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In What Way Has Jesus Overcome the World if There's Still Suffering and Sin Here?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about in what way Jesus has “overcome the world” (John 16:33) if we still have tribulation, suffering, and moral decay here and whether John’s falling in fear at Jesus’ feet in Revelation 1:13–18 indicates Jesus severed his personal, earthly relationship with John.

* In what way has Jesus “overcome the world” (John 16:33) if we still have tribulation, suffering, and moral decay in many countries?

* John was one of Jesus’ best friends, so why does he fall in fear at Jesus’ feet in Revelation 1:13–18? Has Jesus severed his personal, earthly relationship with John?

Transcript

[music] [ding] This is Amy Hall and you're listening to the #shereaskpodcast, and this is the podcast where we take your questions and then I ask them to Greg Cockel and then he answers, and then I throw in something at the end. That's all works. - That's better than what I offered, which is why the teamwork is so good.

- All right, let's go with the question from Charles. What does it mean in John 16:33 where Jesus says, "I have overcome the world." Why do we still have tribulations suffering, wrestling spiritually with the enemy and extreme moral decay in many countries when he has conquered the world? - Okay, so in a certain sense, this is easy to answer because he says, "These things I've been spoken to you so that you may have peace." Okay, now I'm giving you some foundation he's saying, "Okay, I want you to feel good about the future." Okay, I want to feel why. He says, "Because in the world, you have tribulation." He says earlier, this is or actually it's just before the great High Priestly Prayer, chapter 17, where I don't see it specifically here, but he says, "I'm not telling you, Father, I'm not asking you to take them out of the world." All right, but keep them in the world.

Then I was keep them and care for them for that period of time they're in the world. So what he's saying is this, "In the world, you have tribulation, and I'm not going to take you out of that world, but I'm telling you something. I have overcome it, and the overcoming entails a couple of different things, and this is the point of the encouragement." It isn't that you're having some tribulation, but don't worry, in a few minutes, I'm going to stop it all and everything's going to be fine.

No, that's not his point. His point is to affirm that. I often say, you know, when I'm talking to Christian audiences about struggles in Christian life, I offer them this aphorism.

Life is hard, and then you die. Okay. Now that's meant to be an encouragement because it encourages me.

It emboldens me to face up to the realities of a difficult life that I will have to deal with until I die, and when I die, it's over. I don't mean my life is over. I mean, the hardship is over.

After that, rest, glory, fun stuff. Okay. That's why Paul says in Romans 8, "I do not count the sufferings of this present life," Jesus says in this world, you have tribulation, "to even compare to the glories that are to follow." In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, he says, "Momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory." So there are two things going on here.

There is hardship and there is reward, and the hardship is now and the reward is later, and the reward is possible because of what Jesus has done for us. He has overcome the world. Now, I think that has a dual concept, a dual application, if you will.

It is an overcoming that helps us in the moment. We're not the victims of the world. We may be victimized after a fashion from one perspective, but Jesus is there with us as the overcomer, and he helps us to persevere through the hardship so that we will take the benefit of the hardness of this life that we reap in the future.

That's the one thing. And the second thing is we reap it in the future because of the overcoming Jesus did on the cross that secures our future with him and is the thing that is the ultimate thing that defeats the devil. I'm trying to think of a more modern metaphor, a military metaphor.

It's almost like Patton is saying, "Look, there are the bad guys. There's the Germans. Okay, get your tanks going.

We got this. I got this. It's going to be hard.

We're going to fight hard, but we're going to win this battle." Now, of course, that's a human metaphor illustration, and Patton could have lost. But in this particular case, we know our commander has won. We are still fighting the battle, but we're encouraged to

fight it confidently and embrace the difficulties of the battle because our commander has secured not just the victory ultimately, but secured our ability to fight well on his terms.

Fighting well doesn't mean that we always stop the enemy now from causing us trouble today. It means persevering through the difficulty. Okay? And this is why life is hard, and then you die as an aphorism is really helpful to me.

And I tell to other people, I says, don't have the wrong expectations about what this life is going to give you. Have the right expectation. That's what Jesus said.

