

The Principle of the Man-child

by Watchman Nee

Revelation is a book which reveals the things of the end time. There are a total of twenty-two chapters in this book, but by the end of chapter 11 we can say that everything is finished. Revelation 10:7 says, "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he is about to trumpet, then the mystery of God is finished." In chapter 11, when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, everything concerning God's mystery and everything related to God is fully accomplished. Verse 15 says, "The seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever." This means that when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, eternity has already begun. The millennium, the new heaven and new earth, and everything regarding eternity are intimated in this verse. Why then are there still eleven additional chapters after the first eleven chapters? Our reply is that the following eleven chapters serve as a supplement to the first eleven chapters. Beginning with chapter 12 we are told *how* the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and *how* God will make His Son King forever and ever.

When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, according to Revelation 11:19, something happens. "The temple of God which is in heaven was opened, and the Ark of His Covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightnings and voices and thunders and an earthquake and great hail." The book of Revelation contains many visions, but two central visions serve as the basis for all the others. The first is the vision of the throne (Rev. 4:2). All the visions from chapter 4 to chapter 11, when the seventh angel sounds the trumpet, are based upon the throne. The second is the vision of the temple (11:19). From chapter 12 to the end of the book, all the visions are based upon the temple of God.

In chapter 4, John saw a vision of the throne of God with

a rainbow around it. This signifies that from this chapter forward, everything is based upon the authority of the throne and the remembrance of the covenant which God made with every living creature on the earth. The rainbow is the sign of God's covenant which He made with all living things. At the present time we cannot see a complete rainbow. At most we see only half of it. But there is a rainbow that fully surrounds the throne. It is complete; there is no break in it. God is faithful; He will remember and keep His covenant. God will remember His covenant with every living creature on the earth. In everything that God desires to do toward man, He must abide by the covenant He has made.

At the end of chapter 11, John saw another vision—a vision of the temple of God. Within the temple the Ark of the Covenant could be seen. God originally told the Israelites to build the Ark according to the pattern which was given on the mount and to put the Ark into the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. Later, when Solomon built the temple, the Ark was put into it. When Israel was taken captive to Babylon, the Ark was lost. But even though the Ark on earth was lost, the Ark in heaven still remained. The Ark on earth was made according to the Ark in heaven. The shadow on earth disappeared, but the substance, the reality, in heaven still remains. At the end of Revelation 11, God once again shows us the Ark.

What is the Ark? The Ark is the expression of God Himself. It signifies that God must be faithful to Himself. The throne is the place where God exercises authority, and the temple is the place where God dwells. The throne is something outward toward the world and mankind, but the temple is something for God Himself. The rainbow around the throne signifies that God will not do anything harmful to man, while the Ark in the temple signifies that God will not do anything that comes short of Himself. What God has purposed, He must accomplish. What God

desires to do, He is able to successfully perform. The Ark was not only for man but also for God Himself. God cannot deny Himself; He cannot contradict Himself. God purposed in eternity to have a glorified people, and He determined that the kingdom of this world would become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. When we see the situation of the church today, we cannot help but ask, "How can God accomplish His purpose?" Yet we know that God will never stop halfway. He has the Ark, and He Himself has made the covenant. The righteous God cannot be unrighteous with man. Furthermore, the righteous God can never be unrighteous to Himself. Man never does anything to contradict himself, for each man has his own character. Neither can God deny Himself in His work because of His own character. When God unveiled the Ark to us, He meant that what He desires to do He must accomplish.

Here we must see one point. What is the basis upon which God and His Christ will reign forever and ever? What is the basis upon which God will cause the kingdom of this world to become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ? His character is the basis. God will accomplish all of these things because of His own character. Nothing can hinder Him. We must learn that whatever is of God can never be frustrated. The Ark still remains, representing God Himself and His covenant. God will accomplish this matter by means of Himself. We thank God that from chapter 12 to the end of the book we are shown how God will accomplish all that He purposed in eternity through His own faithfulness.

The Woman in the Vision

Revelation 12:1 says, "A great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon underneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." Who is the woman described here? She is a woman over whom many Bible students have had much dispute. Some have said that she signifies Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. Others have said that she stands for the nation of Israel. However, according to the Scriptures this woman can neither be Mary, the mother of the Lord, nor the nation of Israel. Here are the reasons:

- (1) Since this vision is revealed in heaven, this woman is entirely of heaven. Neither Mary nor the nation of Israel have this position.
- (2) After this woman bore the man-child, she fled into the

wilderness. If we liken this woman to the nation of Israel, the man-child she brought forth to Christ, and the man-child being caught up to the ascension of Christ, this does not correspond with the actual facts. Although the nation of Israel was scattered, her going into the wilderness was not the result of Christ's ascension. At the time Christ ascended, Israel had already been dispersed for some time and was no longer a nation. But here we see that the woman fled into the wilderness after the man-child was caught up unto God. Long before Christ ascended, the nation of Israel was gone. Therefore, it is impossible for this woman to be a reference to the nation of Israel. There is even less of a basis to refer to her as Mary.

- (3) While this woman was in travail to bring forth the man-child, she encountered a dragon. This dragon had seven heads and ten horns. Chapter 17 tells us that these seven heads are seven kings: five have fallen, one is still existing, and the other has not yet come. The ten horns are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, who will arise afterwards. We know that no such historical events occurred before Christ ascended. Therefore, this woman and the man-child must refer to things in the future. If we say that this woman refers either to the nation of Israel or to Mary and that the man-child refers to the Lord Jesus, we are contradicting history.

- (4) After the man-child was caught up unto God, there was war in heaven, and Satan was cast down to the earth.

Then there was a proclamation in heaven: "Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night" (12:10). We know that this has not yet been accomplished. Ephesians 6 tells us that the church on earth must still battle with the rulers, authorities, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies. Satan is still there. Since this portion of Scripture has not yet occurred, it is impossible for it to be a reference to the time of Jesus.

- (5) When the dragon was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man-child. Many people use this as a confirmation that the woman is Mary. After Mary gave birth to the Lord Jesus, she did flee to Egypt; however, she did not do this at the Lord's ascension. Verses 14 through 16 say,

To the woman there were given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast

God will cause the kingdom of this world to become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ because of His own character. Whatever is of God can never be frustrated.

water as a river out of his mouth after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by its current. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

Whether it is said that this woman is a reference to Mary or to the nation of Israel, we know from history that no such thing happened when Christ ascended to heaven. Therefore, this woman cannot be a reference to Mary or to the nation of Israel.

(6) There is one more proof. Verse 17 says, “The dragon became angry with the woman and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.” After the man-child, who was born of the woman, was caught up to the throne, a remnant of her seed still remained upon the earth. This could not be Mary. Furthermore, this remnant keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus. It is all right to say that the nation of Israel kept the commandments of God, but to say that the nation of Israel held the testimony of Jesus would mix the Old Testament with the New Testament. In conclusion, it is impossible for this woman to be Mary or the nation of Israel.

