

THE LAMB OF GOD AND THE OVERCOMERS

Revelation 14:1-5—And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing upon mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written upon their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of the heaven as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder. And the voice which I heard was as of harp-singers harping with their harps; and they sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. And no one could learn that song save the hundred and forty-four thousand who were bought from the earth. These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins: these are they who follow the Lamb wheresoever it goes. These have been bought from men as first-fruits to God and to the Lamb: and in their mouths was no lie found; for they are blameless.

May we have another word of prayer:

Dear Lord, how we praise and thank Thee that it is Thy mercy and grace that have brought us to the last full day of the conference. We thank Thee for the past and we look forward to the now. We do pray that if Thou hast still something to say to us, or if there is still something in us that needs to be dealt with, oh dear Lord, this is Thy time. We commit this time into Thy hand and pray that Thou will open our hearts to Thyself. Search us, oh Lord, and know our hearts. We do pray that Thou wilt remove every hindrance that may be still in us. Claim us, oh Lord, for Thyself that we may truly be the link that Thou art able to use to bring in Thy imminent return. Oh Lord, how we long to see Thee face to face. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

Every time I try to sing that song we have just sung (Since Long Ago) I can hardly finish it. It was written by brother Watchman Nee. During the first two years of the Communist rule in China he tried to express his innermost feeling, and the result is this song.

THE LONGING FOR HIS RETURN

Thank God, there is always a deep, deep longing in the hearts of the saints through every century for His return. We do not know how many prayers have ascended through the centuries, the cry of the church waiting, looking, expecting the Lord's return because He is our only hope. Year after year, century after century, it seems as if the Lord is delaying His return. Yet we all know our Lord Jesus is more anxious than any one of us to return and claim us for His bride. I think again we have to confess that it is because of us. He cannot come back to marry a bride that has not grown up, who cannot be a companion for life to Him. He is looking for His likeness in His church and He is still waiting.

I believe from all the indications the time should be now. He is looking for that link that will prepare His way for His return. I believe this is the desire of our hearts. I believe in every one of us who are His, we long to be that link, if in any way by the grace of God, we can speed up His return. I often feel that we are waiting for Him, but on the contrary, He is waiting for us. Are we prepared to offer ourselves to Him as the link that He is waiting for? Hopefully, even within our lifetime He will return. I really feel that way.

However, the problem is not just expectation; the real problem is whether there is the link. Are we ready to pave the way for His glorious return? This is the burden of our hearts.

As we said in the very beginning, that whenever God is going to do something, He always has His way or His principle. As we find in Psalm 103:7: "God has made known His ways to Moses and His acts to the children of Israel." The children of Israel had to wait until God had done something; then they saw and glorified the Lord. But it was Moses who knew the way of the Lord, and because he knew the way, he was preparing the way. That is what we are looking to the Lord for, that by His grace He will make each and every one of us to be that way which God can use to bring back our dear Lord.

REVELATION CHAPTERS 1-10—GOVERNED BY THE THRONE

We want to look into another vision which is found in Revelation 14. We know that the whole book of Revelation can be roughly divided into two parts. Chapters 1-10 is one part, and chapters 11-22 form the other part. The first part is the prophecy of how the Lord is coming and is governed by chapter 4:2: "Immediately I became in the Spirit; and behold, a throne stood in the heaven, and upon the throne one sitting."

In other words, the first part of Revelation is governed by the throne. Everything proceeds from the throne of God. It represents His power by which He is to bring to pass all these events for the coming of the Lord.

REVELATION CHAPTERS 11-22—GOVERNED BY THE TEMPLE

Then in Revelation 11:19 it says: "And the temple of God in the 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."

When we come to the second part, it is governed by the temple or the ark. This means that it is the glory of God more than the power of God. God Himself is working out His purpose for His glory. The reason we believe there are these two parts is because in chapter 10:11 it says: "And it was said to me, Thou must prophesy again as to peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."

In other words, in the first ten chapters we already have prophecies concerning peoples, nations, tongues, and many kings, and there is a chronological order to it. We have the seven seals, seven trumpets, and one succeeds another. Then from chapter 11 onwards, it seems as if it does not follow a chronological order. But God is taking out something that is deep within His heart that He is going to do and emphasizes these special events.

