

## **THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY IS THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS**

*Revelation 12:11—And they [the man child] have overcome him [Satan] by reason of the blood of the Lamb, and by reason of the word of their testimony, and have not loved their life even unto death.*

Let's have a short word of prayer:

*Dear Lord, our hearts are full of thanksgiving. We thank Thee for having invited us to Thy table. We remember what love Thou hast bestowed upon us. We who were dead in sins and transgressions are now Thy children by Thy grace. We thank Thee for the privilege to partake in the table. Lord, Thou hast bought us with such a price; how can we live for ourselves any longer? We are Thine, and we are here by Thy grace and for Thy glory. We thank Thee for being with us these few days. We continue to give ourselves to Thee and pray that if Thou hast more to say to us, speak; we are listening. This time is Yours. Will You please continue to bless this time that we may hear Thy voice and we may surrender ourselves even more to Thee? Thou art forever worthy. We worship Thee. In Thy precious name. Amen.*

I always hesitate to speak after the Lord's table because we have been brought into the Lord's presence, and what more could we want? But to obey my brethren, I will try to share something more.

### **Simon Peter's Great Revelation**

God in His great love sent His only begotten Son into this world. We, who were created by Him, failed Him, and yet His love will not let us go. He sent His only begotten Son into this world to be a Man in order to save us, and save us to the uttermost that we may be the man of His heart to be used by Him as His witness and testimony. What mercy and grace He has given us!

Our Lord Jesus came into this world full of grace and truth; yet after He had worked for over three years, people did not understand Him. More than that, they even rejected Him. So our Lord Jesus retreated to the Gentile city of Caesarea-Philippi. But while He was there, He asked His disciples a question: "Whom do men say that I am?" Now we know how the world misunderstood Him, how they said bad things about Him, and how they rejected Him. But of course, the disciples would not tell the Lord all the bad things people said about Him. They wanted to please the Lord, so they said to Him: "Some say that You are John the Baptist come to life. Others say that You are Elijah, the greatest prophet that Israel ever had. Others say that You are Jeremiah because You weep

much. And some others said that You are one of the prophets” (see Matthew 16:13-14). In other words, everything they said was rosy and good. Was our Lord satisfied? If someone were to say to you, “You are Confucius coming to life,” what will be your reaction? “Oh,” you say, “I am not worthy because that would be too good.” Now when they reported all these good things to the Lord Jesus, He was not satisfied.

So He asked His disciples, “You have been with Me for three years, and who do you say I am?” And Simon Peter said, “You are the Christ the Son of the living God” (see Matthew 16:16). What a confession! Christ is what His work is. He was sent by God to accomplish a special work, the work of redemption. “You are the Son of God.” That is the Person.

### **The Church is Built Upon the Rock of Peter’s Confession**

The Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona, for this is not something that human beings can tell you. It is My heavenly Father who has revealed Me to you. You are Peter, and I will build My church upon this rock. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (see Matthew 16:17-18). Some people have misunderstood this Word. The Lord said, “You are Peter” meaning a small stone. I will build My church upon this rock, and this is a huge stone. Yet some people have misunderstood. They think Christ said the church is built upon Peter. What a misunderstanding! What our Lord Jesus really said is this: “You are a small stone. Formerly you were just clay, but now because you have believed in Me, there is a change of inner character. You have become a piece of the rock. I am that Rock, and the church is built upon Me. You will be built upon Me, and because of what you will be the church will be built, and the gates of Hades will be opened to try to destroy the church. However, the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” This is the church that our Lord Jesus is building. And we know that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to the hundred and twenty and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. That was the beginning of the church.

### **The Early Church had a Glorious Beginning**

The church had a glorious beginning, and it was to be the bearer of the testimony of Jesus. When you look at the beginning of the church, you can see how glorious it was. On that very day, through the preaching of Peter and the eleven disciples, three thousand came to the Lord, and were all baptized. They all kept the Word of God. What a powerful church it was! They were able to bear the testimony of Jesus, and many turned to the Lord. The church had a glorious beginning.

Of course, God’s enemy was very unhappy, so he tried his best to attack the church by causing many problems. But thank God, the church was able to solve their problems. Problems are not problems if they can be rightly solved; instead, they become blessings. So the early church was a victorious church and was able to bear the testimony of Jesus. They gave a good witness to Christ Jesus. That was the beginning of the church.

