

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE OF THE CHURCH AS THE NEW MAN

Message Three The Victorious Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:8; John 12:31; Heb. 2:14; Acts 2:24; Eph. 4:8; Rev. 1:18; 19:11

- 1 John 3:8 He who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the **Son of God** was **manifested**, that He might **destroy** the **works** of the devil.
- Joh 12: 31 Now is the **judgment** of this **world**; now shall the **ruler** of this world be **cast out**.
- Hebrews 2:14 Since therefore the children have shared in blood and flesh, He also Himself **in like manner partook of the same**, that **through death** He might **destroy** him who has the might of death, that is, **the devil**,
- Acts 2:24 Whom God has **raised up**, having **loosed** the **pangs of death**, since it was **not possible** for Him to be held by it.
- Ephesians 4:8 Therefore the Scripture says, "Having ascended to the height, **He led captive those taken captive** and **gave gifts to men**."
- Revelation 1:18 And the living One; and I **became dead**, and **behold, I am living forever and ever**; and **I have** the **keys of death and of Hades**.
- Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called **Faithful** and **True**, and in righteousness He **judges** and **makes war**.

In Ephesians 4 we see that when the victorious Christ ascended, **He led a train of vanquished foes and constituted them into gifts to His Body**. We have pointed out that **we become gifts** through experiencing Christ's descending and ascending within us.

Paul is the most useful gift given by Christ to His Body. Before being constituted a gift to the church, Paul was an enemy of Christ and a persecutor of the church. Nevertheless, when the Lord Jesus appeared to him, Paul was **defeated**. He fell to the ground, and said, "Who art thou, Lord?" By calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, he was saved, and the Lord came into him. At that moment, **Saul of Tarsus became a vanquished foe**. In the years to follow, he went on to experience Christ's descending and ascending within him. Eventually, through this experience of the traveling Christ, Paul became an outstanding gift to the Body.

The principle is the same with us. Although **we were once enemies of the Lord**, one day He met us, perhaps as we were on our road to Damascus. **The Lord vanquished us, captured us, and put us in His train of vanquished foes**. Now, by descending and ascending within us, He is constituting us into gifts to His Body.

Many Christians think only the leading apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers are gifts to the church. However, if we read 4:7 in context, we shall see that **every member, including every one of us, is a gift to the Body**. In 4:16 Paul speaks of every part, that is, every member. Every member of the Body may be a gift if he is constituted by the descending and ascending Christ. (Life-Study of Ephesians, Chapter 80, Section 2)

I. In His earthly ministry the victorious Christ **defeated the devil and destroyed his works**—Matt. 4:1-11; 1 John 3:8:

- A. For Him to accomplish His ministry for the kingdom of the heavens, the Lord Jesus had **to defeat God's enemy**, the devil, Satan—Matt. 4:1, 11:
1. This **He had to do as a man**; hence, He stood as a man to confront the enemy of God—vv. 3-4, 6-7.
 2. The devil's temptation of the first man, Adam, was a success; his temptation of the second man, Christ, was an absolute failure—v. 11.
- B. In His ministry on earth, the Lord Jesus **destroyed the works of the devil**—1 John 3:8:
1. In 1 John 3:8 the Greek word translated "destroy" may also be translated "undo," or "dissolve."
 2. For this purpose the **Son of God was manifested**, that He might **undo** and **destroy** the sinful deeds of the devil, that is, condemn, **through His death on the cross in the flesh**, sin initiated by him, the evil one; destroy the power of sin, the sinful nature of the devil; and take away both sin and sins—Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14; John 1:29.

We should also believe that in **manifesting** Himself on the earth, the Lord not only **destroyed** the works of the devil, but also **gave authority** to His disciples to cast out demons in His name. The Lord said, "Behold, I have given you the authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). He gave His name to the church so that His church might continue His work on earth after His ascension. The Lord used His authority on earth to cast out demons. He also gave this authority to the church.

We must distinguish between what the devil has and what we have. What the **devil has** is **power**. What **we have** is **authority**. All that Satan has is power. But **the Lord Jesus has given us authority, which can overcome all the power of Satan**. **Power cannot prevail over authority**. God has given us authority, and Satan will surely fail. (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 3) Vol. 50: Messages for Building Up New Believers (3), Chap. 9, Section 6)

II. In His crucifixion the victorious Christ cast out the ruler of this world, destroyed the devil, caused the rulers and authorities to be stripped off, and nullified death—12:31; Matt. 27:51; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10:

- A. In His work on the cross, Christ cast out the ruler of this world and judged the world—John 12:31:
1. The ruler of this world was **cast out** when Satan was cast out by Christ's work in His death.
 2. Simultaneously, the world system related to Satan was **judged**—1 John 5:19.
 3. The base of Satan's rebellion was **shaken**, and the strongholds of Satan's earthly kingdom were shaken—Matt. 27:51.
- B. In His crucifixion Christ destroyed the devil—Heb. 2:14:
1. In verse 14 the Greek word translated "destroy" can also be rendered as "bring to nought, make of none effect, do away with, abolish, annul, discard."
 2. In His humanity and through His work on the cross, Christ has destroyed the devil—John 3:14.
- C. In His work on the cross, Christ caused the angelic rulers and authorities to be **stripped off**, to be made a display of openly, and to be **triumphed** over in the cross by God—Col. 2:15:
1. Colossians 2:15 portrays the warfare that took place at the time of Christ's crucifixion.
 2. God openly **shamed** the evil angelic rulers and authorities on the cross and triumphed over them in it—v. 15.
- D. Through His devil-destroying death, Christ **nullified** death, **making it of none effect**—2 Tim. 1:10.