Therefore, when we read chapter 14 of the book of Revelation, it is very hard, as it were, to pinpoint the time even though we do have some hints about it. So I feel Revelation 14 stands out by itself. It shows us God's ideas, God's principles, what is in the mind of God, and what He is going to fulfill.

THE LAMB STANDING UPON MOUNT ZION

The vision says: "I saw and behold the Lamb standing upon Mt. Zion" (v. 1). As we have repeatedly mentioned, in the book of Revelation it is a Lamb that is in the foreground. Our Lord

Jesus is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Even though He was not slain and crucified until He lived for thirty-three and some years on earth, yet in eternity past, in the thought of God, He has already made Him that Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. In God's eyes, He alone is the Lamb.

As you read the book of Revelation, even in chapter 1 on the Lord's day, John was in the Spirit and he heard a voice behind him. He looked back and he saw seven golden lampstands, but that is only the background. The foreground is the Lamb, One who is like the Son of Man standing among the seven churches. So it is wrong for some of us to consider the church to be more important even than the Lord Himself. Thus, we find that the church, however much it is loved by God, is only the background; the foreground is always the Lamb, the Christ. God wants us to center our attention upon Him.

In chapter 5 we are told that the Lamb, newly slain, is standing before the throne, and there He receives the scroll, which is the title deed of the earth, from the One who sits on the throne. Even though Satan seems to be the temporary, seemingly prince of this world, yet we know that God has never given up His property. The title deed is still in His hand. You remember how the proclamation goes out to the whole universe: "Who is able to open the seals?" that is to say, to bring the earth back to God. It is the Lamb, newly slain, standing because He is resurrected. He is worthy to receive that scroll, and it is there that He begins to open the seals.

THE OVERCOMERS ARE STANDING WITH THE LAMB

In chapter 14 we find that it is the Lamb standing upon Mt. Zion, the place where the King rules. Our Lord Jesus has accomplished everything that God has entrusted to Him. He has fulfilled all the purposes of God and He is now standing upon Mt. Zion. He is the victorious One, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the possessor of the universe. Thank God, He is not there alone but He has standing with Him 144,000. We may be familiar with the 144,000 because that number has been used in the book of Revelation before, but there is a difference. In Revelation 7 there are 144,000 of the Jewish nation who will be sealed from among each tribe. That is to say, God claims them, He protects them, and He keeps them. These 144,000 will be those of the Jewish nation who will be kept through Jacob's trouble. One day Jacob's trouble will come. It is simultaneous with the Great Tribulation of three and half years. So far as the Jews are concerned, it is Jacob's trouble; so far as the church is concerned, it is the Great Tribulation. But during Jacob's trouble, 144,000 of the faithful Jews will be kept by the Lord.

In chapter 14 there is another 144,000, but this one is different because they have upon their foreheads the name of the Lamb and of the Father. 144,000 is a full number. It does not mean that there are only 144,000 and no more. It is the multiple of twelve. In other words, God will have His full number of overcomers through the ages.

It is very funny that Jehovah Witnesses tell us that the 144,000 have already been fulfilled, and if you join Jehovah Witness today you are a second class citizens. But we know this is not an exact number; it simply means a full number. God will have His overcomers throughout the centuries. These 144,000 have His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. To me this means two things. One is that it proves they belong to the Father and to the Lamb. The other meaning is that because it is on their foreheads they are not afraid to confess the

name of the Lord when they are alive. You will recall that our Lord Jesus said, "If you confess Me, one day I will confess you."

These 144,000, the full number of the overcomers, are those who are wholly the Lord's, and publicly confess the Lord. They are not so-called hidden Christians; they are open to witness and to testify to the name of the Lord. I feel that this vision of the 144,000 is the picture of the overcomers through the ages and what will happen to them, and we see that they are standing with the Lamb on Mt. Zion—the Overcomer. They are considered as having overcome Satan, the world, sin, and their own self.

THE OVERCOMERS ARE HARP SINGERS

"And I heard a voice out of the heaven as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder. And the voice which I heard was as of harp-singers harping with their harps; as harp singers harping with their harps."

