But whenever that moment comes for you, and it will probably come often in life. Whenever the tomorrow comes when this rider on his white horse isn't beating up your enemies as quickly or thoroughly as you would like him to, let your heart remember this: The Jesus of Revelation 19 – this wildly powerful and untamable Jesus has already proven that he is using his power for your good.

Yeah, Jesus demands submission from you too, but you know to whom you are submitting.

This is the one who lived for you, who died for you, who rose for you.

This is the one who has already taken on sin, your sin! He killed your sin on his cross. He took your failures; your failures to trust him as you should, your failures to love him as you should, your failures to live for him as you should, and he ran them through with that sword from his mouth, he beat them down with his iron scepter, he tread on them, crushing them like so many grapes beneath the feet of his wrath. Those sins, beaten, killed and crushed beyond recognition can't touch you. No more guilt. No more fear. No more judgement. Because your Jesus can beat up your sins.

This is the one who has already taken on death! He killed your sin on his cross and then he killed the wages of your sin in his empty tomb. He took that giant specter at the end of your life, this giant thing that we spend so much of our time trying to avoid and delay and he struck it down. He stared death in the face. He got down and dirty in the grave and he came out the other side with another crown on his head. Death, the sting of death, the fear of death, is one more stain at the bottom of his robe... because your Jesus can beat up death.

And this is the Jesus, with eyes like blazing fire, with the crowns of his enemies already vanquished on his head, with his robes dipped in their blood, who comes to you today and asks you to submit to him and trust him.

The one on whose robes and thigh is inked the name: King of kings and LORD of lords, would be your King and your LORD.

I don't know about you, but that fills me with kindergarten-like pride and trust.

This is my Jesus. This is your Jesus.

Hail the King of kings and LORD of lords.

Amen.