

# Christus Victor

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## How we got here

What was Christ's victory? To understand that we need to first understand what was the battle. Victory must be tied to struggle and battle. The greater the battle, the greater the victory. What did Jesus defeat?

We tend to view Jesus' death on the cross as something done to provide forgiveness from sin. That is true, but it is a minimalist view of what He did. Had he only provided forgiveness from sin on the cross, His death would have been anemic and would have failed to solve the problems of the cosmos.

What we find in the beginning is that the creation did not happen in a sterile vacuum. Adam and Eve were not the only imagers of God on the scene. There were three "groups" present: God and His faithful spiritual sons, His rebellious spiritual sons, and Adam and Eve. (For the record, not all this can be seen in the Genesis narrative, but can be "back filled" from other Scripture and relevant texts from neighboring cultures.) What was the relationship between these groups? Which of these needed to be defeated? Obviously the rebellious spiritual sons. Seen this way, the creation recorded in Genesis 1&2 was an act of war. God was initiating His strategy against the rebellious heavenly host. He was going to create a "weaker" being and use them to destroy the "greater" beings.

Adam and Eve were installed as the viceroys over creation. Adam, with Eve as his co-ruler, was the "god of this world" with authority over the creation. The serpent offered them the opportunity to become like the "elohim," God's spiritual sons, an opportunity they chose to accept. The unintended, for them, consequence was that God's spiritual adversary usurped their position of authority, became the god of this world, and man became his slave. By getting Adam and Eve to switch sides, the adversary gained additional territory and authority.

Jesus' primary act via the cross, death, and resurrection was the dethroning of the adversary, taking back the rulership of the cosmos for man, and offering humanity freedom from bondage to the rebellious, evil spiritual sons of God to every person who chooses to submit to his lordship. The greatness of His victory is defined by the greatness of His adversary. Defeat of an insignificant foe doesn't warrant much praise. Jesus became one of the "lesser" beings and from that position defeated the adversary, the god of this world, released humanity from slavery to him, set the captives free, and restored back to humanity the dignity and honor which they had in the garden. Without the defeat of the adversary, there would have been no salvation or freedom for humanity.

The teaching of Jesus on the strong man as entering his house and binding him up is in the context of deliverance and spiritual warfare. He depicts himself as warring against and defeating the kingdom of satan. He defeated the strongman and spoiled his goods through his victory on the cross.

## Introduction

Gregory Boyd, in his seminal book, God at War, (InterVarsity Press, 1997), states the following:

“In keeping with the Old Testament and especially the apocalyptic worldview of the time, we have seen that Jesus and his earliest disciples operated within a warfare worldview. In direct contrast to the ‘enlightened’ worldview that has characterized Western culture for the last several hundred years, but in essential agreement with the worldview of almost all other cultures throughout history (and increasingly that of Western culture as well, as it heads into the ‘postmodern’ age), Jesus and his earliest disciples believed that the universe was inhabited by a myriad of spiritual beings, some good and some evil, which were at war with one another. **And they believed that Jesus was the decisive player in that warfare.**” (Emphasis mine)

The most fundamental unifying theme throughout Jesus’ ministry is that he was setting up the kingdom of God over against the kingdom of Satan. Jesus’ exorcistic and healing ministry constitutes preliminary victories over this enemy, while his death and resurrection spell Satan’s ultimate defeat” (p.238).

He continues, “Though Satan’s fortress has in principle been toppled and the strong man himself ‘tied up,’ his fortress has not yet toppled to the ground. Though the power to set people free from the scourges of this enemy has in principle been established and distributed to all who follow Christ, the world continues to be held hostage by this (now mortally wounded and bound) strong man (1 John 5:19).

As the New Testament authors realize, this means there is still work to be done, **and the church is the means by which it is to be done.**” (Emphasis mine p.239)

“*The cosmic significance of the cross.* Since at least the time of Anselm in the eleventh century, A.D., and especially since the Reformation in the sixteenth century, **the tendency of the Western church has been to focus almost all its attention on the anthropological dimension of the atonement, usually to the neglect of the cosmic dimension that is central to the New Testament.** In the standard Protestant view, the chief thing God was accomplishing when he had Jesus die on the cross was satisfying his perfect justice and thereby atoning for our sins. The work of the cross is centered on us. Other aspects of the cross, to the extent that they are acknowledged are seen as subsidiary to this anthropocentric dimension of Christ’s work.