## **When the Church became Prosperous it began to Decline**

Unfortunately, Satan tried to defeat it. In the beginning, he tried to threaten it. When that did not work, he tried to welcome it. In the fourth century, after Constantine accepted Christianity, it became popular. Do you think popularity is a good thing? Actually, it is a great temptation. After Constantine accepted Christianity, he encouraged his soldiers to believe in Christianity. Any soldier who accepted Christianity would be rewarded with clothes and money. Who would not do that? So Christianity became a welcome thing. Humanly speaking it became prosperous. But in actuality, Christianity began to decline. Many joined Christianity but they were not saved, so you can see how difficult it was. It was for this reason they had to train a special group in order to take care of the church, and that is when the special priesthood or the clergy were raised up.

### **John was Exiled to the Island of Patmos**

In the beginning of the book of Revelation, John was exiled to the island of Patmos. John was the last one of the twelve apostles who was living at that time, and he was working in Asia which is Asia Minor. But because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, he was exiled to the island of Patmos and put into hard labor. But one day, on the Lord's day, he seemed to be free from labor, and we can just imagine how he would have been sitting on a rock facing the sea. For on a good day from the island of Patmos he could faintly see the sea coast of Asia Minor, and naturally John would be thinking about the churches there. But as he was thinking about them he heard a loud voice behind him, and when he turned back to look at the voice, he saw what is called the Patmos vision. He saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of man.

The seven golden lampstands were explained by God as being the seven churches in Asia Minor. Now there were more than these seven churches; for instance, Colossae or Hierapolis were not mentioned. But the Spirit of God purposely chose these seven churches because they represented the condition of all the churches at the end of the first century.

### **The Spirit of Prophecy is the Testimony of Jesus**

In Revelation 1 God has given us a vision of One like the Son of man. Oftentimes our emphasis is on the golden lampstand, but actually the emphasis that God wants us to see is the One like the Son of man because the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

I remember when I was first saved, I was fifteen. One day I heard a brother, Mr. Jeffrey, speaking, and he spoke on the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw. I was so attracted by this word of prophecy that I began to be interested in prophecy and tried to know more about it. In studying prophecy, the most difficult thing is to know the timing. When will these prophetic things happen? How can you arrange all the words of a prophecy in their time zone? Unfortunately, I spent a great deal of time in trying to put these prophecies in timing. I almost became a prophet, yet I missed the whole point because I lost sight of Jesus Christ.

As we study Revelation, as we study prophecy, it is not all these prophetic words that are important because they are to testify of our Lord Jesus. If you see all these words of prophecy and you do not see Christ, you miss the whole point.

### **Seeing the Immensity of Christ**

I remember when brother Watchman Nee asked me to join with him. I was twenty years old and had just graduated from college. So what did I know? I knew very little, but I worked and travelled in many parts of China. Wherever I went, we had a gospel campaign. From city to city we preached the gospel, and after people got saved, what did we do with them? We did four things. 1) When people got saved, we would baptize them. 2) We would gather them to meet together. 3) We would have the sisters wear a head covering. 4) We would leave the denominations. These were the four things I did for years until I was tired and began to think: Is this all?

Thank God, because of the Second World War, I was in Singapore. At the last minute, God brought me out and took me to India. In Shanghai, we had a proverb — “If you are so unlucky, you will land in India.” I had never thought of going to India even though people suggested it to me. I just laid it aside. But thank God, He led me to India. While I was there, I had time to read. So I spent the time in meditating before the Lord, and I began to read Mr. Spark’s books. The Lord opened my eyes and began to show me that it is Christ. If you look for Christ, there is no end to your seeking. If you look for something else, there will be a limit. In His mercy and grace He released me and showed me that Christ is unlimited. So I began to feel that I had something to talk about, and this is what I have been doing until now.

### **God’s Call for Overcomers**

“The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 19:10b). God’s purpose is for us to see Jesus. This is God’s will. So we see in the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, seven churches which are the churches at the end of the first century. What happened to them? Aside from the church in Philadelphia, which was filled with praise and no blame, a number of the churches had fallen. And because they had fallen, the Lord began to call for overcomers. The last call to the church is the call to overcome. So at the end of the first century, in every church there was the call to overcome, and this call has gone out to the church throughout the centuries.

In chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation is the call to overcome at the end of the first century. All those who overcome will receive reward in the Millennial Age. When you come to the second part of chapter 7, you will find there are numberless people. Thank God for the numberless people. They are all clothed with white clothing and have palm branches in their hands, praising God. Who are these numberless people? We believe these are the overcomers through the ages. No matter what the history of the church may be, thank God there will be those who overcome. Numberless people were there worshipping God. The Lord had taken care of them. But what about us? We are now in the twenty-first century. Is there anything in Revelation for us? I believe when

you come to Revelation 12, this is something that relates to us. Of course, there are many different interpretations of the book of Revelation.

