



Already, Christ has won the Victory Over the World  
 John 16:33  
 January 19, 2020

As we seek to assimilate the peace that the Savior brought to earth (Luke 2:8-14), we have noticed (and sung!) that there is peace in Christ. We have also noted that we should expect trouble, persecution, and sin as a part of normal Christian life. Yet even though we know such things are normal in this world, they can still be extremely difficult. But Jesus gives us another basis for peace in a surprising and bold statement: Take heart! I have overcome the world! (John 16:33).

“Overcome” means “to be the victor, prevail or conquer-in an athletic contest, a legal case, or battle.” The tense of “overcome” points to a victory that has been won and that lasts. The “world” that Jesus has overcome refers especially to all in the world that is opposed to God (John 8:23; 12:31; 15:19; 16:8; 1 John 2:15-17; 4:5). The language here suggests warfare.

During his life and ministry Jesus battled Satan by healing and casting out demons. In this way Jesus overcame his power (Luke 11:22). Still, the assertion that he has overcome the world was quite bold, in light of his impending desertion by his followers (John 16:32) and his execution (John 16:5, 16-20; 12:23-33). In hindsight, though, we now see that his death and resurrection are the very means by which he won the victory (John 12:23-24, 31-33; 18:33-40, followed by chapter 19; Revelation 12:11). Jesus has indeed triumphed and is victorious (Revelation 3:21; 5:5)! Because of his victory over evil, we can take heart! There is peace in Christ!

If we are honest, however, we don't always feel like Christ is victorious. We can see many examples in our lives and the world at large where Satan seems to be winning. Scripture says the same. The book of Revelation makes clear that Satan still wins some battles (6:2; 11:7; 13:7). This indicates that the victory Christ has won is proleptic (describing a future event as if it has already happened) and ultimate (Revelation 17:14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 50-56). Sometimes wars continue for a long time even after it is clear who the victor will be.

Revelation was written to Christians in the throes of a vicious struggle with Satan to remind them that, even though the conflict continues, Christ has already won the war. It encourages us to hang on and persevere during difficult times. Like the original readers, we can be victorious by means of the blood of Christ, our testimony, and our own sacrifice (Revelation 12:11; cf. Romans 8:37; 12:21). The fighting continues and Satan even wins some provisional victories, but if we persevere, we will receive an eternal reward (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21 15:2; 21:7).

Do you believe this? That question is paramount, because faith is the key to Christians overcoming the world (1 John 5:4-5). We have all been in or watched games or contests where we thought our side had no hope of winning. In such times it's easy to get demoralized and quit. In fact, one common strategy contestants use is to try to demoralize their opponents in hopes that they will give up altogether. But if we believe that, no matter what the current score or situation may be, we are ultimately going to win, we can then find encouragement to hang on and persevere. It is paramount that we believe Jesus really has overcome the world.

Peace may be found in Christ

Every believer can expect trouble, persecution, and sin.

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