“From the perspective of the New Testament, I maintain, the anthropological significance of Christ’s death and resurrection is rooted in something more fundamental and broad that God was aiming at: to defeat once and for all his cosmic archenemy, Satan, along with the other evil powers under his dominion, and thereby to establish Christ as the legitimate ruler of the cosmos, and human beings as his legitimate viceroys upon the earth.” (Emphasis mine p.240)

“Thus as Scripture portrays the matter, the foundational reason Christ appeared was ‘to destroy the works of the devil’ (1 John 3:8), to disarm ‘the rulers and authorities’ (Col. 2:15), and to ‘destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil’ (Heb. 2:14). The consequence of this victory is that he is seated on his rightful throne, the whole cosmos is liberated from a tyrannical and destructive ruler, humanity is delivered ‘from the power of darkness and transferred...into the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13), **and all who accept it are thereby reinstated to the original position and responsibility of stewards of the creation that God had always intended for us.**” (Emphasis mine p.241).

*Christ’s victory applied to us:* “So it is throughout the New Testament: Salvation is most fundamentally construed as being the direct result of Jesus having overcome the powers of darkness through his work on the cross. In other words, **Christ’s cosmic victory results in our personal salvation.**

The basic pattern found throughout the New Testament when it speaks of our salvation in Christ is first to state what Christ accomplished on a cosmic level, then to present what this means to us. This pattern reemphasizes the point that the central significance of the cross is found in the fact that through it Christ won a cosmic battle against Satan. **It’s anthropological significance is a consequence of this.**” (Emphasis mine p.250)

## Boyd unpacked!

To summarize Boyd:

1. Jesus' work on the cross must first and foremost be seen as a cosmic warfare event. It was an act of war against his spiritual enemies, whom he soundly defeated, stripping them of their illegitimate authority and rulership.
2. Personal salvation, that is your and my redemption, was an essential, but subsidiary or secondary goal of the cross event.
3. Reformation theology largely ignored the cosmic significance of Jesus' death, or at best inverted the order, by placing ourselves at the center of the work of the cross.
4. We are now to participate in Jesus' war against his enemies, enforcing the victory on the cross.
5. We can do that because Jesus' victory is our victory also.
6. If Jesus had not defeated the cosmic powers, we would still be in bondage to them and our personal salvation would have been anemic at best.
7. We now become active members of Jesus' army engaged in warfare against Jesus' cosmic enemies

"And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" (1Co 15:17, NKJV)

So according to Paul, the cross did not provide the victory over the devil, it was the resurrection. We will look more at that next week.

## The human element

1. Jesus became human

God did not choose to wipe out His enemies on the purely spiritual plane. They, the Godhead, chose from before the foundation of the world for Jesus to become human. "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1Pe 1:20, NKJV). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (Joh 1:14, NKJV). The strategy appears to have been to create another hitherto unknown being called "Adam" (man), who would become the replacement for the rebellious spirits and be the medium of their judgment and demise.

2. Where Adam and Eve failed by breaching their loyalty to God, Jesus remained faithful. Thus the language that says:

- "because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." (John 5:30b)
- "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Php 2:8, NKJV)
- "saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."" (Luk 22:42, NKJV)

Where Adam chose to deviate from the plan, Jesus stuck to the plan and remained loyal to the Father at all times.

3. Jesus will never return to His former status as a purely spiritual being. He is forever a man! "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, **the Man Christ Jesus,**" (1Ti 2:5, NKJV)

4. Whereas Adam and Eve only had authority over the material realm, now with Jesus, **authority over both realms** was in the hands of a man: Jesus. "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me **in heaven and on earth.**" (Mat 28:18, NKJV)

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## What are the implications?

1. We live in a war zone

2. Faith is believing that we have the resources to effectively fight and win against God's, and therefore our, enemies
3. What was true of Jesus, as the forerunner of the faith, is also true for us.
4. We need to walk in total submission to Jesus as our Lord to effectively navigate the war zone in which we live. "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luk 6:46, NKJV)
5. Prepare for war!
6. Obey orders
7. There is no division between faith and works!
8. The essence of evil is the unceasing desire for more

## The lust for more

"It seems God used Satan's insatiable lust for more (viz. his desire to capture the Son) to take away what he had already acquired." P.256

"God used Satan's evil to bring about Satan's own demise." P.256

"God orchestrated the destruction of Satan's empire by having it devour itself through its own evil. The cross and resurrection were the central means to this downfall and God used Satan himself to bring it about." P.259

The lust for more is at the heart of evil. To be satisfied is at the heart of good.

**Monitor you "lust for more" quotient**

## The armor

The armor of God is not a mystical exercise you do every day. (When did you take it off that you need to put it on again?). It is a lifestyle that needs to be developed and perfected.

Eph 6:13 Therefore **take up** the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with **truth**, having put on the breastplate of **righteousness**,

Eph 6:15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of **the gospel of peace**;

Eph 6:16 above all, taking the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Eph 6:17 And take the **helmet of salvation**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is **the word of God**;

Eph 6:18 **praying always** with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, **being watchful** to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

The armor of God is a lifestyle that protects us from evil.

For Jesus to rise from the dead, He needed to defeat him who had the power of death.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, **that through death He might destroy him** who had the power of death, **that is, the devil**," (Heb 2:14, NKJV)