### **Differences in Interpretation Can Separate the Lord's People**

I remember in the 1960s, I went to Peru because I was invited to visit an American couple there. At that time, there had been five missionaries killed by the Aucas, and the husband of the couple I visited was a brother of one of those who had been martyred. They loved the Lord. They went to Peru and lived in a place in which you had to fly in by the river. Half a year they lived in a small boat. They travelled on the Amazon River and visited the villages and preached the gospel. The other half of the year they lived in a truck. They would go through the high mountains in Peru and visit villagers. When I went there to visit them they took me in their boat and also in their truck to visit different villages. When he arrived at a village, the people would come and ask him to pull their teeth, and afterwards he would begin to speak to them.

I was with them for a few weeks. The day before I was to leave, they had a conference. Villagers and natives came out of the jungle because there was no road, but they wanted to gather together for the conference. Because I was leaving the next day they asked me to speak that night. Before the meeting, another missionary who had come from a neighboring village, an Englishman, came to our brother's home. When he saw me, he began to question me. Now I had heard of his background that he was a strict Brethren. So I tried to avoid anything that might not please him, but he tried to figure out where I stood. I noticed his questions were getting closer and closer, and finally came the question he wanted to ask me. He said, "What do you think of rapture?" Now the strict Brethren believe that there is going to be only one rapture and it will be before the Great Tribulation. Unfortunately, my interpretation was different, so I tried to avoid this question. But he kept getting closer and closer until it came out: "What do you think of rapture?" I said, "The whole church will be raptured." However, he was not satisfied. So he said, "How many times?" I knew he believed in one rapture before the Great Tribulation, but I had to be honest. I said, "Brother, I believe in rapture, but now my understanding is more than one rapture." And do you know what he said? "You do not believe the Bible." I said, "I believe the Bible as you do, but unfortunately, our interpretations are now different. If the Lord should show me the way you think, I am willing to change." But he insisted on saying, "You do not believe the Bible." After supper we walked to the meeting place together, and he said to me: "If you speak I will not speak." Now if it were you, what would you have done? He was a neighbor and I was just there for a visit and I will be leaving. So, of course, I said, "I will not speak." So I told the brother that I would not be speaking, and the next day I left. The natives came to our brother and wanted to know why I did not speak.

Oftentimes because of a difference in interpretation, we will be separated. However, we believe the same Bible, and if we continue to fellowship, gradually we will come to one mind. So do not be separated because of different interpretations. As long as we believe the Bible is the Word of God and we continue to fellowship—you may tell me what you think, and I can share with you what the

Lord has shown me—we will come to one mind; but there should be no insisting. How good that will be!

### **The Woman in Revelation Represents the Church**

So I am going to speak on Revelation 12. I hope you will not mind if you have a different interpretation. I do not mind if you have a different interpretation as long as it will profit us. Here in Revelation 12, John saw a great vision of a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and she cried in travail and pain to bring forth that child. We know that in the Bible, sometimes woman is used to represent the church. So this is the church during the time of the second coming of our Lord and we are very close to it. How close it is! He may come now. All the prophecies prior to the second coming of the Lord have been fulfilled. There are still prophecies to be fulfilled, but they concern the coming of the Lord and afterwards. So do not look for any prophecy to be fulfilled before the Lord can return. I want to warn you brothers and sisters that the Lord can come at any time. He can come today or He can come next year; we do not know. But this woman represents the church at this time because she is clothed with the sun which means she is related to Christ the Son. She has the moon under her feet because she is related to the Law. She had a crown of twelve stars on her head meaning she is also related to the Patriarch Age. She is the woman of the ages. She represents the church, and she is in travail.

In Matthew 24 the Lord Jesus said, “There will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be earthquakes and all kinds of trouble, but this is the beginning of birth pain” (see vv. 6-8). When a woman is to give birth, she will go through a period of travail and it will increase until the baby is born. This is what the church is now experiencing today; she is in travail to give birth to a man child.

### **The Red Dragon**

Then there is another vision, and it is of the red dragon. Without going into details, that dragon represents Satan. The church should be the target of Satan, but he is not thinking of the woman because she is already in his hand. What he is noticing is the womb, for he knows that when this man child is born, it will be his end. So he is waiting before the woman for the child to be born so he can devour him.