Colossians 2:15 says, "*Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*" Here we see that in His **work on the cross** Christ caused the rulers and authorities to be **stripped off**, to be made a display of openly, and to be **triumphed** over in the cross by God. The rulers and authorities spoken of in this verse are the angelic rulers and authorities. The Greek word for "stripping off" can also be rendered "putting off." The Greek word for "make a display" means show or exhibit in the sense of putting to an open shame. God openly **shamed** the evil angelic rulers and authorities on the cross and **triumphed** over them in it. The Greek words translated "in it" refer to the cross, but they can also be rendered "in Him," referring to Christ.

Colossians 2:15 portrays the **warfare** that took place **at the time of Christ's crucifixion**. In His crucifixion Christ was working to accomplish redemption, and God the Father was working to judge sin. At the same time the rulers and authorities were busy in the attempt to frustrate the work of God and Christ. The reference to triumph in Colossians 2:15 implies **fighting**; it indicates that a war was raging. While Christ was **working** to accomplish redemption, the rulers and authorities came to **interfere**, pressing in close to Christ. But at that very juncture **God stripped them off, triumphed over them, and made a display of them openly, putting them to an open shame**. Christ's work in His death caused all this to take place. (Conclusion of the New Testament, The (Msgs. 063-078), Chapter 10, Section 1)

III. The resurrection of the victorious Christ declares that He is victorious over death—2:8:

- A. It was not possible for the Lord to be held by death—Acts 2:24:
1. The Lord Jesus is both God and resurrection, **possessing an indestructible life**; death cannot hold Him—John 11:25; Heb. 7:16.
 2. The Lord Jesus **defeated** death and rose up from it.
- B. The resurrected Christ is "the living One," and He has "the keys of death and of Hades"—Rev. 1:18:
1. As the living One, the Lord **became dead**, but now He is "**living forever and ever**"—v. 18a.
 2. The resurrected Christ **has the keys of death and of Hades**; death is **subject** to Him, and Hades is under His **control**—v. 18b.

He is "the **First**," the **source** of all things; He is "the **Last**," the **consummation** of all things. God says in Isaiah 41:4: "*I, Jehovah, am the first, / And with the last, I am He*"; also, in 44:6, "*I am the First and I am the Last*"; and in 48:12, "*I am He; I am the First, / I am also the Last.*" "The **First**" and "the **Last**" are **names of God**. This indicates the divinity of the Lord Jesus. **He is before eternity past. He is also after eternity future.**

He is "the **living One**." **The Lord Jesus is life** (John 1:4). He is doubtless the living One. This is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said in John, "I am...the life" (John 11:25). His life is **not a created life**; He exists forever. **He is the source of life.**

"I became dead." This is not for His own sins. It is a sin even to think that He has sins. This is for the sins of the world. The death of the Lord Jesus is "the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous" (1 Pet. 3:18). **Through His death, He has given life to us.** Oh saints, let us meditate more upon this wonderful death.

In Revelation 1:18 the Lord also says, "*I have the keys of death and of Hades.*" Due to the fall and sin of man, death came in and is now working on earth to gather up all the sinful people into Hades. **Death** resembles a **dustpan** used to collect the dust from the floor, and **Hades** resembles a **trash can**. Whatever the dustpan collects is put into the trash can. Thus, **death is a collector, and Hades is a keeper**. **In the church life today we are no longer subject to death and Hades, for Christ abolished death on the cross and overcame Hades in His resurrection.** Although Hades tried its best to hold Him, it was powerless to do it (Acts 2:24). **With Him, death has no sting and Hades has no power.** We must be the same as Christ. **In the church life the keys of death and Hades are in His hand.** It is impossible for us to deal with death; we simply do not have the ability to handle it. Whenever death enters, it will deaden many. But **as long as we give the Lord Jesus the ground, the opportunity, and the free way to move and act among us, both death and Hades will be under His control.** However, whenever the Lord Jesus does not have the ground in the church, death immediately becomes prevailing and Hades becomes powerful to hold the dead ones. We should praise the Lord that Christ has the keys of death and of Hades. **Death is subject to Him, and Hades is under His control.** (Conclusion of the New Testament, The (Msgs. 404-414), Chapter 4, Section 4)

IV. In His ascension the victorious Christ “led captive those taken captive”— Eph. 4:8:

- A. The Amplified New Testament renders *He led captive those taken captive* as “He led a train of vanquished foes”:
1. *Vanquished foes* may refer to Satan, to his angels, and to us the sinners.
 2. This indicates Christ’s victory over Satan, sin, and death; in His ascension there was a **procession** of vanquished foes, led as captives from a war for a celebration of Christ’s victory—2 Cor. 2:14.
- B. As believers, we are now in the heavens, for when Christ ascended to the heavens, **we were in the train of captives led by Him** to “the height”—Eph. 4:8:
1. Christ has released us from the usurping hand of Satan and **brought us to the heavens** where we are now sitting, not as captives but as sons of God and members of Christ—2:6.
 2. In His ascension the victorious Christ has brought us to the highest place in the universe—v. 6; 4:8.

