

Are You an Overcomer?

A few months ago during our Sunday noontime Bible study at the beginning of the Book of Revelation, a lady in attendance asked, “What is an ‘overcomer’?” We tried as best as we could to answer “off the cuff” as it were. This was her first time there and she never came back. I’ve often wondered if it had been the inadequacy of our collective answer or, and I hope, some other reason which caused her not to return. I pray the following commentary will provide her and others with a clearer and more accurate answer to what was a very important question.

As I look back to the early chapters of Revelation to see where we might have been during that particular study, for the first time I noticed a peculiar thing. Jesus speaks of “overcoming” to each and every one of the seven churches!

To the church of Ephesus, He says, *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

To the church of Smyrna, He says, *“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

To the church of Pergamos, He says, *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”*

To the church of Thyatira, He says, *“And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.”*

To the church of Sardis, He says, *“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.”*

To the church of Philadelphia, He says, *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”*

To the church of Laodicea, He says, *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.”*

Once more, and for the eighth time in Revelation 21, Jesus says in verse 7 that, *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*

These are all statements made to John directly from the throne room of heaven as Jesus reveals the seven aspects of the entire church age from Pentecost to the Rapture, and then describes those who are saved during the tribulation. From this it is evident that Jesus is making a big deal over this word “overcomer.” If He is emphasizing it so much, it must be very important and something which we should seek to understand thoroughly.

The word expressed as “overcome,” “overcomer,” or “overcometh” occurs a total of 26 times in the New Testament as “nikao,” meaning “to subdue, conquered, overcome, prevail, get the victory.” All seven epistles to the seven individual churches were meant to be circulated among the actual churches that existed in Asia Minor at that time. While each was addressed to a specific church and expressed the predominate, God-seen characteristic of that church, the individual message nevertheless had value to each of the other churches as well. That is why Jesus ends each message with, “... what the Spirit says to the churches” (plural). This is probably of even greater relevance to the prophetic churches to which these letters were addressed. The letters are demonstrated to be prophetic of the seven church periods from about 30 AD through to the Rapture, which will instantly end the entire church age. While the letters describe characteristics specific to the church during each of the individual historical periods, each of the messages has some application to all the churches in all periods in history. Therefore, we may conclude that while Jesus individualized the “overcometh message” to each of the churches, the composite of these also has relevance to all of the churches.

Now let’s see what they say in this context. He that overcometh will eat of the tree of life, shall not be hurt by the second death, will be given the hidden manna to eat, will receive a white stone with a secret name, will be given power over nations, will be clothed in a white raiment and not blotted out of the Book of Life; will be made a pillar in

the temple and have the name of God and of the new Jerusalem written on him, along with God's new name; and finally, will sit with Jesus in His throne.

Viewed collectively, this seems to be a whole basketful of goodies, which God has prepared for those who overcome. They depict a glorious eternal life filled with wondrous gifts, positions and circumstances that will be available to all who overcome.

Then we have Revelation 21:7 which is just 40 verses from the very end of not only Jesus' Revelation, but also of His entire written Word to the world. Here is a grand finale message to the overcomer. Jesus summarizes it all when He says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and will I be his God and he shall be my son." (Remember all of this applies to daughters as well.) How can it get any better than this? ALL THINGS! BEING GOD'S SON! All the individual gifts to the overcomer described in the seven letters are here included in one grand promise!

But now, just what and who is an overcomer? In Romans 12:21, the Holy Spirit speaks through Paul and says, "Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good." Overcoming sin is also the underlying essence of the messages given us in the epistles of both Peter and John. Therefore, it is apparent that the important characteristic of an overcomer, in the Biblical sense, is to have overcome or to have been victorious over sin. But how can one do this when we know from Jeremiah 17:9 that "...the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" There is no way, by ourselves, that we can overcome sin when we are so hopelessly wicked. We need help, big help; help of a supernatural quality.

How blessed are we who recognize where this help can be found, and who are willing to trust and obey Him who can provide the strength and the way to become an overcomer. Look at what Jesus told His apostles and therefore us as well, in John 16:33: "... *in this world ye shall have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" Also, look back at Revelation 3:21 where Jesus again speaks of His having overcome.

Here we have the ultimate overcomer, the only person ever to have lived a perfect life of obedience to God, a genuinely sinless life. By being both God and a sinless man, He was made sin, the equivalent of the sum total of all sins perpetrated by all of mankind past, present and future. His suffering and death on the cross, along with His resurrection from the dead and ascension back to heaven, is the sublime achievement of the very first and greatest of all overcomers. He and He alone, because He was the only One who could, overcame the power and authority of sin, of hell, of death, and of Satan himself. He did this just for us, and out of His incredible love for us. Now, through Him and in no other way, is the power to overcome these things available to those who trust and obey to those who genuinely accept Him as their Lord and Savior and all that this means.

In order to become a genuine overcomer, one must become totally committed by yielding one's self to God and become controlled by the Holy Spirit. 1John 5:4 assures us "*For whatsoever is born of God (by His Spirit in us) overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believes (trusts, relies on the fact) that Jesus is the Son of God.*"

Therefore, once you have truly accepted Him and are born again, you are an overcomer. You have overcome all past sins for they have been forgiven. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you have overcome the power of sin and have received an ever-growing strength and sensitivity of conscience to resist, moment by moment, the temptations of sin. To these has been added the blessing of having overcome the "second death;" that is, your immortal soul as well as a new incorruptible body will spend a glorious eternity in heaven as one of the sons or daughters of God.

With so much at stake, who in his right mind would want to wait for even one second to get on his way to becoming an overcomer? If you don't know the way, just ask Jesus. He is waiting most eagerly to show you the way. You may not have heard Him, for He is very gentle, but He has been knocking continuously at the door of your heart during your whole life, waiting for you to accept His offer to make you an overcomer (Revelation 3:20, 21, 22).

FOR GOD'S SAKE AND YOUR OWN, ANSWER HIM!