Who then is this woman? The Old Testament shows that only one woman encountered the serpent—Eve in Genesis 3. In the New Testament there is also only one woman who encounters the serpent. Here we see the correspondence and correlation of the Scriptures, the beginning with the end. Furthermore, God particularly points out that the great dragon is the old serpent. This means that He is referring to the serpent who had been mentioned once before. God makes the point clear that it was that one and only old serpent. The emphasis is on the word *the*—*the* old serpent. Therefore, the woman mentioned here must also be that woman.

The sun, moon, and stars mentioned in Genesis 1 are mentioned in Revelation 12 in the same principle. As the serpent was in Genesis 3, so the serpent is here also. The seed of the woman mentioned in Genesis 3 is also mentioned here. Furthermore, the travail of birth is in Genesis 3, and it is also here. If we put these two portions of Scripture together, we can surely see that the woman in Revelation 12 is the woman whom God purposed in His eternal will. Everything that will happen to her at the end time is clearly stated here. The woman in Genesis 2 speaks of God’s eternal purpose; the woman in Ephesians 5 speaks of the position and future of the church; and the woman in Revelation 12 reveals the things at the end time. In addition to these three women, there is another woman who shows forth the things in eternity.

When the woman appeared in the vision, the Scriptures

pointed out firstly that she was “clothed with the sun, and the moon underneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (v. 1). These facts are very meaningful in reference to the ages.

(1) The woman was clothed with the sun. The sun refers to the Lord Jesus. Her being clothed with the sun means that when the sun shines the brightest, it is shining upon her. In this present age, God is revealing Himself through her. This shows her relationship with Christ and the age of grace.

(2) The woman had the moon underneath her feet. This phrase *underneath her feet* does not mean that she is treading upon it. According to the Greek, it means that the moon is subject at her feet. The light of the moon is a reflecting light; it has no light of its own. All the things in the age of the law merely reflected the things in the age of grace. The law was but a type. The temple and the Ark were types. The incense, the showbread in the Holy Place, and the sacrifices offered by the priests were all types, as well as the blood of the sheep and oxen. The moon underneath the feet of the woman means that all things pertaining to the law are subordinate to her. This speaks of her relationship to the age of the law.

(3) The woman had a crown of twelve stars upon her head. The chief figures in the age of the patriarchs were from the time of Abraham to the twelve tribes. The crown of twelve stars upon her head speaks of her relationship to the age of the patriarchs.

In this way, we see that the woman is not only related to the age of grace, but also to the age of the law and the age of the patriarchs. However, she is more closely related to the age of grace. She includes all the saints in the age of grace, as well as all the saints from the ages of the law and the patriarchs.

The Birth of the Man-child

Revelation 12:2 says, “She was with child, and she cried out, travailing in birth and being in pain to bring forth.” Being with child is figurative and not real. What does it mean to be with child? It means that a child is in the mother’s womb, and the child and the mother are united in one body. When the mother eats, the child is nourished. When the mother is ill, the child is also affected. The condition of the mother is the condition of the child. The mother and the child are one.

However, this child is also different from the mother; he is another being. If you say that they are one, they are really one, for the child receives life from the mother. However, as far as his future is concerned, he is different. His future is entirely distinct from that of his mother.

Immediately after he is delivered, he is caught up to the throne of God, while his mother flees into the wilderness.

In addition, while the woman is with child, all that can be seen is the mother; the child is hidden. Outwardly, it appears as if there is only the mother. The child assuredly exists, but he is hidden within the mother; he is included in the mother.

Verse 3 says, “Another sign was seen in heaven; and behold, there was a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.” That serpent after several thousand years is completely different. Originally it was a serpent, but now it has been enlarged to become a dragon. What is the form of this dragon? It has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns upon its heads. It has the same appearance as the beast which rises up out of the sea. Revelation 13:1 says, “I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems.” The beast which rises out of the sea also has seven heads and ten horns with crowns. This reveals Satan’s goal—he wants to gain the crowns, which signify authority. The difference between the dragon and the beast is that the crowns of the dragon are upon its heads, while those of the beast are upon its horns. The heads signify the authority to decide, and the horns signify the authority to execute. The heads control and the horns execute. In other words, the horns are subject to the commands of the heads. Whenever the heads move, the horns follow. This means that all the behavior of the beast is under the control of the dragon.

Revelation 12:4 begins, “His tail drags away the third part of the stars of heaven, and he cast them to the earth.” Isaiah 9:15 shows that the tail denotes lying and deception. In Revelation 2 and 3, stars refer to angels. Since the stars of heaven are mentioned here, they are the angels. One third of the angels in heaven were deceived by the dragon, and they fell and were cast down with the dragon.

Verse 4 continues, “And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, so that when she brings forth he might devour her child.” Here is a woman whom God has purposed in His will and a man-child whom He desires to obtain. But the dragon is hindering what God is after in the woman. The dragon knows that this woman is about to bear a man-child; therefore, it stands before the woman and waits to devour her child as soon as she delivers.

Verse 5 says, “She brought forth a son, a man-child.” In order to see the relationship between the woman and the man-child, let us look at Galatians 4:26: “The Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother.” The last part of Galatians 4:27 says, “Because many are the children of her who is desolate rather than of her who has her husband.” The Jerusalem that is above is the New Jerusalem, and the New Jerusalem is the woman, the goal which God desires to obtain in eternity. The woman in creation is Eve, the woman in the age of grace is the Body of Christ, the woman at the end of the age of grace is described in Revelation 12, and the woman in eternity future will be the New Jerusalem. When the Word says that the Jerusalem which is above has many children, it does not mean that the mother and the children are separate. It means that one has become many, and many are composed into one. The many children added together equal the mother. It is not as if the mother delivers five children, and then there are six individuals, but that the five children added together compose the mother. Each child is a portion of the mother—one portion of the mother is taken out for this child, another portion is taken out for another child, and so for

each one. It seems as if they are all born of her, but in fact they are herself. The mother is not another being in addition to the children; she is the summation of all the children. When we look at the whole, we see the mother; when we look at them one by one, we see the children. When we look at the totality of the people in God’s purpose, we see the

woman; if we look at them separately, we see many sons. This is a special principle.

The same meaning is applied in Revelation 12 when it speaks about the woman delivering a son, a man-child (v. 2). The man-child delivered by this woman is a wonder and a sign. The words *bring forth* do not mean that the child had his origin with her and was then separated from her, but merely that within her there is such a being. *She brought forth a son, a man-child* simply means that a group of people is included in this woman (v. 5).

