

CHAPTER 6
THE JOY OF AUTHENTIC
CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
—A DELIGHT—

or

“WRITTEN IN HEAVEN”—THE TRUE SOURCE OF JOY

In the Book of His Kingdom,
with its pages so fair,
through Jesus my Savior,
my names written there.

I am bought not with riches,
neither silver nor gold;
but Christ hath redeemed me,
I am safe in His fold;

My sins, they were many,
like the sands of the sea;
but the blood of my Savior
is sufficient for me;

For His promise is written,
in bright letters that glow,
though your sins be as scarlet,
I will make them like snow.

My name' written there,
on the page white and fair;
in the Book of God's Kingdom,
my name's written there. Amen!

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THE JOY OF AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
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or

“WRITTEN IN HEAVEN”—THE TRUE SOURCE OF JOY

¹⁷ *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

¹⁸ *And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*

¹⁹ *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

²⁰ *Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

Luke 10:17-20

Salvation! When one's name is written in heaven's masterroll of the saints, when one's name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, that is true joy and happiness! "Wonderful" is the word that describes the deliverance of us sinners from the certain doom of the lake of fire. And what shall we do with this great salvation? How shall we respond to it? Paul's suggestion pinpoints the precise time as *now*, *Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation*. Reference is here to the *day of salvation* as right now in our lives. Our opportunity to be saved in the first place brought with it the responsibility to live it also, and the secret of living the Christian life is keyed upon the joy with which we view it. In our text, Jesus admonishes us to rejoice in this great salvation inasmuch as *our names are written in heaven*. That is, just the uncomplicated fact that we are saved from God's merited wrath is more than sufficient motivation for measureless joy and faithfulness.

The occasion for Jesus' words in our text was very special; they occurred at an extraordinary juncture, because for the first time Christ had commissioned a large group of His disciples to preach and to heal *in His name*,

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

Luke 10:1, 9

When these seventy returned from this ministry, they said, *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name* (Luke 10:17). That phrase, *through thy name* means much more than just saying, “Jesus,” when doing something. The phrase connotes the merited authority, reputation, and renown of our Lord. It focuses the power of God into the control and command of men. For the first time Jesus authorized men other than the Apostles to use His name—reputation, renown, authority, that is, His endowment as the God-man—to reach the multitudes with the gospel of the Kingdom. He threw open the doors to both Jews and Gentiles, for they were then going into Gentile territory. This delegation of His authority to men was to climax in the commission to His church whereby every church receives her commission to win souls, baptize, and to teach them. Therefore, this was a great event, inasmuch as it marked the beginnings of Satan’s utter ruin under the power of His name as Lord and Savior.

Pentecost was a victorious occasion because that power of His name came among men (Acts 2:36-37). Throughout the history recorded in the Book of Acts His name, reputation, and authority again and again brought the victory of the cross and Satan’s defeat more clearly into view. But in the story of our text, which was the harbinger of things to come, the first signs of man’s share in Satan’s defeat were given. This marked the collapse of the *gates of hell* when confronted with the message of the gospel. This clarifies Jesus’ limitless words of *verse 18, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*. These do not refer only to a past time, but were the articulating of an eternal program from eternity. Christ saw the eternal, and uttered an established truth relevant to the past, present, and future:

Satan is in subjection and subordination to Jesus Christ, Who has commissioned men to have that same endowed authority that is His as Lord and Savior through the work of the cross, the Gospel.

Today the church exercises this authority over Satan and the evil empire of his servants when she preaches the Gospel. This subjection of the demonic spirits to the authority of Jesus' name brings great joy to us today because lost souls are involved. But the great joy of the disciples involved just the bare subjection, which led Him to give a loving rebuke. That loving rebuke constitutes our text, and contains the real source of joy for Christians, namely, the fact that our names are written in heaven. Consequently, our exposition will emphasize the contrast that Jesus made between human joy, as exhibited by the disciples at the demons' subjection, and the spiritual and heavenly joy that is ours because our names are written in heaven.

We shall mark:

- I. The Commonplace of Satan's Subjection, *verses 17-20a.*
- II. The Cause of Our Joy, *verse 20b.*
- III. The Contrast between Demonic Subjection and Spiritual Salvation, *verse 20.*

I. THE COMMONPLACE OF SATAN'S SUBJECTION

¹⁷ *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

¹⁸ *And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*

¹⁹ *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

²⁰ *Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you.* Luke 10:17-20a

Satan's Subjection is Commonplace even though it is a Peculiar Subjection

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

Luke 10:17

The Peculiarity of this new experience was astounding to these disciples. No man was ever the master of evil spirits. Never before had mere men been able to control Satan's evil forces. Man has always been under his dominion.¹ This would have been an unusual encounter for any man; especially was it so for these newly appointed messengers of Jesus. Though so peculiar to men, still it was commonplace for the evil spirits to be governed by their Creator and Lord. Man's part in His dominion was the peculiarity of this encounter, not that the evil spirits were dominated by Jesus' authority. Yet, because of the work of the cross, even man's part in Christ's authority is no longer rare. To these disciples at that unique time of ministry, it was peculiar. No power of man's own could repel Satan and his hosts because all men have a depraved nature like his. He can and does unreservedly play man's depravity like the strings of a musical instrument—to his melody and to his liking (*II Tim. 2:26; I Peter 5:8*). Man dances as he plays, except when men have the ceded authority of Jesus Christ through new birth and Holy Spirit indwelling. Because of the victory of the cross, Christ