Life is hard, and then you die. That's my paraphrase of Jesus' comment. In this world, you have tribulation, but I've overcome the world.

It's not always going to be this way. And I'll give you the way I think about it because everybody has troubles. And lots of times, spiritual leaders have all kinds of troubles that most people who look at the product of their life are not aware of.

Their secret crosses they carry. And this is the case with lots and lots of people. And so in my own case, when I think about the challenges that I face that are very difficult for me, that are private, I think of it this way.

I think in the world, you have tribulation. Okay, Greg, what's happening is not unusual. It's par for the course.

It's the way it works for everybody. But take courage, some translation say be of good cheer. That's a little much for me.

I like to take courage better because I'm not so cheerful about it, but I can be courageous about it. All right, because I have overcome the world. What am I doing here? I'm making an investment now in my retirement.

Now, I'm not talking about this world retirement. Like when I quit stand a reason and I sit around and, you know, drink mint juleps in the beach or something, I don't do that. That's not my style.

But I'm not talking about that. What I'm talking about is in this world, we are logging time for a benefit in the next world where the hardships of this world will no longer be present. Okay, I talk about it a bit at the end of the story of reality and in perfect mercy and what we get, how this in the book, in the section on actually on resurrection, our final resurrection, I talk about what that's going to be like.

And I'm not interested in streets of gold, you know, and everybody having a picnic. When you hear some of these stories about people who have gone to heaven and come back, allegedly what they experience is everybody's sitting around having a picnic with flowers all around them. You know, it's interesting.

The book Revelation talks about a city, not a park, you know, just just saying in any event, the that doesn't appeal to me. That doesn't sound like fun sitting around having a picnic. But there's going to be meaningful activity that is the reward of the perseverance of this period, momentary light of fiction, momentary light of eternity light in comparison to the to the glory that's to follow.

This all fits together. And this is something Jesus has secured our ability to endure now and to benefit later. That's what this passage is talking about.

It's not talking about getting rid of all the woes of this world. It's just the opposite. It's explaining the overcoming Jesus has done for us to help us persevere through it and then reap the benefit in the new heavens and the new earth.

So I'm that's the way I take this passage and I'm I'm encouraged by it because of the the fairly raw acknowledgement of the difficulties that this life presents to us, which then it turns out to be, yeah, I know it's hard. It is. Okay, let's just accept that and keep going.

That helps me. If I'm expecting, you know, light duty here and it gets hard, then that's makes me crabby. If I keep reminding myself, okay, this isn't the place where I rest, where where where it's all going to be just right.

That's a different life. That's the life we yearn for. That's what we're made for.

Or maybe better put, that's what we're being made for in this life. JP Morlind once said to me that this life is where God makes us fit to spend eternity with him. Great perspective.

And I know this passage from 2 Corinthians 4, momentary light affliction. I know this one's from Romans 8 because I reflect on them often because I need to reflect on them often. By the way, notice this is John 16.

This is almost the end of the upper room discourse. This is Jesus last night with his disciples prior to the crucifixion and resurrection. What is he giving them? Marching orders, encouragement, helping them to understand.

You're going to get the Holy Spirit. This is, I mean earlier, John 14 and 15 and now 16, you know, all of these things he's preparing them for. And then he's saying, okay, it's going to be hard.

Don't worry. I got this. I got this.

I'm with you. Even until the end of the age, he says later. And then he prays for them and then he prays, don't take them out of this world.

Keep them in the world while they're here. That's all momentary light affliction. That's all down payment on the retirement fund.

And for some reason, Amy, that way of looking at it helps me because I realize this isn't wasted. This is an investment. This is going to produce returns for me in a way that really matters where neither moth nor rust destroy nor thieves break in and steal.

So part of this question is just the problem of evil. When we've talked about that before, reasons why we're in a fallen world, why God hasn't ended the world yet. But I wanted to, because in this passage, it starts with, or this verse, it says, these things I've spoken to you, I just want to back up a little bit to give some context here, starting in verse 16.

You want to do it. Never read a Bible verse, huh? All right. If you must.

And then I want to relate it to first Peter, because I think Peter goes a lot more into this in that book. But here's what Jesus says, a little while, and you will no longer see me. And again, a little while, and you will see me.