All of God’s people have a part in His eternal purpose, but not all assume their rightful responsibility. Therefore, God chooses a group of people from among them. This group is a portion of the whole, a part of the many chosen by God. This is the man-child brought forth by the woman. As a whole it is the mother; as a minority it is the man-child. The man-child is the “brothers” in verse 10 and “they” in verse 11. This means that the man-child is not a single individual but a composition of many persons. All of these persons added together become the

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man-child. In comparison with the mother, the man-child appears to be small. When the group is compared with the whole, their number is in the minority. But God's plan is fulfilled in them and His purpose rests upon them.

Verse 5 says, "She brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod." This speaks of the millennial kingdom. The overcomers are the instrument that enables God to achieve His purpose. Revelation mentions shepherding "the nations with an iron rod" three times. First, 2:26-27 says, "He who overcomes and he who keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he will shepherd them with an iron rod." This passage quite obviously refers to the overcomers in the church. The last mention of this phrase is 19:15, which says, "Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations; and He will shepherd them with an iron rod." This passage refers to the Lord Jesus. To whom then does the passage in chapter 12 refer? It must refer either to the overcomers in the church or to the Lord Jesus. Is it possible that it refers to the Lord Jesus? No. (However, it is not wholly impossible, for later we will see that the Lord Jesus is included here.) Why is it not possible? First, the man-child was caught up to the throne of God immediately after he was born. Therefore, this could not be a reference to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was not caught up immediately after He was born. He lived thirty-three and a half years on this earth, died, resurrected, and then ascended to the heavens. For this reason we believe that the man-child refers to the overcomers in the church. It is the portion of the people in the church who are the overcomers. The man-child refers to them, not to the Lord Jesus. (However, the man-child does include the Lord Jesus, since the Lord Jesus was the first overcomer and all overcomers are included in the Lord Jesus.) The man-child and the mother are different, and yet they are also one. The overcomers differ from the church, but they are included in the church.

The Rapture of the Man-child

Revelation 12:5 continues, "Her child was caught up to God and to His throne." *Caught up* in this verse differs in meaning from *caught up* as it is used in 1 Thessalonians 4. There it says that some will be caught up in the clouds, while here it says that the man-child was caught up to the throne of God. The man-child was caught up to the throne because someone is already on the throne. The Head of the church is on the throne. God's purpose is not just to have one man upon the throne but many men upon the throne. His original desire was to have a group of men on the throne to exercise His authority. God desires that Christ and the church together bring His purpose to fulfillment. However, the majority of the people in the church at that time will still not be able to attain

the throne. Only a minority, called the overcomers, can go to the throne of God. They will be caught up to His throne because they will achieve God's purpose.

Two things occur immediately after the man-child is caught up: "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place there prepared by God so that they might nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels went to war with the dragon. And the dragon warred and his angels" (Rev. 12:6-7). Notice the word *and*, which is used twice immediately after the man-child was caught up in verse 5. Verse 6 says, "And the woman fled into the wilderness..." Then verse 7 says, "And there was war in heaven..." The fleeing of the woman into the wilderness and the warfare in heaven are both due to the man-child being caught up.

Let us look into the matter of warfare in heaven. First there is Michael, whose name is quite meaningful. *Michael* means "Who is like God?" This is an excellent question. Satan's intention is to be like God, but Michael asks, "Who is like God?" Not only does Satan desire to be like God, but he also tempted man to be like God. However, Michael's question "Who is like God?" shakes the power of Satan. It seems as if Michael is telling Satan, "You want to be like God, but you will never make it!" This is what Michael's name reveals to us.

Immediately after the man-child is caught up, there is war in heaven. In other words, the cause of the war in heaven is the rapture of the man-child. From this we see that the rapture of the man-child is not just a matter of some individuals being caught up, but more than that, it is to bring to an end the warfare which has been going on for ages and generations. The old serpent, the enemy of God, has been fighting against God for several thousand years. When this warfare takes place in heaven, Michael and his angels fight against the dragon, who is the old serpent. Formerly he was a serpent, but now he has changed in form to a dragon. He has steadily increased his power. However, once the man-child is caught up, not only is the dragon unable to be enlarged any further, but he is cast down from heaven. The rapture of the man-child is a transaction which causes Satan to have no more position in heaven.

What is the result of the fight between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels? Verses 8 and 9 say,

They [the dragon and his angels] did not prevail, neither was their place found any longer in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole inhabited earth; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

The dragon's defeat is the outcome of this battle. There was no place for him in heaven; he and his angels were all cast down to the earth.

The death of the Lord Jesus has already dealt with the position which Satan gained by man's fall. In other words, redemption has destroyed the legal position of Satan. The work of the church is to execute in the kingdom of God what the Lord Jesus accomplished in redemption and, consequently, to completely bring to an end the legal position of Satan gained by man's fall. Redemption is Christ's solution for the fall; the kingdom is the church's solution for the fall. The work of judgment was Christ's, while the task of executing this judgment rests upon the church. The overthrow of Satan is our work. God is trying to end this age. He needs overcomers. If there is no man-child, there will be no way to overthrow Satan's work. Satan has already been judged by redemption; now the punishment must be executed by the kingdom.

After the dragon and his angels were cast down from heaven, verse 10 says, "I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ." This is the kingdom. When Satan is cast down, when his angels are cast down with him, and when there is no place in heaven for them, this is the salvation, power, and kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ.

Let us read two verses in Revelation together. "The seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever" (11:15). This is the subject. "I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ" (12:10). This is the successful fulfillment of the subject. The key to success is the rapture of the man-child. Because the man-child is caught up, there will be warfare in heaven and Satan will be cast down. The result of Satan being cast down is the coming of the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. The rapture of the overcomers causes Satan to be cast down and introduces the kingdom. The work of the overcomers is to bring in God's kingdom. The Lord's work has been accomplished, and He is on the throne. Now the overcomers bring this into realization.

There is corresponding passage in Luke 10:17 which says, "The seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the

demons are subject to us in Your name." The disciples had been casting out demons. Then the Lord said, "I was watching Satan fall like lightning out of heaven" (v. 18). This is a reference to Satan being cast down from heaven. But when does this event occur? It occurs in Revelation 12. What causes Satan to be cast down? According to Luke 10:18, which is based upon verse 17, Satan is cast down from heaven because the church casts out demons. Verse 17 also shows that casting out demons is not a once for all matter; rather, the church should continue to cast out demons on the earth so that Satan will be cast down from heaven. When the Lord Jesus died, all the power of Satan was destroyed. But what can actually cause Satan to lose his power in heaven? All of his power can be brought to an end by God's children on earth repeatedly dealing with him, instance after instance. When the demons have been subdued many times in the name of the Lord Jesus, Satan will be cast down.

