

# OVERCOMING THE WORLD

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One of the most important doctrines taught in the New Testament is that Christians can and must overcome. The Greek word for this is “nikao,” which literally means “to subdue” or “to conquer.” (The noun form of this word is “nike,” meaning “conquest,” which has been adopted by the “Nike” shoe company, although in a much different context.) This word occurs 28 times in the entire New Testament, 17 of which are found in the book of Revelation. We can learn much by examining the scriptures where this word is used.

## **To him that overcomes**

A great promise is given by the Lord in each of the letters to the seven churches in Asia in Revelation chapters two and three. The promises include: to “eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev 2:7); to “not be hurt of the second death” (Rev 2:11); to “eat of the hidden manna,” and be given “a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev 2:17); to be given “power over the nations,” to “rule them with a rod of iron,” and to be given the morning star (Rev 2:26-28); to be clothed in white raiment, and not have our name blotted out of the book of life, but to have Christ confess our name before the Father and his angels (Rev 3:5); to be made “a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Rev 3:12); and to be granted to sit with Christ in his throne (Rev 3:21). Each of these seven promises is given to “*him that overcomes.*” Remember that this book was written to Christians who were suffering or about to suffer terrible persecution for their faith in Christ. The book was written to them (and also to us) as an encouragement to endure the afflictions and to overcome the temptations. Revelation clearly points out the great eternal reward that awaits us in the next life if we overcome in this life, but also warns us against the great eternal punishment that awaits those who do not overcome. Revelation 12:11 points out *how* we overcome: by the blood of Christ, by the word of God, and by loving the Lord as our Master above even our own lives. Revelation 15:2 gives a picture of the redeemed in heaven and it is emphasized that these are the ones

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(continued)

who had overcome Satan and his devices. Revelation 21:7 sums it all up by saying, *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*

## **The victory through Christ**

Jesus is the ultimate example of overcoming. He suffered for righteousness' sake to the point of dying on the cross, but overcame every temptation and never disobeyed God no matter how severe the sufferings and temptations were (Php 2:5-8; 1 Pet 2:19-25). In John 16:33, Christ said, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* In spite of our past sins, through our faith in Christ, we too can overcome as Jesus did. Evil must not overcome us (Rom 12:21). *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4). God is more powerful than the devil, and through Him, we *can* be victorious (1 John 4:4). His armor can make us stand against the wiles of the devil and enable us to quench all of his fiery darts (Eph 6:10-18). Revelation 3:21 reminds us that Jesus overcame and was rewarded with an eternal throne, and if we overcame as he did, we will sit with Christ in his throne. We will be persecuted as Jesus was (John 15:18-20; 2 Tim 3:12). But no matter how much we suffer in this life, we need to remember the great inheritance that awaits us in eternity! *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Rom 8:18). *“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Cor 4:16-18). But we will receive that great reward only if we overcome. Heaven is not for quitters. That is why the Bible stresses that we should be faithful (Rev 2:10), hold fast (Rev 2:13,25; 3:11), and keep God's word (Rev 3:8; 14:12) even to the point of dying.