So of course he's talking about, he's talked, well, I don't know if he's talking here specifically about coming, rising from the dead then or coming back, because a few verses later, he says, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor, she is pain, because her hour is come.

But when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore, you too have grief now, but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice and no one will take your joy away from you. So I think there's a double thing here because of course he comes back, he's resurrected three days later.

A double reference like, right. But then he of course goes away again and he's going to come back again. So this idea that we will suffer while he is gone, but he will come back, and then we will have our joy.

That's kind of the context of all of this. Plus it's the same passage where he says, the upper room discourse where he says, I go to prepare a place for you. I think the immediate reference and what you just read probably is the resurrection because they will grieve and then they'll be so overjoyed when Jesus returns.

But I think it does have this longer term reference because of some of these other remarks. So in first Peter, what Peter talks about is how he's trying to prepare them to suffer now so that we can have glory with Jesus later. And the idea is right now we are tempted to go along with the world because we don't want to be, we don't want to suffer at the hands of the world.

We don't want to deal with that. But Peter's point is that it's better to suffer for doing what is right and to suffer at the hands of men now than to suffer at the hands of God later. So the context he gives for all this, he talks about how Jesus has, he wins.

I mean, basically that's the bottom line. It doesn't make sense to go along with the world if Jesus is already the victor. It's just a matter of time before he comes back.

And so I think what this is talking about Jesus conquering the world is that he has won and he has conquered death and sin on the cross and he will come back and he will be the victor and he will separate the sheep from the goats. And those who are in the book of life will be with him forever and those who aren't will be punished for their sins. And so because of that, we will have tribulation now because the world will hate us.

But he is the victor. So we need to be on his side and that's the winning team. So we suffer now for doing what is right because he has conquered the world.

He is the victor and we want to have glory with him later. Perfect. Peter, what's interesting is this very verse is right after he tells them that they're all going to desert him.

And what he says to Peter, not in this gospel, it's in your afraid to John now. I'm sorry, I'm afraid to John because he says, do you now believe beholden hours coming and has already come for you to be scattered each to his own home and to leave me alone. And in another gospel, he says to Peter, but when you return, I want you to strengthen your brothers.

And that's exactly what he does in 1 Peter. It's so interesting to see that Peter who went through this not only heard from Jesus, but experienced turning away from him out of fear, he comes back and now he explains to us why we shouldn't do that. Because he's had time to think of it.

He's had time to, he has the Holy Spirit now. And so we do well to learn from Peter in 1 Peter. All right, let's go into a question from Rick McCleary.

In Revelation 1, 13 through 18, John reunites with Jesus. On earth, John was one of Jesus's best friends. But here Jesus scares the life out of John and he falls at his feet as though dead.

Is this more personal than what appears in English? Or, as Lord has Jesus severed his personal earthly relationship with John? Well, that's a false dichotomy, I think. It's not necessarily one or the other. There could be another reason now.

At this point, we're speculating. I have no reason to think that he severed somehow his earthly relationship with John. Remember what Paul says is to be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord.

Okay. And I'd much rather be with the Lord than here. And so, he says the one in 2 Corinthians, I think, and the other in Philippians, because in Philippians, he was in jail and he wasn't sure whether he was going to survive that imprisonment, that first

imprisonment.

So, which he did. And notice though the characterization there is that, you know, to be with the Lord is kind of cool. It's kind of good.

It's the better thing to do. It isn't like, "Who are you, Paul?" "Oh, wait, I have a vague recollection. Did I talk to you on the road to Damascus?" I went, "Okay, yeah.

Well, I got other things to attend to, so get out of my sight." No, it's not like that. You don't get that sense. Now, it does raise the question of what is going on there in Revelation, and it scares John, because this didn't happen in Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in the Gospels or in the beginning of the book of Acts.

So, what's going on? Clearly, and you can see this from the description, there's a totally different kind of manifestation of the resurrected Jesus in Revelation than we have in the Gospels. And I'm not exactly sure what's going on there. I don't really research it to find other people's opinion.