Suppose that we have a balance that is used for weighing. On one side of the balance there is Satan. Since we do not know how much Satan weighs, we must keep adding weight on the other side of the scale. Each time we deal with Satan, we add more weight to the other side. When the weight is increased to a certain point, Satan will be moved. In the beginning, as we continue to add weight to the other side, it is seemingly of no use. But each addition of weight is valuable. Finally, when the last amount of weight

The work of judgment was Christ's; the task of executing this judgment rests upon the church. If there is no man-child, there will be no way to overthrow Satan's work.

is added, the balance will start to move. We do not know who will add the last amount of weight, but all the weight, that which is added in the beginning and that which is added at the end, produces the effect. The work of the church is to resist the work of Satan so that together we can cast out the demons. This is why Satan will do anything in his power to hinder us from being overcomers.

Casting out demons does not necessarily mean that when we encounter a demon we should confront him. Casting out demons means that we cast out all the work and power of the demon. We lay hold of the authority of the Lord and stand fast in our position. One brother adds a little weight, and another brother adds a little more weight. Then one day Satan will be cast down from heaven. God does not work directly by His own hand to cause Satan to fall from heaven. It would be very easy for Him to do this work, but He does not. He has entrusted this work to the church. Oh, how pitifully the church has failed in this matter and been unable to do it! This is why there must be the overcomers standing in the position of the church to do God's work. When the overcomers stand in the

church's position and do the work which the church should have done, the result will be: "Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ." The man-child in Revelation 12 consists of the overcomers who stand on behalf of the church. Therefore, as soon as the man-child is caught up, Satan is cast down from heaven and the kingdom comes.

The Principle of the Man-child

The Scriptures say that this man-child will "shepherd all the nations with an iron rod." This is God's purpose. The work of the church is to cause Satan to lose his power and bring in God's kingdom. The church which God desires must have the characteristic of Abigail—that of cooperation with Christ. Since the church, however, has not attained to God's purpose, nor does she even know God's purpose, what can God do? He will choose a group of overcomers who will attain His purpose and fulfill His demand. This is the principle of the man-child.

There are many examples of this principle in the Bible. What was God's purpose in choosing the people of Israel in the Old Testament time? Exodus 19 tells us that He chose them to be a kingdom of priests. What does a kingdom of priests mean? It means that the whole nation was to serve God and be His priests. However, not all of the people of Israel became priests, because they worshipped the golden calf. Instead of serving God, they worshipped an idol. Therefore, Moses charged the people of Israel, saying, "Whoever is for Jehovah, come to me" (32:26). Then all of the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto Moses. Then Moses said to them, "Thus says Jehovah the God of Israel, Let each man put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each man kill his brother, and each man his companion, and each man his neighbor" (v. 27). The worshiping of idols is the greatest sin, so God required these men to slay their own brothers with the sword. "The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses" (v. 28). They were willing to serve God above all their human affection, so God chose them to be the priests. From that time forward, only those of the tribe of Levi were priests among all the people of Israel. The whole body of the Israelites henceforth approached God through the Levites. Originally, all of the Israelites were chosen to serve God, but they failed Him; therefore, God chose from among the whole body of failures a group of people who would stand in their place. This group of people is the overcomers.

We must remember that the Levites did not serve God for themselves, nor were they overcomers by their own selection. Much less did they claim superiority over the others. If this had happened, they would have been finished. The Levites were chosen by God to be the priests as representing the whole body of the people of Israel. What the

children of Israel should have offered unto God, the children of Levi offered for them. The service of the Levites before God was counted as the service of the whole nation of Israel. Only the children of Levi were priests, but the whole nation of Israel benefited from their priesthood. In the same manner, the work of the overcomers is for the whole church. The work belongs to the overcomers, but the church receives the blessing of the work. This is the glory of the overcomers. The business is theirs, but their accomplishments bring glory to the whole church; the work is theirs, but the whole church derives the blessing.

During the time of the judges, the people of Israel were oppressed by the Midianites and were in great desperation. Out of one of their tribes, God raised up Gideon to lead a contingent of men and chase away the enemy. The whole nation was set free because of this group. The responsibility rested on the whole nation, but some were afraid and some were slothful; therefore, a group of them went forth to the battle and brought benefit to the whole nation.

The same principle is seen when the people of Israel returned from captivity. God originally promised that after the seventy years of captivity, the people of Israel would return and be restored to the land. However, not all returned; only a minority led by Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, and Joshua came back to build the temple and the city of Jerusalem. But what they did counted for the whole nation of Israel. It was reckoned as the recovery and returning of the whole nation.

The principle of the overcomers is not that an individual who is especially spiritual will have a crown and glory waiting for him. This is not to say that individuals will not be rewarded with crowns and glory in that day. These they may obtain, but they are not for these; this is not their main purpose. The reason for the overcomers to be the overcomers is not to receive glory or crowns for themselves but simply to take the position which the whole church should take and do the work for the church. Before God, the church should be in that condition which He desires; she should be responsible to Him, fulfilling the work committed to her and standing in her proper position. The church, however, has failed and is still failing today. She has not become what she was originally purposed to be; she has not done her work, taken up her responsibility, nor stood in her proper position. She has not gained the ground for God. There is only a group of people left to do that work for the church and to take up the church's responsibility. This group is the overcomers. What they do is counted as the work of the whole church. If there are those who will be the overcomers, God's purpose is attained and He is satisfied. This is the principle of the man-child.

The reason we are considering this matter of the man-child is because in God's eternal purpose He needs a

group of overcomers. According to history, we have to admit that the church has failed. Therefore, God is calling the overcomers to stand for the church. The man-child spoken of in this passage of Revelation refers particularly to the overcomers at the end time. Once the man-child is brought forth, he will be caught up to the throne of God. Then things will immediately happen in heaven, and Satan will be cast down. God's difficulty is removed by the rapture of the man-child; His problem is solved. It seems that once the man-child is born, God's purpose can no longer be hindered. This is what God is calling for today; this is what interests Him today. God needs a group of people to attain His original goal.

The Basis and Attitude of the Overcomers

In Revelation 3:21 the Lord Jesus said, "He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne." The reason that the man-child can be upon the throne is because he has overcome. Now we will see how they overcome and what is their attitude. Revelation 12:11 says, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death." "They overcame him." *Him* refers to Satan. They overcame Satan by rendering him unable to do any of his work upon them. They overcame him (1) because of the blood of the Lamb, (2) because of the word of their testimony, and (3) because they had an attitude of not loving their soul-life even unto death.

The Blood of the Lamb

First, "they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." Victory in spiritual warfare is based upon the blood of the Lamb. The blood is not only for forgiveness and salvation; it is also the basis by which we overcome Satan. Some people may think that the blood is not of much value to those who have grown in the Lord. They suppose that some may grow to the extent that they go beyond the need of the blood. We must emphatically say that there is no such thing! No person can grow to the extent that he surpasses the need for the blood. God's Word says, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb."