Psalm 68:18 prophesied, “*You have ascended on high; You have led captive those taken captive; / You have received gifts among men, / Even the rebellious ones also, / That Jehovah God may dwell among them.*”

Isaiah 53:12a prophesied, “*I [Jehovah] will divide to Him [the ascended Christ] a portion with the Great, / And He will divide the spoil with the Strong.*”

The **fulfilment** of these two prophecies is confirmed in-

Ephesians 4:8: “*Therefore the Scripture says, ‘Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men.’*”

According to Isaiah 53:12a, God **divides** to the ascended Christ a **portion with the Great**, and Christ **divides the spoil with the Strong**. This means that in Christ’s ascension, there was a demonstration of Christ’s victory by the sharing of the captives, the spoil, taken in Christ’s victory with **God the Father**, who is “**the Great**” and “**the Strong**.” Christ is a Warrior. On the cross and in His resurrection Christ fought the battle, gained the victory, and took spoil from Satan. This is **prophesied** in Psalm 68:18: “*You have ascended on high; You have led captive those taken captive.*” This is also **referred** to in Ephesians 4:8: “*Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive.*” This clearly indicates that in His ascension Christ led captive the saved sinners who had been taken captive by Satan before they were saved through Christ’s death and resurrection. In His ascension Christ **led them captive**; that is, He **rescued** them from Satan’s captivity and took them to Himself. Therefore, His ascension implies that His enemies have been defeated. Before Christ ascended, He **vanquished** every foe. In His ascension He **led a train of vanquished foes**, as captives from a war, to the heavens in His triumphal procession for a celebration of His victory. (Truth Lessons, Level 4, Vol. 1, Chapter 10, Section 2)

V. The victorious Christ will come as the fighting General with His army to fight Antichrist, the kings under him, and their armies at Armageddon— Rev. 19:11-21:

- A. Christ is “*called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war*”—v. 11:
1. Christ is faithful and true both to God and to those who believe in Him— v. 11a.
 2. In His **faithfulness** He **defeats** and **destroys** those who oppose God and persecute the believers.
 3. He is also **true** in **carrying out** God’s economy and in caring for those who believe in Him.
 4. He is **righteous**, and in righteousness He will **defeat** Antichrist and **judge** the rebels who follow him—v. 11b.
- B. The fighting General, the Warrior, is **the Word**, and **His fighting will be the speaking of the word of God**; as the Lord fights, He speaks for God and expresses God—v. 13; 2 Thes. 2:8.

Revelation 19:13 says, “*His name is called The Word of God.*” The **Word of God** is the **definition**, the **explanation**, and the **expression** of God. As the Word of God, Christ speaks for God not only by **imparting life** as grace to God’s chosen people in the Gospel of John (John 1:1, 4, 14), but also by **executing God’s judgment** upon the rebellious people in the Revelation of John. Even as the Lord fights, He speaks for God and expresses God. The fighting of Christ is the speaking of the word of God. God is righteous and sovereign. He is also a God of order and He cannot tolerate disorder and rebellion. As Christ fights against the enemy, He will speak that God is sovereign, righteous, and orderly. He will declare that God is the God over everyone and that He does not tolerate rebellion against His authority. Hence, **the Warrior is the Word. His fighting is the speaking of God’s Word.** (Life-Study of Revelation, Chapter 55, Section 3)

The **heavenly armies** following Christ are His **called, chosen, and faithful ones** and **His bride** called to His **marriage dinner**. To be **called** is to be saved, but to be **chosen** is to be approved by the Lord on the basis of an overcoming life. Many are called today, but few will be chosen in the future. We all have been called, but in order to be among the chosen in the future, **we need to live an overcoming life today**. Only those who are chosen will be His **armies** to fight against Antichrist. The armies **consist** of those who are both the bride and the guests called, invited to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. Hence, the guests and the bride are the same. The **bride** consists of the called guests, and the called guests make up the bride. After the wedding all the guests will become the army. The Lord’s armies will be dressed in fine linen. This fine linen qualifies them both to attend the wedding dinner and to fight with Christ against His enemies. Christ’s **enemies** are the beast, Antichrist (undoubtedly including his associate, the false prophet), and the kings of the earth and their armies. **God Himself in Christ as His embodiment will come with all His chosen and faithful ones to fight against Antichrist, the false prophet, and their armies, and He will defeat them at Armageddon.** The beast and the false prophet will be seized, and they will be **cast alive into the lake of fire**, which burns with brimstone. (Truth Lessons, Level 4, Vol. 4, Chapter 7, Section 2)