

What Child Is This?

Jesus the Warrior

Intro

As we've seen throughout this series, it's easy to get a distorted view of Jesus. We tend to make Jesus look like us, instead of responding to the real Jesus presented in Scripture. One of the biggest omissions when it comes to Jesus is failing to appreciate Jesus the warrior. The first time Jesus came to earth he came to be a sacrificial lamb, dying for the sins of the world. When he returns, though, he will come as a conquering warrior avenging his people and destroying his enemies. This week's Digging Deeper takes a look at what the Bible says about Jesus the warrior and what the implications are for us.

Jesus' Victory Over Satan

The Bible clearly affirms without qualification, that at the crucifixion Jesus disarmed and triumphed over the devil, and all the "principalities and powers" at his command. The unfolding of this conquest over Satan takes place in six stages in Scripture. First, the conquest was predicted by God himself in the Garden of Eden as part of his judgment on the serpent, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Secondly, the conquest began in the life of Jesus as he demonstrated his authority over demons and Satan. Thirdly, at the cross, Jesus achieved the conquest by freeing us from the slavery of sin and overpowering Satan (Col. 2:13-15). Fourthly, the resurrection shows the confirmation and announcement of the conquest. In the resurrection, Jesus shows that he has decisively defeated Satan and his life is universal proof. Fifthly, the conquest is extended to the people of the church. As people put their faith in Jesus Christ not only are their sins being forgiven, but they are being transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Sixthly, the conquest will be finally consummated in the future. When Jesus returns he will rid the world finally of Satan and his demons (John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, IVP, 231).

**Digging
Deeper**

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When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Colossians 2:13-15

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Scriptures on Jesus the Warrior

When Jesus returns to earth he will come in the form of a warrior. “He will sit on his glorious throne” (Matthew 25:31). And from that glorious throne he will reign. “The government shall be on his shoulder. . . .Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end . . . with justice and with righteousness . . . forevermore” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

That glory will be the glory of the Son of Man (Matthew 25:31). His coming is simply called the revelation of “his glory” (1 Peter 4:13). The joy of the saints, who “rejoice and are glad” at his coming (1 Peter 4:13), will be the joy of and praising the unclouded glory of Christ. This is why he is coming—“to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed” (2 Thess. 1:10).

And what will the display of all this glory be? It will be “the voice of an archangel, and . . . the trumpet of God. . . . The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place” (1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 6:14). It will be the fire of judgment. “The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire” (2 Thess. 1:7). All nations will be gathered before him, and every unbeliever “will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thess. 1:9). Kings of the earth and lowly slaves will hide themselves “in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains” and will cry out to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from . . . the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16). “Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him” (Rev. 1:7).

But the glory of the coming of the Lord will also be salvation. “Christ . . . will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but *to save* those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb. 9:28). “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore” (Rev. 21:4) (John Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, Crossway, 112-113).

The clearest picture of Jesus as a warrior comes from Revelation 19. This image of Jesus shows us that one day Jesus will vindicate his people and judge his enemies. He appears on a white horse, symbolizing his military victory over his enemies (19:11). “His eyes are a flame of fire” (19:12), as they were when he appeared as “one like a son of man” (1:14). None can hide from his heart-piercing gaze (2:18). On his head are “many crowns” (19:12), conveying visually his infinite authority and dominion, as does his name, “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (19:16).

“He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood” (19:13). This is the blood of God's enemies, a preview of the defeat of the beast and the false prophet, with the slaughter of earth's kings and armies (19:21). His robes are soaked blood red because he “treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty” (19:15), from which his enemies' blood flows deep and wide (14:20). Such a presentation of a divine Warrior, full of wrath and vengeance against those who disregard his authority, is offensive to many today. However, the consistent picture in Scripture is redemption *and* judgment. Redemption of those who are God's friends by grace entails vengeance on those who stubbornly persist as God's enemies (Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 270-271).