The major activity of Satan against Christians is to accuse them. Is Satan a murderer? Yes. Is he a liar and a tempter? Yes. Is he one who attacks us? Yes. But this is not all. His chief work is to accuse. Revelation 12:10 says, "The accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them

before our God day and night." We see here that Satan accuses the brothers day and night. Not only is he the accuser before God, but he is also the accuser in our conscience, and his accusations can cause us to become weak and completely powerless. He likes to accuse people to such an extent that they consider themselves useless and thus lose all their ground for fighting with him. We are not saying that there is no need for us to deal with sin. We must have a keen sense toward sin, but we should not accept the accusations of Satan.

Once a child of God accepts Satan's accusations, he will feel that he is wrong all day long. When he rises early in the morning, he will feel that he is wrong. When he kneels down to pray, he will feel that he is wrong and does not even believe that God will answer his prayer. When he wants to speak a word in the meeting, he will feel that it is no use, because he is not right. When he wants to give an offering to the Lord, he wonders why he should offer anything, because God would surely not accept an offering from such a person as he. The main concern of Christians like this is not how glorious and victorious the Lord Jesus is, but how evil and worthless they are. From morning to evening they are consumed with the thought of their own worthlessness. Whether they are working, resting, walking, reading the Scriptures, or praying, a single moment does not pass without their consideration of how worthless they are. This is the accusation of

Once the man-child is born, God's purpose can no longer be hindered. This is what God is calling for today. God needs a group of people to attain His original goal.

Satan. If Satan can keep them in such a condition, he has won the victory. People in this state are powerless before Satan. If we accept these accusations, we can never be an overcomer. Often when we are engrossed with the thought of our own evil, it is easy for us to mistakenly consider this as Christian humility, not realizing that we are suffering the harmful effect of Satan's accusations. When we sin, we must confess and deal with it. But we must learn another lesson; we must learn to not look upon ourselves but only gaze upon the Lord Jesus. Being conscious of our self every day from morning until evening is a sickly condition. It is the result of accepting the accusations of Satan.

In the consciences of some of the Lord's children there is little feeling toward sin. People like this are not of much spiritual use. However, there are many of God's children whose consciences are so weak that they have no real awareness of the work of the Lord Jesus. If we ask them if they have the sense of a particular sin, they cannot point to any. Yet they always have the feeling that they are wrong. They always feel that they are weak and worthless. Whenever they think of themselves, they lose all of their

peace and joy. They have accepted the accusations of Satan. Whenever Satan gives us this kind of feeling, we are weakened and can no longer resist him.

We must not, therefore, lightly esteem the accusations of Satan. His chief work is to accuse us, and he does it day and night without ceasing. He accuses us in our conscience as well as before God until our conscience becomes so weak that it cannot be strengthened.

In the daily life and work of a Christian, the conscience is of great importance. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 8 that if one's conscience is defiled, he is destroyed. Being destroyed does not mean eternal perishing but that a person can no longer be built up. He has been so weakened that he has become worthless. First Timothy 1 says that a man who thrusts away his conscience is shipwrecked regarding the faith. A ship which is wrecked cannot sail. Therefore, whether a Christian can stand before God depends upon whether he has any offense in his conscience. Once he accepts the accusations of Satan, his conscience is offended, and once his conscience is offended, he cannot proceed in his service nor fight for God any more. We must realize, therefore, that Satan's main work is to accuse us, and this is the work we must overcome.

How can we overcome the accusations of Satan? The voice from heaven tells us, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." The blood is the basis of victory, and it is the instrument to overcome Satan. He may accuse us, but we can answer that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from every sin (1 John 1:7). "Every sin" means any sin, whether it is great or small. The blood of God's Son cleanses us from all of them. Satan may tell us that we are wrong, but we have the blood of the Lord Jesus. The blood of the Lord Jesus can cleanse us of our many sins. This is the Word of God. The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from every sin.

We must not only reject the accusations which are without cause, but we must also reject all the accusations which have cause. When God's children have done something wrong, we need only the blood of Jesus, His Son, not the accusations of Satan. The precious blood is needed for sin, not accusation. God's Word never speaks of the need for accusation after we have sinned. The only problem is whether or not we have confessed our sin. If we have confessed, then what more can be said? If we have sinned and do not confess, then we deserve to be accused. But where there is no sin, there is no cause for accusation. If we have sinned and have confessed, we should not be accused.

If you have sinned, you can bow and confess to God. Immediately the blood of the Lord Jesus will cleanse you. Do not think that you will be a little more holy if you consider how sinful you are, or that you will be more holy if

you have more feeling toward your sin. No. You only must ask yourself one thing: How do I treat the blood of the Lord Jesus? We have sinned, but His blood cleanses us from every sin. *Every sin* means great sin or small sin, recollected sin or forgotten sin, visible sin or invisible sin, sin which we think can be forgiven and sin which we do not think can be forgiven—every kind is included in *every*. The blood of Jesus, God's Son, does not wash us of one or two sins, or even many sins, but it cleanses us from *every* sin.

We admit that we have sin. We do not say that we are without sin. But regardless of this, we do not accept the accusations of Satan. Before God we are clean because we have the precious blood. We should not believe in the accusations more than we believe in the precious blood. When we commit sin, we do not glorify God, but when we do not trust the precious blood, we dishonor Him even more. It is a shameful thing to sin, but not to believe in the precious blood is even more shameful. We must learn to trust in the blood of the Lamb.

Romans 5:9 says, "Having now been justified in His blood." When many people come into the Lord's presence, they have no peace in their heart. They also have a feeling of worthlessness and of being wrong within. This is because they have a false hope. They expect that they will have something positive in themselves to offer to God. When they discover that they do not have anything positive to offer in themselves, the accusations come. An accusation is like this: "A person like you will never have anything good to offer to God." But we must remember that we originally possessed no positive goodness before God. There was nothing good in ourselves that we could offer to God. We could only present one thing to Him—the blood. We could only be justified by the blood. We do not have any positive righteousness in ourselves. We become righteous only because of the righteousness which we receive through redemption. Every time we come to the throne of grace, we can look to Him for grace. It is a throne of grace, not a throne of righteousness. Every time we come before God, our only qualification is that we have been redeemed, not that we have advanced in our Christian life. No Christian can ever reach the stage where he can say, "I have been doing pretty well recently; now I have the boldness to pray." No. Every time we come before God, our only ground, our only position, is based upon the blood. We must realize that no amount of spiritual growth can substitute for the effectiveness of the blood. Not one spiritual experience can ever replace the work of the blood. Even if someone should become as spiritual as the apostle Paul, the apostle John, or the apostle Peter, he would still need the blood to stand before God.

Sometimes when we have sinned, Satan comes to accuse us, and sometimes when we have not sinned, Satan still comes to accuse us. Sometimes it is not a problem of

whether we have sinned but a problem of not having a positive righteousness to offer to God; so Satan accuses us. However, we must be clear: We can come into God's presence only because of the blood, not because of anything else. Since we have been cleansed by the blood and justified by the blood, we are under no obligation whatsoever to accept the accusations of Satan.