We read in Psalm 27 that the voice of the Lord is upon the waters. The voice of the Lord is like mighty waters. Here we find the same quality, as it were, of that voice, a great voice of many waters and a voice of many thunders. What a testimony that must be!

"And they are harp singers harping with their harps; and they sing a new song before the throne."

We all know that the harp is heart music. It is music that comes from the very depths of their hearts. So the singing here is the singing of their hearts. I always feel that there are two different kinds of singing. One kind is without the heart; the other is singing with the heart. Singing is not just music, but is something that comes from the very depths of their hearts; it actually represents what is in their hearts. It is just like harp singing, and it is beautiful. It is not just noise but there is depth to it. When these 144,000 sing, they are harp singers; they sing out from the very depths of their heart. The Bible tells us no one can learn this song; only harp singers can sing this song. Of course, in this matter of singing we can learn whatever song it might be, and we can sing it even without our heart. But this singing is different because you have to learn it in your life experiences. Nobody can imitate it. It is only those who have gone through.

We remember that David is called the sweet singer of Israel. How he sang! But his songs came from his heart, from his life experiences. He had gone through so much persecution, misunderstandings, everything, and out of his life experiences sprang forth these wonderful psalms that we read in the book of Psalms. This is harp singing.

These brothers and sisters, the overcomers of the ages, learn that song through their daily living. Thank God, sometimes we murmur and say, "Lord, before we believed in the Lord Jesus, our life on earth was difficult with many problems. But now that we have believed in the Lord Jesus, unconsciously we expected from now on our lives would be smooth and prosperous. But after we believe in the Lord Jesus and begin to live as Christians, we discover this is not true. We are even surprised that our life has become more difficult than before. Even the difficulties are different. Why is it so? Oftentimes, we begin to murmur and wonder if the Lord loves us. If He loves us, why does He allow all these things to happen to us? But thank God, in the book of Hebrews we are told that because He is our Father and loves His sons, He will discipline us so

that we may grow up to be partakers of His divine nature. So these Christians have learned through their experiences in their lives.

I am afraid it is a great temptation to the Christians who are internet knowledgeable to think they know everything. They think they have everything. But that is not true. Even if we may know everything in our mind, it does not really mean we have experienced these in our lives. When I travel and meet brothers and sisters, sometimes I find those who may not be as intelligent as others, but somehow you feel they really know the Lord. Other times when you meet believers, they seem to know everything and yet there is very little reality in their life. So I encourage myself and my brothers and sisters to seek to know the Lord by life rather than by mind.

VIRGINS ESPOUSED TO THE BRIDEGROOM

Who are these people? The Bible tells us these are they who have not been defiled by women for they are virgins. I believe that this is not to be applied literally but spiritually. We remember how in II Corinthians 11 the apostle Paul said, "I have espoused you to one as chaste virgins." The Bible never calls people in the world virgins because in the sight of God, they are adulterers and adulteresses. Only those who are cleansed by the precious blood of the Lamb are virgins in the sight of God. So we are virgins, cleansed by the blood and espoused to Christ. And as a chaste virgin, even before her marriage, her life was governed by her future husband. Whatever she does, whatever she puts on, she will ask the question: Will it please my future husband? Her heart is already there. These are chaste virgins.

In Corinth we believe these believers were virgins, but they were not chaste virgins. They had been enticed by the world.

THE OVERCOMERS FOLLOW THE LAMB WHEREVER HE GOES

Who are these people? "These are those who follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes." When our Lord Jesus was on this earth, He did not only seek and save the lost, but He called those who believed in Him to come and follow Him. Wherever He goes, they go. When our Lord was on earth, in the very beginning of His ministry, many followed Him. But you will recall in John 6 that our Lord Jesus began to make it clear to them that they were following Him not for Him but for the bread that He provided for them. When our Lord Jesus said, "I am the One whom you should eat and drink; My blood is drinkable and My body is eatable," they could not understand that it is by faith. Many of His disciples left Him. So The Lord turned to His twelve disciples and said, "Do you also want to go? You are free to do whatever you want to do." But thank God for Simon Peter who said, "Lord, you have the Word of life and we have believed it. Where shall we go? We are stuck with You." These are God's disciples who follow the Lord wheresoever He goes. In other words, you do not choose your way; the Lord is your way. He chooses the way, and it is not for us to question His way, but it is for us to follow. If He goes straight to the cross, then to the cross we go. These are the overcomers of the ages.