### **The Man Child**

Some people think the man child is Christ, but we know after Christ was born, He was not raptured to heaven right away. He lived on earth thirty-three and a half years. So this cannot represent Christ. This man child is raptured to the third heaven as soon as he is born. Who is the man child? This is a collective term; it represents a group of people and not just one person. Now who are these people? They are the overcomers in the last days because as soon as they are born,

they will be raptured to the third heaven. The air above us is the headquarters of Satan, but this man child is able to penetrate his headquarters and reach the throne. In other words, they had overcome Satan; thus, they are the overcomers at the time of the coming of the Lord. They represent us if we are overcomers. They will go through the air and reach the third heaven. They will be the welcoming party for the return of the Lord. After they are raptured to the third heaven, there will be war in the air. Michael and his angels will fight against Satan and his followers, and there will be no more place for Satan in the air. He will be thrown down to the earth, and the air will be cleared because Christ is going to descend from the throne to the air. When Satan is thrown to the earth, the Great Tribulation begins.

### **The Overcomers at the Last Stage**

#### ***They Overcome by the Blood of Jesus***

These are the overcomers at the last stage. How do they overcome? In verse 11 it says, “They have overcome him by reason of the blood of the Lamb.” That shows us they are not perfect. You know, we often think that only the perfect will be raptured, but aside from the Lord Jesus, there is no one who is perfect. We have sinned; but thank God, we know the preciousness of the blood of our Lord Jesus. Whenever we feel we have done something against God, immediately we come to the Lord for the cleansing of the blood.

I think you probably have heard what happened to Martin Luther. He was used by God to be the reformer of the church, and one day he had a dream. Satan came to him and showed him a scroll that said, “The sins of Martin Luther.” It was written inside and out. Satan laughed and said, “How dare you do the work of Reformation!” Martin Luther took a red pen and wrote over the scroll: “The blood of Jesus cleanses all sins,” and Satan left. How we treasure the blood of our Lord Jesus! We cannot live without His precious blood. Some people say, “Even the tears of repentance need to be cleansed.” By the blood of our Lord Jesus we will be cleansed. We often look for someone perfect, but we will not find them. However imperfect we are, if we trust the blood of our Lord Jesus and are always under the blood, then we will be cleansed.

#### ***They Overcome by the Word of Their Testimony***

“They overcome the enemy by reason of the word of their testimony.” They have the testimony that Jesus is Lord. And because they have that testimony within, when they say the Word, it is powerful.

You remember in the book of Acts when Paul went to Ephesus, God greatly used him. There were seven sons of a Jewish priest, and they were trying to drive out demons. They had seen Paul driving out demons in the name of Jesus, and they tried to use the same formula. They said, “I ask you to leave in the name of Jesus that Paul preached.” The demons said, “Jesus I know, Paul I am acquainted with, but who are you?” The demons overcame two of them, and they fled naked, and

this became known in all Ephesus. So unless we really have the testimony in our lives, “Jesus is Lord,” it is just words. If the lordship of Jesus is true in our lives, when we say the word, there is power behind it.

### ***They Overcome by not Loving Their Life Unto Death***

“And have not loved their life even unto death.” The life here is our self-life. They do not love their self-life but are willing to give it up that Christ may be their life. And because of this, they overcome the enemy.

### **The Great Tribulation**

May it be true of all who are here this morning, if we have this testimony, when Christ shall come, we will be raptured. We will be the welcoming party to welcome our Lord Jesus. After the air is clear, the Lord will descend from the throne to the air. On the earth, there will be the Great Tribulation. But thank God, even the Great Tribulation is for us because God will use it to wake up those Christians who are asleep, and out of the Great Tribulation there will come forth overcomers. We find this in Revelation 15 and I Thessalonians 4. The trumpet will be blowing, there will be the shout of the angels, and those who are dead in Christ will be raised in resurrection, and those who are still there will be changed. Where will they be raptured to? They are not raptured to the third heaven but to the air because the judgment seat of Christ will be taking place. While the judgment seat of Christ is going on, the wrath of God, represented by the seven vials, will be poured upon the earth. At the judgment seat of Christ, those who overcome will be rewarded with the Millennial Kingdom and they will rule with Christ for a thousand years. Those who have been overcome will be cast into outer darkness. People are very curious and often ask, “Now what is outer darkness?” I am not going to say. But in the outer darkness, during the Millennium time, they will be gnashing their teeth and repenting. After they have repented, in eternity they will also reign with Christ forever. This is the plan of God. The testimony of Jesus must be declared. May the Lord have mercy upon every one of us!

Shall we pray:

*Dear Lord, as we relate Thy Word, we thank Thee that Thou art so merciful and gracious. How is it that in Thy heart we will all be overcomers? Thou dost want us to rule and reign with Thee. Thou dost want to prepare us for that day. We thank Thee for gathering us for this time. As we by Thy grace go to our different places, may we all be vessels of Thy testimony. May we all be those who hasten Thy return. It is the cry of our heart: Come, Lord Jesus, come. We ask in Thy name. Amen.*