The precious blood is the basis for spiritual warfare. If we do not know the value of the blood, we cannot fight. Once our conscience is weakened, we are finished. Therefore, if we do not maintain a blameless and clean conscience, we will have no way to deal with Satan. Satan can use thousands of reasons in his accusations against us. If we accept them, we will fall. But when Satan speaks to us, we can reply to all his reasons with the one answer of the blood. There is not a single reason which cannot be answered by the blood. Spiritual warfare requires a conscience without offense, and the blood alone can give us such a conscience.

Hebrews 10:2 says, "Those worshipping, having once been purified, would have no longer had the consciousness of sins." When a Christian's conscience no longer has the sense of sin, it is because of the blood. Once we stand on the ground of the blood, once we believe in the blood, Satan can no longer work upon us. We often like to reason that we can no longer fight because we have sinned. But the Lord knows that we are sinful, so He has prepared the blood. The Lord has a way for sinful man, because the Lord has the blood. But He has no way for one who willingly receives Satan's accusations. Anyone who accepts the accusations of Satan denies the power of the blood. No one who believes in the precious blood can receive Satan's accusations at the same time. Either one or the other must go. If we accept the accusations, the blood has to go; if we accept the blood, the accusations have to go.

The Lord Jesus is the High Priest and Mediator for us (see Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:20-28; 8:6; 9:15; 1 John 2:1). He is always serving in this position—the High Priest and the Mediator. The purpose of His serving is to keep us from Satan's accusations. It takes only a moment of time for man to receive Him as Savior, but it is a lifelong matter to face the accusations of Satan. The word *mediator* in Greek means "an appointed defender." The Lord is our Mediator, our Defender. The Lord speaks for us. But do we stand on the side of the Mediator or on the side of the accuser? It would be ridiculous if we believed the words of the accuser while our Mediator is in the very act of defending us. If an attorney continually proved that a defendant was not

guilty and the defendant persisted in believing the accuser, would that not be quite absurd? Oh, may we see that the Lord Jesus is our Mediator and that He is defending us. May we see that the blood is the basis for us to deal with Satan. We should never answer Satan's accusations with good conduct; we should answer with the blood. If we realized the value of the blood, there would be a great increase of peaceful and joyful Christians on the earth today.

"They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." How precious are these words! The brothers overcame him not because of their merit, their advancement, or their experience. They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb. Whenever accusations come from Satan, we need to deal with them by the blood. Once we accept the blood, Satan's power will be nullified. All that we are depends on the blood, and we need the blood every day. Just as we depended upon the blood and trusted in the blood on the day we were saved, we must continue to depend upon the blood and trust in the blood from that day forward. The blood is our only foundation. God desires to deliver us from many senseless accusations. He wants to break these chains.

We must never feel that we are being humble by receiving accusations day after day. We must learn to overcome these accusations. If we do not overcome accusations, we can never be the overcomers. The overcomers must know the value of the blood. Although we do not know the immense value of the blood, we can still say

to the Lord, "O Lord, apply the blood on my behalf according to Your evaluation of it." We should deal with the power of Satan according to God's valuation of the blood, not according to our valuation of the blood.

The Word of Their Testimony

The second thing is that the brothers overcame him "because of the word of their testimony." When our conscience is without offense, then our mouth can give testimony. When there is an accusation in our conscience, we can utter nothing. It seems that the more we speak, the lower our voice becomes. The meaning of testimony here is to testify to others, not to one's self. When you have the blood before God, you will have boldness before God, and you will have a testimony before man. Not only will you testify that sinners can be forgiven and man can be accepted because of Christ, but you will further testify of God's kingdom. *Testimony* means to tell others what there is in Christ, and the word of testimony is something which must be spoken forth. The overcomers must frequently proclaim the victory of Christ. Satan fears the

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most when this fact is repeated again and again. It is a fact that the kingdom of heaven will come; it is a fact that the Lord is King; it is a fact that Christ is victorious and forever victorious; it is a fact that Satan is defeated; it is a fact that the strong man has been bound and legally condemned; it is a fact that Christ has destroyed all the work of Satan on the cross. When we declare all of these facts, we have the testimony. When we proclaim that Christ is this and Christ is that, this is the testimony.

It is the word of testimony that gives Satan the greatest fear. Satan does not fear when we try to reason with him, but he does fear when we proclaim the facts. Satan does not fear when we talk theology or when we expound the Scriptures, but he does fear when we declare the spiritual facts. "Jesus is Lord" is a spiritual fact. Many people speak about Jesus as the Lord and explain how Jesus is the Lord, but Satan is not afraid in the least. However, when someone declares in faith that Jesus is Lord, Satan fears. He does not fear our preaching or theology, but the word of our testimony. It is a spiritual fact that the name of Jesus is above every other name. We must declare it in faith, not only to men but also to Satan. We often speak for Satan to hear; we purposely speak for him to hear. We call this the word of testimony. Even when we are alone in our room, we can proclaim aloud, "Jesus is Lord." We can say, "The Lord Jesus is stronger than the strong man," or "The Son of God has already bound Satan," etc. This is the word of our testimony.

Christians must rely upon prayer in everything, but sometimes the word of our testimony is more effective than prayer. In Mark 11:23 the Lord Jesus said, "Whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says happens, he will have it." The Lord Jesus did not say that what a person prays will come to pass but that what a person *says* will come to pass. The Chinese have a proverb which says, "A composition can come immediately from one's mouth." But Christians can say, "An accomplishment can come immediately from one's mouth." God created the heavens and the earth by one word of His mouth. The incident in Mark 11 shows us that we can speak to the mountain. Only if we speak in faith will something be accomplished. Many times the power of prayer is not as strong as the power of proclamation. Many times we must use the word of testimony to deal with Satan.

When we read the book of Acts, we can see many words of testimony. In chapter 3 Peter and John saw the lame man at the door of the temple, and what Peter did was to say to him, "Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I have, this I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene rise up and walk" (v. 6). This is what is called the word of testimony. It is not beseeching God to deal with the situation but dealing with it directly in the name

of the Lord. In Acts 16:18, when Paul cast out the demon, he also used the word of proclamation: "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." Immediately the demon came out.

Let us further illustrate by relating a certain event. There were two sisters who were engaged in preaching the gospel. One day they came to a certain village and stayed for a while. A woman who was possessed of a demon was there, and a member of her family invited the two sisters to go to her home to cast out the demon. After praying, they felt that they should go. When they arrived, they saw that the woman was properly dressed and that everything was in good order. They wondered if the woman was really demon-possessed. Then they preached to her, and she seemed to be quite clear. (Actually demons cannot be clear, but they pretend to be.) The two sisters felt very strange about the situation. They asked the woman, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus?" She answered, "I have believed for many years." Upon this reply, the two sisters were really confused; they did not know what to make of the situation. Then they asked her, "Do you know who Jesus is?" She said, "If you want to know who Jesus is, come and see." Then she led them from the front room to a room at the rear of the house. Pointing to an idol, she said, "This is Jesus. I have believed in him for many years." Then one of the sisters felt that she must give a testimony. Please note that what she said is the kind of testimony that we are talking about here.

