



LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

June 18th 2017 — Part 7
“The One Who Conquers”



The Structure of the Letters to the Churches

There appears to be an overall chiastic structure to the letters as well as a general pattern to each of the letters individually.

- A. Ephesus (A church in grave danger from subtle sin)
- B. Smyrna (A church enduring faithfully)
- C. Pergamum (A church in danger from overt sin)
- D. Thyatira (A church in danger from heresy and overt sin)
- C¹. Sardis (A church in danger from overt sin)
- B¹. Philadelphia (A church enduring faithfully)
- A¹. Laodicea (A church in grave danger from subtle sin)

- Observations:
1. Only two of the seven churches are considered _____ in Jesus' assessment.
 2. The church will always face threats from within:
 3. The church will always face threats from the outside world:

The Pattern of the Individual Letters:

- A. Command to Write
- B. Description of Christ
- C. The Condition of the Church (Commendation, Rebuke, or both)
- D. Exhortation (Repent, Endure)
- E. The Promise to the one who Overcomers/Conquers

- Observations:
1. In each letter, Christ demonstrates His intimate _____ of the church's true condition.
 2. In each letter, Christ presents Himself as the only _____ for the church in its condition.

The One Who Conquers

Each of the seven letters conclude with a promise addressed to “the one who conquers/overcomes.” To understand this concept is to understand one of the most significant aspects of what it means to live as a faithful believer throughout all the days of our lives.

νικάω (*nikaō*) — [v.] To _____ (literally or figuratively):—conquer, overcome, prevail, get the _____.

- This term is used 24 times in the NT; 21 of those times it is used in the writings of John: John (1x), 1 John (5x), Revelation (15x). The term is used only 3 times in the LXX (Greek OT) and so this concept, as it is used by John, seems to have another origin.

“Overcoming/Conquering” in Judaism (150 B.C. — 70 A.D.)

The Maccabean Revolt (167-160 B.C.) — The Greek ruler, Antiochus IV, forbid Jewish religious practices after a small revolt against his rule had occurred, demanding that all religious Jews worship Zeus as the supreme god.

⇒ 4 Maccabees was a philosophical look at the martyrdoms that occurred during the revolt which were taken as examples of how the faithful could overcome their passions through reason and religious belief.

(4Mac. 1:11) They conquered the tyrant by their endurance so that through them our homeland was purified.

(4Mac. 6:10) Like a noble athlete, the old man, while being beaten, conquered his torturers;

(4Mac. 9:30) “Do you not think, tyrant most savage of all, that you are being tortured more than I, as you see the arrogant reasoning of your tyranny defeated by our endurance for the sake of [religious] piety?”

These stories of martyrdom would have been well known among the Jewish people and stood as examples of faithfulness even to death.

Jesus Christ: The One who has Overcomes the World

- The apostle John records in his gospel the intimate details of the Last Supper in John 13-17. Before concluding their time together with the high priestly prayer of John 17, Jesus closed His time of teaching and exhortation with these words:

John 16:33— *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*”

- This statement of Jesus, found only in this part of John's gospel, seems to have marked John's thinking significantly.

In the writings of John, Jesus' conquering/overcoming of the world has two phases:

1. His _____ →

2. His _____ →

Rev. 17:13-14—¹³These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

The Implication for Christians:

Because Jesus has conquered (*past*) and will conquer (*future*), Christians are to be _____ (*present*)!

How do we conquer?

1. We _____ in our faith.

1 John 2:12-14

¹² I am writing to you, little children,
because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

¹³ I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.

————→

I write to you, children,
because you know the Father.

————→

¹⁴ I write to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

————→

I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God abides in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

2. We live by the power of _____ in us.

1 John 4:4— Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

3. We live out our _____.

1 John 1:3-5—³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Encouragement to endure in the present from the martyrs of the future:

Rev. 13:5-10—⁵And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Rev. 12:11—And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Rev. 15:2—And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.

Following in Christ's Footsteps

- In His earthly life, Christ was a _____ even to the point of death. As those who follow Him, we have this same calling upon our lives.
- Like Christ, one of the ways that we will overcome the world will be through what appears to be our _____. We will have victory, however, because Christ has conquered on our behalf!