
Christ's Triumph Over the Demonic Powers (1)

Many people earnestly seek victory and go to great lengths to avoid defeat. In sport, this involves intense training and careful planning. Modern warfare is carried out with high-powered plotting and expensive technology. Think of all the frantic effort and skilful marketing that goes into political elections!

The Christian too is vitally interested in victory or triumph, and pained and left desolate by loss. We seek victory over sin, the flesh, the world and the devil. Sadly, in our lives, we too often transgress, and experience the shame and misery of defeat.

Colossians 2:14-15 proclaims the great victory of our Saviour and the triumph of His cross. It describes Christ's work as that of "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

In some places in Scripture, "principalities" and "powers" (15) are used of civil rulers (Rom. 13:1-3; Titus 3:1). Usually, they refer to ranks of angels, as in Ephesians 3:10, where "the principalities and powers *in heavenly places*" marvel at God's "manifold wisdom." Speaking of our Lord Jesus, Colossians 1:16 declares that "all things were created by him, and for him," both "in heaven" and "in earth," whether "visible" or "invisible" (to us currently), including the angels: "thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." Christ is "the head of all principality and power" (2:10) or, more simply, "angels" (18).

Colossians 2 speaks of a cosmic battle between Jesus Christ and the demonic powers (15), headed by Satan, at the cross (14). This cosmic battle is presented in terms taken from human warfare and military victory, especially *Roman* triumph.

Let us follow the progress of the battle in Colossians 2:15. First, and presupposed in this verse, is victory in the conflict itself. Our Saviour defeated the demonic hordes at the cross conclusively and decisively.

Second, there is the disarming of the conquered enemy. An earthly example of this is recorded in I Samuel 31, where the Philistines defeated the Israelites on Mount Gilboa, and proceeded to strip the slain and take their armour. At the cross, Christ "spoiled" (Col. 2:15) or disarmed Satan and his demons of their weapons.

Third, and this is an especially Roman feature, there is the triumphal procession. The leading survivor of the forces defeated by the Romans would be kept alive. He and his men would be transported to the imperial capital. Leading the victory parade through its thronged streets would be the Roman general in his war chariot. Behind him would come the leader of the conquered army and his wretched men in chains, with the Roman crowds cheering wildly.

Colossians 2:15 declares that our Redeemer "made a shew of [the fallen angels] openly, triumphing over them." In other words, Jesus Christ so routed the demonic hosts at the cross that He made a public spectacle of them in His triumph!

Rev. Stewart

Covenant Reformed News

September 2019 • Volume XVII, Issue 17

The Idea of the Organic in Scripture (2)

I have, over the years, received many questions that deal with Bible texts supposedly teaching the well-meant and gracious offer of the gospel. As I said in my last article, the problem is often that people do not take into consideration nor understand that God deals with mankind "organically." Since I wrote the first article, I received two letters dealing with matters that concern the truth of God's organic dealings with man. I will address the Scripture verses that they cite as evidence of how important it is to know and understand the organic dealings of God with the world He has created.

(1) The first text contains words Jesus uttered concerning Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34; Matt. 23:37).

The relation here to the reality of organisms is the important relationship of the family. Parents, the God-appointed leaders of the family, are responsible for their children and for their conduct. What parents do and how they conduct themselves have implications for their children.

Bearing that in mind, one can easily understand that the text does not even begin to say that, though Christ wanted to gather the wicked Jews under His wings, they refused. Hence, so men argue, men thwart Jesus' will. His desire is not realized because of the wickedness of the Jews.

But the text does not say that. The wicked Jewish leaders, especially "the Pharisees" (Luke 13:31), are not the ones whom Jesus desires to save but their "children." This desire was not wholly realized in Jesus' earthly ministry. It was not carried out because the wicked Jews not only rejected His ministry but they refused to permit their children to be gathered by Christ. They opposed Jesus with such bitter hatred that they also did all that they could to stop their children from following Christ.

Yet there is another "organism" referred to here. It is the organism of the Jewish nation as a whole, called, as it often is in Scripture, "Jerusalem." The entire nation named after its capital city. Jerusalem was the centre of the nation politically and spiritually, for there was the throne of David and the temple in which God dwelt with His people. The Jewish nation as a whole is called "Jerusalem" (as America is sometimes referred to as Washington DC or the UK as London). The nation as a whole had wickedly rejected Christ. That is why the nation was destroyed in AD 70, when Jerusalem was demolished by the Roman armies under Titus.

(continued on p. 2)

Parents, for example, who will not worship in a sound church on the Lord's day commit a grave sin. But if they refuse to allow their children to go to church (perhaps with a grandmother or grandfather) their sin is multiplied. The same is true of churches and nations, such as America or those in Europe, that forsake the gospel. The church or nation as a whole is forsaken by God and terrible judgments await it.