The sister grasped the woman's hand and said (not to the woman but to the demon), "Do you remember that more than nineteen hundred years ago the Son of God came from heaven to become a man for thirty-three and a half years? He cast out demons like you many times. Do you remember that you desired to attack and harm Him? You and all of yours rose up to kill Him and nail Him to the cross. You were very happy at that time. You did not know that He would rise from the dead after three days and break all your power. You are but a wicked spirit under the hand of Satan. Do you remember that when the Son of God came out from Hades, God announced from heaven to all living creatures and to all spirits, 'The name of Jesus henceforth is above every name. Whenever His name is mentioned, every tongue must confess and every knee must bow.' So I command you in the name of Jesus to come out from her!" When the sister made this proclamation, the demon cast the woman to the floor and left.

The sister's question, "Do you remember?" is of utmost significance. Her repeated urging of that question was her testimony. If we preach to Satan, he also can preach, and he can do quite a bit of it. If we reason with him, he has all kinds of reasonings. But if we speak the facts, especially the spiritual facts, Satan will be helpless.

We must know the facts in the Scriptures and believe them. We must be covered by the blood so that God may protect us from all the attacks of the enemy. Then we may speak to Satan. Satan fears when we speak the word of testimony to him. In our Christian experience, we sometimes feel so weak that we cannot even pray to God. At such a time we must remember the spiritual facts, the victorious facts. We must proclaim to Satan and his demons that the Lord Jesus is victorious and that Jesus is Lord. Such a proclamation is the testimony, and the testimony is the proclamation. What do we proclaim? We proclaim that Jesus is Lord, that the Lord is victorious, that Satan has been trodden under His feet. We further proclaim that the Lord has given us authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy. This is the word of testimony. The word of testimony causes Satan to lose his ground. When we give the word of testimony, we give Satan a blow. The work of the Lord has not only given us the blood to protect us but also the word of testimony by which we can defeat Satan.

Not Loving Our Own Soul-life

We have spoken of the basis of overcoming, but what is the experience of the overcomers themselves? They face trials and encounter many difficulties, yet Revelation 12:11 says, "They loved not their soul-life even unto death." This is the attitude of the overcomers in the warfare. In this verse the word *life* has two meanings. One denotes the physical life, and the other refers to the power of the soul. (The word *life* can be translated as "soul-life.") Let us consider the power of the soul or the natural ability.

The best way for Satan to deal with us is to cause us to act in our own strength. Satan wants us to move in ourselves. He wants us to exercise our own natural ability and fleshly energy in our work for God. What is natural ability? Natural ability is the ability which we originally had and which has never been dealt with by the cross. It accompanies our character. The natural ability of one person may be his cleverness. In whatever he does, he draws upon his own cleverness. The natural ability of another may be his eloquence. He can speak well independently of any special power from the Holy Spirit. Man, however, cannot serve God with the natural ability that has never been dealt with by the cross. The failure of the church is due to man bringing in his natural ability. Oh, we must all be brought by God to the place where we are trembling and fearful lest we do anything without the Lord. We must become such persons—not merely *speaking* such

things, but actually *being* such persons. Then we will become useful in the hand of God.

We are not encouraging anyone to pretend that he is holy. This is of no use, because it does not come from Christ. We are saying that God wants to break everything that is natural in a man. Only when we are cut off from all the elements that originate from our self will Christ be manifested. We must allow God to cancel the self through the cross. One day we must let God break the backbone of our natural life. We should not try to deal with this matter, piece by piece, item by item. For us to deal only with the outward things and leave the inward, natural life untouched is not only useless, but, on the contrary, it will make us proud. We will consider ourselves to be quite satisfactory, yet our inward condition will be even more difficult to deal with.

The day must come when our strength to do good and our ability to serve God are broken. Then we will confess before God and man that we can do nothing. Henceforth, Christ will be able to manifest His power upon us. We

must all be brought by God to the place where we see that we can do nothing in the church with our natural strength. Many people think that as long as their motive is correct, it is good enough. But this is not the case. When you say that you are working, the Lord will ask, "By what are you working?" If you say that you are zealous, the Lord will

ask, "From where does your zeal come?" If you say that you have power, the Lord will ask, "What is the source of your power?" The question is not what you are doing but with what you are doing it. The problem is not whether the matter is good, but what is the source of the goodness.

We must learn to experience the cross. The purpose of the cross is to deal with us so that we will not dare to move by ourselves. It is useless merely to talk about the message of the cross or to listen to the message of the cross. God requires those who have gone through the cross and have been dealt with by the cross. It is not enough that our message is correct. We have to ask, "How about ourselves? What kind of persons are we?" The apostle Paul said, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling; and my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:2-4). The first part of these verses refers to Paul's message, and the last part refers to Paul's person. We often think that when a person like Paul gets up to speak, he must feel rich and full

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of his own resources. But Paul's message was the cross, and he himself was in weakness, fear, and much trembling. Whenever we know the cross, we will be in weakness, fear, and much trembling. If we have been dealt with by the cross, we will not have any self-confidence, and we will not dare to boast. If we are proud, considering that we are quite capable, we know nothing of the cross.

The subjective work of the cross in us is to take away the things which do not originate with God. The cross leaves only the things which are of God. It cannot shake that which comes from God, but whatever is of man is powerless before it. Some brothers have said that in the past they had many ways to help people be saved, but after they began to experience the dealing of the cross, the cross has dealt with their various ways, and it seems as if they are not able to do anything. This proves that what they did previously came out from themselves, because whatever is of God cannot be slain by the cross. Anything that can be destroyed by the cross is certainly something of man. That which passes through the cross and rises up again is of God; anything which is not able to rise is of man. The Lord Jesus is of God, for after He passed through the cross, He was able to rise again. We should not love anything of the soulish life or of the life of the flesh but let it all go into death. We must not allow anything of such a life to remain in us. The basis of our overcoming is the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. Furthermore, our attitude is that we will not live by ourselves in any way; we will not value our own ability or have any self-confidence. We must live as men full of fear and trembling. We must realize what feeble creatures we are.

The other meaning of not loving our soul-life is that we do not love our physical life. We have to stand for God even at the cost of our life. In the book of Job, Satan told God: "Skin for skin! Indeed all that a man has he will give for the sake of his life" (2:4). Satan realizes that man values his life above everything else. But God said that the overcomers love not their lives. The attitude of the overcomer is that he does not care what Satan may do to him. Even though Satan would take his life away, he would never bow to Satan but always remain faithful to God. The attitude of the overcomer is to be able to say to the Lord: "For Your sake there is not one thing that I would not forsake, even my life."