It might be that Jesus' glorious self was, in some measure, what's the right word here, "veiled" from them at the post-resurrection experience? And it makes sense to me that that might be the case. "veiled" then, and then later, there he is in Revelation in his full resurrected glory, so much so that it's terrifying to John, who had spent his whole ministry with him. There's something else that took place that was just awe-inspiring.

Well, why wouldn't he do that at the post-resurrection appearances? Because, I mean, it seems to me, in this just speculation. If he had done that, what did Jesus want to convince the people of their right in the beginning? That he rose from the dead? It's me. The disciples were not inclined to think that Jesus was going to die and rise from the dead.

Okay? And he right has gone through great lengths to demonstrate this is not part of their expectation, all right? If he had manifest himself in this unbelievably glorious way, what they would have rather expected to do is to think he was a spiritual being in this glorified, magnificent glorified state. In fact, this is what Jesus did say to them, "I'm not a spirit. This is flesh and blood here.

Feel my body. Let's have some food." You know, kind of thing. So it makes sense to me that Jesus would appear in a certain sense, risen but less glorious in his manifestation.

So still somewhat veiled in his glory? Yeah, veiled in his glory and more human to put it just simply, just more human, because this would reinforce their understanding that he is risen. He wasn't a ghost that came back from the grave. It was the one who came out of the grave.

The body's gone. Why? Because the body has been raised and then they meet Jesus in a

recognizable form. Now there was something going on in the end of Luke and the road to Emmaus.

They didn't recognize him right away, but the text, as I recall, says, "Jesus veiled his identity from them, kept his identity from them." And then when they broke bread, then the scales came off, so to speak, and they recognized him. So that was purposeful on Jesus' part. But in this particular case, generally speaking, he's showing up because he wants them to recognize, "I'm the guy who died on the cross.

This is me, the same me. Here's my body. Look at the, here's the wounds.

I can eat whatever. I'm not a ghost." He actually says that, I think, in one of the accounts. Had he manifested himself in unmitigated glory, kind of like we have in the book of Revelation, then it would have been hard for, I think, for the apostles to conclude that this is the resurrected Jesus rather than the return of Jesus' glorious spirit.

And that may be why you have a different characterization in the gospels of how Jesus appeared to the disciples than you have with John's appearance in the book of Revelation. And keep in mind, too, he's still the Lamb of God of the gospels. In Revelation, he's the conquering Messiah, the lion of the tribe of Judah.

And so the manifestation of Jesus in those circumstances is more consistent with the role he plays as the returning judge to the earth with a sword in his hand, so to speak. So that would make sense to me of the difference. I don't think the difference is he just, "We're not friends anymore.

I've already left that. All you plebs behind, you know, you stinking little fishermen. I've got bigger fish to fry, so to speak.

I've got more glorious things to do about how to worship me. No, I don't think so at all. I think it was something else that was going on entirely.

Also, I wonder, since this is a vision, God is, well, Jesus is being revealed in ways that maybe we can't see with our human eyes. Like, maybe, well, I'm trying to... Like a first-person private experience, not a... Yeah, so because it says it's a vision, so Jesus is revealing himself to him in all of his glory in that vision. But yeah, I agree with you.

I don't think there's any sort of loss of that relationship. Although, of course, when you, I guess it would be kind of like, I'm trying to think of it. You know the story, the Prince and the Popper.

I don't know why this came to mind, but the Prince is... The Prince switches place with a commoner and is living the life as commoner. When it suddenly revealed to him that he's real to others, that he's royalty, suddenly people are bowing down before him because they get a glimpse of his royalty that they didn't see before, even though they were

seeing him with their own eyes. So I think that's what's going on here.

He's seeing more of who he is, even though he still knows Jesus and Jesus still knows him, he's seeing him in a different way now. It's a great movie, I think. It was an arrow flin, I don't even know.

There are different ones. There's a Disney version. Oh, I don't trust the Disney version.

He flat out. Unless it was made 50 years ago. Anyway, it's another issue.

All right. Well, thank you, Charles. Thank you, Rick.

We love hearing from you. Send us your questions on Twitter with the hashtag #STRS. Or go through our website on our hashtag #STRS.

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