Yet in them now are people of God, as there were in the nation of Israel, and these people are saved. They are a part of the organism but they are elect. The organism of the fig tree of Israel (which Jesus cursed), though dead, still had some living branches.

Those are "thy children" referred to in Luke 13:34. Jesus desired to save them, though the nation was doomed to destruction. Moreover, He not only *wanted* to save them; He *did* save them. After Pentecost, thousands of Jerusalem's children were saved (Acts 2:41; 4:4). Before the destruction of Israel, God took His people out of the nation, as He took Lot and his daughters out of the homosexual Sodom and Gomorrah before He rained fire and brimstone on them (Gen. 19:1-26)—as God will do also when the elect are taken out of wicked Europe and N. America.

There is not even a hint in the text that can support so God-degrading a heresy as the bizarre notion of the well-meant offer of the gospel, a weak and ineffectual desire of the Almighty and unchangeable Jehovah to save those whom He has eternally reprobated!

For more, see "Quotes on Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34" (<https://cprc.co.uk/quotes/matthew23v37>).

(2) Another text is Matthew 11:21: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

First of all, Chorazin and Bethsaida were two cities in Israel, which here represent the entire nation, even though there were elect in both cities and in the nation. The cities are organisms as cities, and the cities in the nation represent the entire nation. The nation and its cities had rejected Christ: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

Second, the same is true of Tyre and Sidon. As the two chief cities in Phoenicia, they represented the entire nation. (Whether there were elect in those cities or not, we do not know, although in Israel's history occasional references are made to believers there, such as the widow with whom Elijah stayed in I Kings 17:8-24 and the lady whose daughter Jesus healed in Matthew 15:21-28. Isaiah 23 pronounces God's judgments on Tyre but it also contains a promise of salvation in verse 18.) But, as nations, the Phoenicians had not had the gospel and so could not reject it.

Third, the sin of Israel was, therefore, far greater than the sin of Tyre and Sidon. This is Jesus' point. Never to have had the gospel and to live in sin is not nearly as dreadful a sin as having had Christ in one's land, seeing Him, beholding His miracles and hearing His preaching, yet rejecting Him. Yet not only would the Jews not believe in the Messiah but they killed Him for who He was. That is Europe and America today! And this was true and is true always.

(3) John 3:16, the favourite text of the Arminians, also speaks of the whole creation as the "world." God created the entire creation as an organism: the heavens and their heavenly bodies, the earth and all its contents, and the human race in Adam. As man is finding out more and more, the whole creation is intimately related so that no part of it exists independently from any other part. Further, man was created as the head of the creation and what he does in relation to God affects the whole. When Adam fell, the curse of God came on all the creation.

That creation God loves. His love is revealed in making His own Son the new head of the creation, which head redeems it by delivering it from the curse. That is the organism of John 3:16. Well, as that final organism is formed by God, the dead and useless parts of it are pruned away. That is, the devils (for even the heavenly creation and its inhabitants will belong to the new creation with Christ at its head) and reprobate humans will be pruned away and destroyed forever. But the organism will be saved and the elect people in it will be saved as believers who belong to Christ, the head of all.

For more on John 3:16, ask us for the free pamphlet, "God So Loved the World (John 3:16)," by Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema or read it on-line (<https://cprc.co.uk/pamphlets/godsovedtheworld>).

(4) One more text was sent to me, the answer to which is dependent on the sovereign God's organic dealings with men. What about the destruction of forty-two youths by two she bears in response to Elisha's cursing them for mocking him as God's prophet (II Kings 2:23-24)? This occurred in Bethel, the location of the major shrine for one of the two golden calves (I Kings 12:26-13:32). It seemed to my correspondent (and others) that no prophet would ever do that.

The answer to this question is that the family is created by God as an organic unity. This is why the second commandment of the Decalogue says that God visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" (Ex. 20:5).

For example, a man leaves a faithful church and takes his children with him to a false or departing church. Then his children eventually quit going to church at all, and are lost in unbelief and worldliness. The head of a home cannot live unrepentant in sin without it having consequences for his whole family. A drunkard's sins destroy his family. It is like the root of a tree being killed with the whole tree dying.

Israel had forsaken the worship of God and turned to idols. The Lord is showing Israel that their terrible sin will result in the spiritual death of their children. This happened as well. Although in Elijah's day there were still 7,000 who did not bow knee to Baal, in Hezekiah's day the few remaining worshippers of God in the Northern Kingdom were called out of the nation and the nation, with its children, was destroyed. *Prof. Hanko*

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church

83 Clarence Street, Ballymena, BT43 5DR • Website: www.cprc.co.uk
Lord's Day services (11 AM & 6 PM) live video stream: www.cprc.co.uk/live-streaming
Pastor: Angus Stewart, 7 Lislunnan Road, Kells, N. Ireland, BT42 3NR • (028) 25 891851
pastor@cprc.co.uk • www.youtube.com/cprcni • www.facebook.com/CovenantPRC