

Overcome The World

January 26, 2025

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "Overcome the World." Thank you to Paul, Dave, Don, and everyone else involved in the service. The scripture reading is Revelation four, one to eight. Happy birthday this week to Pam.

Scripture Reading

Revelation 4:1-8

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

"'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come."

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for being with us today. The book of Revelation is easy to say, the book, Revelation. Understanding Revelation is a different matter. It is unique in all kinds of ways. In the book of John, John records the words of Jesus. I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. Listen to this. They have crossed over from death to life. That's our promise. Then he says this. You diligently study the scriptures because you think that by the scriptures you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me, Jesus. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I want you to have life and have life eternal. But you need to accept it. But even after Jesus had done all these miracles, in their presence, they still wouldn't believe. Jesus did many other things. Now listen to this. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. That's a lot of books.

How many of us have watched the movie The Wizard of Oz? Frightened me to death as a young child. To this day it sometimes frightens me. In many ways, believe it or not, The Wizard of Oz reminds me of the book Revelation. It's difficult to grasp its entire meaning. However, in Revelation 12 and 11 it says, "Things become clear. The over came the evil one by the love of God, by the word of their testimony. And they did not even shrink from death." In the movie The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy is living on a rural farm. She's loved by her family and the farm hands that work them. And then Dorothy is caught up in a dream. There's this horrible witch out to get them all. And the farm hands in this dream turn into a scarecrow. They turn into a tin man, turn into a cowardly lion. It's frightening. And then there's this witch that's chasing them until they find the wizard of the castle who would help them find their way home. Yet there's this evil one that's always attacking them and us to this day. But Dorothy finds her way home in this nightmare. She awakens and she tells her family and the farm hands her nightmare. And they gather around her and love her and they let her know that she's safe and she's loved. Even though it was terrifying, she made her way home.

It's true that one day the devil will be destroyed. But until then, Satan, the accuser, is all about division, hurt, confusion, and selfishness. But our victory comes through the sacrifice of Jesus through his blood. So John the Apostle reminds us that we have overcome and it's all because of Jesus. Verse 11 he states clearly that we have overcome by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives so much even to shrink from death. They were willing to die for faith. So Revelation reminds us how often in scripture our sins are forgiven by the precious blood of Jesus. Body and the blood. Communion. Revelation 1.5, "To him who loves us and frees us from our sins by the blood of Jesus." The sacrifice for us comes at a cost. The cost of the blood of Jesus, the cost of the sacrifice, the crucifixions of many of those who are Christians who would not give up their faith. Like us today. "To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by the blood of Jesus."

When we take that communion, when we take that sip, it reminds us of the cost that Jesus gave for us. In Acts 20, he says, "Guard yourselves on all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which Jesus purchased with his own blood." The sacrifice is continually there. Ephesians 1.7, "In him, Jesus, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." So we get it. But the Bible won't let us stop. It's going to continually remind us the sacrifice, the blood of Jesus. "In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Peter says, "For you know, it's not with perishable things such as silver or gold that we have been redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to us by our forefathers. But we have to be forefathers, but by the precious blood of Jesus." Jesus says, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." And they overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. In Romans chapter 8, the Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. And now if we are God's children, then we are heirs of God and we are co-heirs with Christ.

I want to stop because that's it. We are co-heirs with Christ. Someone dies. Maybe there's a will made. Here's what you're going to get. Here's what we have. Here's the gift of God. And if we are children, we are. We are heirs of God. Yep. We are co-heirs with Christ. If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we will also share in glory. So when we take communion, it's not just the body. It's not just the blood. It's not just the sacrifice. It's your going somewhere. God is welcoming us home. It's not a story. It's not a thought. It is a reality that one day we will see the face of God. We will see the face of Jesus. And we've always wanted to see the Holy Spirit. And who else will we see? Everyone that we've loved and has loved us and loved the Lord. For many of us, it'll be wonderful that we'll see loved ones again. Sometimes it's just so emotional. Losing a baby. We'll see the baby again. It's a reality of we are here right now and right here and now. But there's something all around us. The love of God and all the promises he's giving us.

And even though life can be difficult, Jesus is promising this presence in all things because listen to this. Neither death nor life. Neither angels nor demons. Neither the present nor the future. Nor any powers. Neither height nor depth. Nor anything else. In all creation we'll be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It's not just a couple of words. It is the reality of each of us because of God. And then going back into that first century, boy it was tough. Pretty rigorous. Being a Christian could mean death pretty quickly.

And it says, "And they did not love their lives so much even to shrink from death. It isn't easy to hear but their faith helped them beyond death. In some ways they welcomed it as a remembrance of faith and traumatic challenges. The Hebrew writer was looking ahead even though they knew of the persecutions and the terror that would be coming." So in chapter 11 it says, "Christians died by the mouths of lions. Some were tortured. Some were chained. Some were put to death by the sword. They were persecuted and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them." And then the Hebrew writer, whoever writes this book, no one knows. He's not leaving us waiting. He sees our future and listen to what he says. But you have come. It hasn't happened yet. It's going to happen. You have come. You have come to Mount Zion. You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of joyful assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. Have you ever

thought of that? Your name is in heaven. We don't have to introduce ourselves to Jesus. He knows us. He knows us very well.

And so he's reminding us how we can live in such a way with all these wonderful promises of God. Yes, there are difficulties in life. Yes, there are challenges in life. And yet God said with this wonderful, wonderful scripture, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I will be with you Monday, Wednesday, and Friday." No. I'll be with you always. We just have to remember this promise of God. "I am helping you," he says, "and I am your helper." So there's this very brief book in the New Testament called Jude. Now, not Judas, but the book's called Jude. And here's what he says, "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."

Pray to God. Pray to Jesus. Pray the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ who will bring you to eternity. And then in this last book of Revelation, he says this, "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem," listen, "coming down out of heaven for us. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying," listen to what he's telling to us, "Now the dwelling of God is with us." And then he says, "There will be no more death." And if God says, "There will be no more death," then there will be no more death. No more mourning. No more crying. No more pain, for it will pass away. That arthritis is gone and whatever else. And then he says this, "I am making everything new."

In Revelation, he has this exclamation of hallelujah. "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. Praise our God, all you His servants who revere Him, both small and great. Hallelujah. For our Lord God, Almighty reigns, let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory. Whoever is thirsty, let them receive the free gift of the water of life." And then in concluding that book, he says this, "And he who was seated on the throne is saying to each one of us, I am making everything new." A new heaven and a new earth.

Scripture says a lot about empires. About empires wanting power and control in everything else. And the whole rhythm of life at that time was shaped by the empire. But Revelation teaches us that empires come and go. But with God, He'll never leave us. We don't have to worry about empires. We know who we belong to.

We know who Jesus has given us this faith, this life, and this love. So if life has been a bit challenging recently, please remember, if you will, the promise of God. Oh, sorry, no. The promises of God. No, sorry, no. All the stuff that He gives us. He is giving us part of Himself so that we can live in such a way that the world will know that we believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and that He will never leave us or forsake us. He's with us right now. When we leave today, He'll be with us. When we fall asleep, He's with us. When we wake up, He's with us. When we close our eyes for the last time, we will see Him face to face. He knows us very well. Amen.

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