The Overcomers and God's Dispensational Moves

According to the Bible, the seed of the woman will bruise the head of the enemy. The seed of the woman in Genesis 3 primarily refers to the Lord Jesus, but the overcomers also have a part in this seed. The seed of the woman includes the church, especially the overcomers. Even though the Lord bruised Satan's head, Satan is still at work. The fulfillment of the seed of the woman bruising

Satan can be seen in the man-child in Revelation 12. The only Overcomer includes all the overcomers (vv. 10-11).

God Dispensational Move—"Now"

When God changes His attitude towards a certain matter, He makes a dispensational move. Every dispensational move brings in God's new way. His most important dispensational move is in Revelation 12. He wants to end this age and bring in the age of the kingdom. His purpose is not general and ordinary. How can He bring this age to a close and bring in another? He must have His dispensational instrument. This is what God wants to do today.

The Need of the Man-child

The rapture of the man-child brings an end to the church age and introduces the kingdom age. The man-child enables God to move. If there is not a man-child and a rapture, God cannot make a dispensational move. We should never forget that God can be limited. He waits for man in all of His moves. God's binding in heaven is based on our binding on earth; God's loosing in heaven is based on our loosing on earth. Everything depends on the church.

It is God's desire that created beings would deal with fallen created beings. According to His purpose, the whole church should deal with Satan; however, the church has failed. Therefore, there is the need for the overcomers to rise up. God's purpose is fulfilled in the overcomers because they work with Him. We can see the principle of the overcomers throughout the Word of God. God always lays hold of a group of overcomers to make a dispensational move.

Dispensational Moves in the Word of God

After creation, life went on in a very ordinary way. Then God began with *Abraham*. God laid hold of Abraham and Sarah. He wanted a nation, but He began with just two people. God worked on these two, choosing them from out of all the other nations to produce a kingdom of priests. Abraham left his kindred and country. Abraham was greater than Abel, Enoch, and Noah because of God's choosing. It was as if these earlier men were quite ordinary. They had no dispensational value to God, but Abraham did. Then God said that Abraham's seed would go into Egypt and remain there for four hundred years. This was God's next move.

God laid hold of *Joseph*, not his brothers, and took him to Egypt. Joseph ruled in Egypt. God's actions were meant for good. Joseph was an overcomer in Egypt. He showed forth his power in the kingdom and showed forth his knowledge of God through dreams. God had made a dispensational move. He put an overcomer in Egypt; He did

not put someone who could be defeated there. This is a principle of God's working.

After four hundred years, it was time for God's people to come out. At that point God laid hold of *Moses*. Without the events in the first few chapters of Exodus, there would never have been an exodus from Egypt. Moses came out of the water. He had an exodus from water. Then he had an exodus from Egypt. Moses was triumphant over death. God chose him to deal with Israel. Moses dwelt in the palace, which was the Egypt of Egypt. Not only did his spirit leave Egypt, but his body left Egypt as well; therefore, God chose him. Those who can only say, "Go," but not "Come," will have no effect. All of God's dispensational moves are based on one man. This is a principle of the overcomers.

When the nation of Israel wanted a king, the people chose Saul. He was a head taller than all the other men, but all of his ability was in his head. However, God chose His own king—*David*. Even when David was in the wilderness caring for the sheep, he was a king. He did not run when a lion came but went against it in the name of the Lord. Fear is not a kingly attitude, but when Goliath came, Saul was fearful. In contrast, David trusted in the Lord and went to fight against Goliath. Whoever is truly a king can be a king in any place. Later, David became a servant of Saul. When Saul became his enemy, David even had an opportunity to kill him, but he did not. Whoever cannot control himself is not worthy to be a king. There was no king of Israel greater than David. Only he was called King David, because he had dispensational value to God.

When Israel was taken into captivity for seventy years, God still had a dispensational move for Israel because of *Nehemiah*; he was a true overcomer. Even as he was serving a foreign king, he was preparing to go back to Jerusalem. He was not touched by Susa and the affairs of the capital. Because God gained Nehemiah, He could make a dispensational move.

At the beginning of the New Testament, a group of special people were waiting in Jerusalem for the Lord Jesus. *Anna, Simeon, and all those* (Luke 2:38) were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Their waiting brought in the fullness of the time, the Lord Jesus. God will not do things automatically; He will wait for His children to work with Him.

The Lord has two works on earth: redemption and building the church. The church is built on "this rock" (Matt. 16:18). The apostles were the first to stand on this rock. Even though they were weak in the flesh, their spirits were not weak. Because of this, *the twelve apostles* have a special position—not even Paul is reckoned with them; they were a dispensational instrument. Paul said that he was less than

the least of the apostles. The apostles and disciples waited for ten days, praying in Jerusalem. They might have said, "We have a great work to do after these days; we should rest now." Instead, they prayed. There were one hundred and twenty, but where were the others who had followed the Lord? Clearly, not everyone will work with God. These one hundred and twenty were overcomers.

Dispensational Moves in Church History

In church history the first special move was the *Reformation*. God used *Luther* in this dispensational move. The *Brethren* were also used. Darby, Groves, and Grant were God's instruments. After the Welsh revival, a new move of God began. Both Evan Roberts and Mrs. Penn-Lewis knew about spiritual warfare; they knew how to deal with Satan. The truth of the kingdom began to be known in 1924. When Evan Roberts was seen after an absence of ten years, he said, "I have been praying kingdom prayers." Every time God wants to make a dispensational move, He must obtain His instrument.

Are we at the end of the age? If we are, the kingdom will soon begin. If a dispensational move is near, then God needs an instrument. General work is no longer adequate. The children of God lack a vision; they do not see the seriousness and intensity of the situation. *Now* is a matter of dispensation. Just being a good servant of the Lord is no longer good enough; this is not of great use to God. Please note that we are not saying that it is of no use. What are we doing to close this dispensation? What are we doing to bring in the next age? This is a special time, so there is the need of special Christians to do a special work.

Today God is waiting for the man-child. Only the rapture can precipitate the events in Revelation 12:10. God has an order, and He works according to that order. His eyes have left the church; they are now on the kingdom. An overcomer works according to the principle of the Body. The principle of the Body annuls sectarianism and individualism.

After the rapture the woman will be persecuted three and a half years. Many other of her children will go through the tribulation, but God will keep them. Being an overcomer is not primarily for escaping the tribulation. We need to see of what value the rapture is to the Lord, not to ourselves.

Of all the dispensational moves, the man-child is the greatest because it removes man's power and the devil's power, and it brings in the kingdom. We live in the most privileged time; we can do the most for God. *Light will show us the way, but strength and power will enable us to walk the road. A great price must be paid in order to be used now.* **LAC**