Jesus' Victory and Our Lives

In the Bible, “rulers and authorities” can refer to human governments. But when we read that on the cross Christ “disarmed the rulers and authorities” and “put them to open shame” and “triumphed over them,” we should think of the demonic powers that afflict the world. One of the

clearest statements about these evil powers is Ephesians 6:12. It says that Christians “do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the *rulers*, against the *authorities*, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Three times Satan is called “the ruler of this world.” Just as Jesus was coming to the last hour of his life he said, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). The death of Jesus was the decisive defeat of “the ruler of this world”—the devil. And as Satan goes, so go all his fallen angels. All of them were dealt a decisive blow of defeat when Christ died.

Not that they were put out of existence. We wrestle with them even now. But they are a defeated foe. We know we have the final victory. It is as though a great dragon has had his head cut off and is thrashing about until he bleeds to death. The battle is won. But we must still be careful of the damage he can do. In the death of Jesus, God was “canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14). This is how he “disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame.” In other words, if God’s law no longer condemns us, because Christ canceled our debt, then Satan has no grounds to accuse us.

Now, in Christ, no accusations can stand against God’s people. “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies” (Romans 8:33). Neither man nor Satan can make a charge stick. The legal case is closed. Christ is our righteousness. Our accuser is disarmed. If he tries to speak in the court of heaven, shame will cover his face. Oh, how bold and free we should be in this world as we seek to serve Christ and love people! There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Let us then turn away from the temptations of the devil. His promises are lies, and his power is stripped (John Piper, *The Passion of Jesus Christ*, Crossway, 102-103).

For Christians as for Christ, life spells conflict. For Christians as for Christ it should also spell victory. We are to be victorious like the victorious Christ. But we must realize that it would be utterly impossible for us by ourselves to fight and defeat the devil: we lack both skill and the strength to do so. It would also be unnecessary to make the attempt, because Christ has already done it. The victory of Christians, therefore, consists of entering into the victory of Christ and of enjoying its benefits. We can thank God that he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that Jesus, having been raised from the dead, is now seated at the Father's right hand in the heavenly realms. But God has “made us alive with Christ... and raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms.” In other words, by God's gracious power we who have shared in Christ's resurrection share also in his throne. If God has placed all things under Christ's feet, they must be under ours too, if we are in him. To borrow Jesus' own metaphor, now that the strong man has been disarmed and bound, the time is ripe for us to raid his palace and plunder his goods (1 Cor. 15:57; Eph. 1:20-23; 2:4-6; Mark 3:27).

It is not quite so simple as that, however. For though the devil has been defeated, he has not yet conceded defeat. Although he has been overthrown, he has not yet been eliminated. In fact, he continues to wield great power. This is the reason for the tension we feel in both our theology and our experience. On the one hand, we are alive, seated and reigning with Christ, as we have just seen, with even the principalities and powers of evil placed by God under his feet. On the other hand, we are warned that these same spiritual forces have set themselves in opposition to us, so that we have no hope of standing against them unless we are strong in the Lord's strength and clad in his armor. We live in the tension between the victory of Christ on the cross and the consummation of his victory at his return. While Satan has been decisively defeated by Jesus' work, he still is able to tempt us and sin still has real power in our lives if we let it. For Christians, the key is to live in the victory of Jesus as we await his return, and not be fooled by the schemes of the devil (Stott, 239-240).

Final Thoughts

In numerous places in the Bible, Jesus is described as a warrior. He handed Satan a decisive defeat through his death on the cross. When he returns, he will finish off Satan and his followers once and for all. As Christians, we live in between the time of Christ's victory on the cross and his final defeat of Satan. Satan is still the "ruler of this world" and he still seeks to destroy us. But we must remember that Jesus has won the victory, and by his Spirit we too can have victory over sin.

Home Group Questions

1. Why do you think the image of Jesus as a warrior is often neglected?
2. Why might the image of Jesus as a warrior be offensive to some people?
3. Read Colossians 2:13-15. According to this passage, when and how did Jesus defeat Satan and his demons?
4. Do you think it still makes sense to believe in the devil? What evidence do you see in our world that Satan and demonic forces exist?
5. How can we stay alert and protect ourselves from the schemes of Satan (Read 1 Peter 5:8-9)?
6. How does knowing that Jesus will return to conquer his enemies and vindicate his people encourage us today?

Personal Application

7. How can understanding Jesus' victory at the cross help you overcome persistent sins in your life?