OVERCOMERS ARE FIRST-FRUITS TO GOD AND THE LAMB

"These have been bought from men as first-fruits to God and to the Lamb." This is the description of first-fruits. When you are planting a field, usually there will be the first-fruits and

then the harvest. If there is no first-fruits, then there will be no harvest. What are the first-fruits? First-fruits are those plants which have received more sunlight; therefore, they ripened earlier. Whenever you have the first-fruits, you are assured there will be the harvest.

Among God's people, there is also the difference between the first fruits and the harvest. And these overcomers represent the first fruits of the redemption of our Lord Jesus.

THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY

"And in their mouths, was no lie found; for they are blameless." In other words, it is the word of their testimony. We are entrusted with the testimony of Jesus. But when we speak out, when we testify, will there be truth behind it? If we are testifying to the testimony of Jesus, is it a reality in our lives? We testify that He is the Lord. Is He the Lord of our life? We testify that He is the first and the last. Is He the first in our life or is something else the first in our life? He is the last. Is He the goal of our life? Is He everything to us? Our testimony has to be true and then there will be power behind it.

When you read Acts 19, you find the seven sons of Sceva who were exorcists, and they were trying to cast out demons in the lives of people. When they saw what Paul had done and how he was successful in casting out demons in the name of the Lord Jesus, they tried to use the same formula. And when two of them tried to cast out the demon and said: "In the name of Jesus that Paul preached," and the demon said, "Christ I know, Paul I am acquainted with, but who are you?" And he jumped upon those two men and they fled away naked and hurt. In other words, it was a lie; there was no power or strength.

To be an overcomer, you have to have the life of an overcomer. Then you can have the testimony of an overcomer. You are able to speak out and behind that speaking, there is a backing, a ground that what you are saying is what you are.

They are blameless not because they are perfect but because they know the preciousness of the blood of our Lord Jesus.

We will never come to a point where we are beyond the need of the blood of the Lamb. The closer you live to God, the more you treasure the precious blood of the Lamb.

These are the overcomers of the ages. I believe it is a picture of the Lord trying to encourage us that what the Lord is looking for, He will receive and have.

THE HARVEST

Then, after the first fruits, in the same chapter, there is the harvest.

"And I saw, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud one sitting like the Son of man, having upon his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send thy sickle and reap; for the hour of reaping is come, for the harvest of the earth is dried. And he that sat on the cloud put his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped" (vvs. 14-16).

This is the harvest. Here we can see the order—first the first fruits and then the harvest. The harvest refers to all the believers who have died before the coming of the Lord and also those who still remain on the earth through the Great Tribulation. They will all be raptured up to meet the Lord in the air and then there will be the Judgment Seat of Christ, a family judgment.

ARMAGEDDON

Immediately following that is Revelation 14:17-20: “And another angel came out of the temple which is in the heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the altar, having power over fire, and called with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send thy sharp sickle, and gather the bunches of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripened. And the angel put his sickle to the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast the bunches into the great wine-press of the fury of God; and the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood went out of the wine-press to the bits of the horses for a thousand six hundred stadia.” That is Armageddon.

God has revealed to us what is going to happen. And He has also shown us who will be the link that will really bring in the King and to prepare us for the day that is coming. Thank God, even though we are living in difficult days, on the other hand, we are living in the most exciting time because if the Lord wills, we who are here have the opportunity of being raptured alive. That should be our blessed hope. May the Lord help us!

Shall we pray:

Dear Lord our hearts do cry out: How long? How long? Thy people have been waiting for Thee for centuries. Yet Lord, it is not because of Thee; it is because of us. We look to Thy mercy and grace. We confess that in ourselves, there is no strength, but Thy grace is manifested in our weakness. Oh Lord, we want to look to Thee to strengthen us, to enable us to be used of Thee to be that link that will really prepare Thy way. Lord, we do not want to expect without being prepared. So prepare us that each and every one of us—none excepted—will offer ourselves to Thee and allow Thee to work out Thy purpose in bringing back the King. Hear us, oh Lord; we ask in Thy name. Amen.