

A Journey Through the Bible

Revelation: To the Conquerors

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A. What does one Christian's faithfulness accomplish?

1. **"To the Conquerors" portrays a Christian being pressured to deny Jesus.**

- He thinks about his children and his wife. He knows what remaining faithful could cost.
- His courage comes from remembering Jesus' resurrection: "Then I remembered who was Lord / The day He walked through death."
- Because he belongs to the risen King, his enemies cannot make death permanent: "You can put us in the ground, but you can't keep us there."

2. **Faithfulness has consequences beyond one person's life.**

Refusing to deny Jesus is a victory over fear and temptation. His faithfulness also contributes to Christ's conquest of the world.

3. **What we expect from history changes how we understand everyday Christian life.**

- History is where we fail and hope to get evacuated out of.
- History is where we muddle along until it's over.
- History is where we triumph.

These expectations lead to different understandings of our task. Building the Kingdom in time and in history gives our work and our families significance across generations. Being the best sellers of Eternal Fire Insurance makes getting people out of this world the principal objective.

B. Revelation was written to equip Christians for an approaching crisis

1. Revelation 1:1–3

1 A revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must happen soon. He made it known by signs, sending it through His angel to His servant John, **2** who bore witness to the word of God and to the witness of Jesus Christ, everything he saw.

3 Blessed is the one who reads it aloud, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

2. What the opening tells us

- **"To show His servants":** God gave this revelation so His people could understand what was happening.
- **"Soon" and "near":** John was describing events approaching in his hearers' own time.
- **"Read," "hear," and "keep":** understanding the prophecy was supposed to produce faithful obedience.
- **"Made it known by signs":** the images communicate the prophecy. Revelation itself explains some of them; in 1:20, the seven lampstands are seven churches.

3. Author, audience, and historical setting

- John the apostle wrote to seven actual churches in Asia.
- Revelation was written under Nero, before AD 70.
- The book primarily concerns the judgment culminating in Jerusalem's destruction.
- The book also reaches the end of history. Revelation 20:7–15 concerns the final rebellion and judgment.

Commitments and interpretation: Jesus is risen and reigns as Lord. God speaks through Scripture and calls His people to understand and obey it. These are the confessional commitments governing this class. The first-century setting described above and the Kingdom's advance in history are interpretive conclusions we will demonstrate from Scripture.

4. Why study their crisis now?

Revelation teaches people how to thrive in the most difficult times Jesus said the church would ever face: the tribulation. They needed to know who ruled their world, what their suffering meant, and why they should remain faithful.

If it can teach them how to conquer, it can sure as heck teach us the same thing.

C. The conquerors participate in Christ's victory and rule

1. The Kingdom announcement includes the Christians' conquest of Satan.

Revelation 12:10–11

10 And I heard a great voice in heaven saying: Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, the one accusing them before our God day and night. **11** And they conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witness, and they did not love their life unto death.

Observations

- The accuser is Satan, identified in 12:9.
- Heaven announces God's Kingdom and Christ's authority because the accuser has been thrown down.
- The Christians conquer that same enemy because of the Lamb's blood and their witness.
- They remain faithful even when their confession costs them their lives.

What this establishes: The Christians' faithful testimony contributes to the defeat of the enemy whose fall heaven celebrates. Their conquest depends on the Lamb's blood. The Christian in the song is doing something that matters to the Kingdom when he refuses to deny Jesus.

2. Jesus promises His conquerors a share in His authority over the nations.

Psalm 2:8–9 — God's promise to His King, ESV

8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Revelation 2:26–28 — Jesus' promise to the conqueror, excerpt

And the one who conquers and who keeps My works to the end, I will give him authority over the nations, and he will shepherd them with an iron rod, as the clay pots are shattered — as I also have received from My Father.

Revelation 19:15 — Jesus as the conquering Rider, excerpt

And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, so that with it He might strike the nations; and He Himself will shepherd them with an iron rod

What the passages have in common

- **The nations:** Psalm 2 promises them to God's King; Revelation 2 promises authority over them to the conqueror; Revelation 19 portrays Christ exercising that authority.
- **The iron rod:** the same royal image describes the King's rule and the rule He shares with His people.
- **The shattered pottery:** Revelation 2 repeats Psalm 2's picture of opposition broken by the King's authority.
- **"As I also have received from My Father":** Jesus explicitly connects what He gives the conqueror with what the Father gave Him.

Translation note: The Greek Old Testament has "shepherd" where the Hebrew of Psalm 2:9 has "break." Revelation follows the Greek wording. Both describe the King's authority over the nations.

What this establishes: Jesus shares His rule with the people who remain faithful to Him. His promise concerns authority over nations, so their victory has consequences beyond their own lives.

The one person who won't renounce his confession is the other edge of the same blade that comes out of the mouth of the Rider and conquers the nations.

D. The church equips Christians whose ordinary lives build the Kingdom

1. Christ gives ministers to equip His people for ministry.

Ephesians 4:11–12, 15–16 — ESV

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

[...]

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Christ gives teachers and other ministers to equip the saints to do the work. The whole body grows as its members serve. Christian maturity means becoming people who can do that work. Church doesn't exist to give you more work to do. Church exists to equip you to be that person whose life changes the world simply by the way you live it.

2. The Lord's Prayer asks for God's will to be done on earth.

Matthew 6:10 — ESV

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

God empowers His people to participate in the answer to this prayer. As we obey Jesus in our families, work, and communities, His will is being done in the places where we live.

3. Ordinary faithfulness has consequences across generations.

- **Work:** doing our work well and dealing honestly with coworkers, customers, and employees affects the people who depend on us.
- **Family:** raising children in the faith prepares another generation to know and serve Christ.
- **Life with other people:** keeping our word, doing justice, and serving our neighbors shape the kind of community we and our children inhabit.

It's about whether the way you live, the way you work, the way you build your family, contributes to the Kingdom of God over the long haul.

4. Christ's Kingdom grows in time and in history.

This is the postmillennial expectation: Christ brings the nations under His rule during history. The faithfulness of individual Christians contributes to that larger work.

History moves through a billion tiny levers being pulled every day in the direction of the lordship of Jesus Christ.

We are studying Revelation to understand why faithfulness matters when Christians face opposition, how Christ works through His people's faithfulness, and how to serve Him in our own lives.

Revelation quotations are from Toby's translation. ESV quotations are from the 2011 edition in the BibleWorks study library.