¹ See *II Corinthians 4:3-6* and the Author's booklet, The Devil's Blindfold, especially pp. 3-4, 10-17.

breaks the power of Satan's hold on men's depraved natures through regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. These disciples experienced this victory and judged it peculiar because it all came about *through thy name*. What was to these disciples a strange and unconventional power in Jesus' name has become a rather unremarkable event to some today, because some men fully understand Christ's authority and power as the God-man. Certainly, the reality of Christ's authority over evil is not its peculiarity, but its peculiarity is its apportionment to men. For us today, because we understand Jesus' Person and work in the cross, it is no longer such a peculiar or strange thing that *the devils are subject unto us through thy name*.

Satan's Subjection is Commonplace because it is a Perpetual Subjection

And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.
Luke 10:18

Jesus was at the moment of these words beholding Satan's **Perpetual** fall from eternity. He had for a moment stepped back into eternity as God and was seeing Satan's fall as timeless and continuing forever. He was speaking an eternal truth without respect to time. From the very beginning God saw Satan's fall. The reference here might first be to Lucifer's past fall from his glory in heaven when he first said, *I will*; and secondly to his present defeat through the cross as he is being cast down from his dominion over man; and thirdly to his future casting into the bottomless pit and into the eternal lake of fire.² But to Jesus and to all spiritually aware Christians, his fall is commonplace news, and should not be looked upon as unusual or novel. In speaking here of what He saw, Jesus was saying in effect: *Do not be surprised or think it strange that Satan's kingdom is falling before My authority, because I have already seen his complete and utter ruin from eternity. It was and is and forever will be inevitable.*

² Satan's fall is past, *Isaiah 14:12-20*; and present, *Hebrews 2:14-15*; *Colossians 2:15*; and future *Revelation 20:2,10*, i.e. continuing forever.

Satan's Subjection is Commonplace because it is a Predictable Subjection

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you.
Luke 10:19-20a

These disciples were attending to the work of spreading the message of the Kingdom of God, the gospel of Christ. Therefore, Jesus promised them that during the normal execution of their several responsibilities, Satanic spirits would be under their busy feet. So long as they were doing their work and were subject to Him in ministry, they would, in the typical prosecution of their ministries, encounter demonic opposition; but they would also know regularly the power of the name of Jesus. This demonic subjection to His authority would be duplicated over and over during their service to Him. Similar encounters of demonic subjection could be expected. They would always have demons under their feet, trampled upon, and so rendered powerless to offend or to harm, so long as they were discharging their duties as His servants. It would be a rather commonplace happening. Demons would be tread upon in the regular relations of daily living and serving, not that the disciples were to seek to find demonic powers in order to stomp on them. They would know the opposition and the hindering effects of their constant opposition to the authority of Christ. But they were not to try to find them, or to make them the thrust of ministry. No! They were to go about doing their regular work of ministry, and in that every day practice of service, they would know something of the defeat of Satan's forces constantly, though sometimes evil seems to succeed. It was predictable that he would come against them, but it was also predictable that his defeat would become a commonplace event in true ministry. They were not to seek it, but they were going to find it to be a frequent part of ministry.

II. THE CAUSE OF OUR JOY

²⁰*Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*
Luke 10:20

Jesus devalues demonic subjection in this verse. With these words He states in clear language that the important ministry is not exorcisms of demonic beings, or personal encounters of Satan's forces, or especial physical healings, or even special victories over evil spirits. But according to Jesus, the most important certainty is the reality of our names being written in heaven. That writing of evil men's names in heaven is by far the greater reason for rejoicing. Comparably, there is not so much reason to joy in the spirit's subjection to Jesus' name or authority, because that comes automatically because of Who Jesus is. He is God in human flesh, and as such can dominate all spirits, good and evil, at His behest. That is no particular ground for rejoicing when compared with the means by which our names are written in heaven. Therefore, Jesus says,

Do not rejoice in the rather commonplace and to be expected subjection of the evil powers of Satan to Me, but rather be rejoicing in the legitimacy of your names' being indelibly recorded in heaven, the place of eternal and lasting registry.

This Writing in Heaven is the Occasion for Joy because of the Heights from which Man Originally Fell.

When in the garden before his sin, man had a relationship with God. It was a unique association that existed between man and his God. He saw God daily and at his own pleasure. He had unrestricted access to the beauties of His presence. He could converse with God, at Whose hand are pleasures forevermore. He knew God in all His perfection and in all His captivating splendors. Adam knew the shining radiance of the Eternal. He had no anxious moments ever. He had constant communion with Christ, fellowship with God; no dangers ever approached him or

got close to him. He had God's watchful eye, caring hand, encircling hedge of protection, and a never interrupted peace affecting all. Yet in all this magnificent glory, Adam chose to leave his God for sin. The height from which man fell makes the crime of departure from it of the most loathsome character.

If one falls from a high position in the world there can be no restoration. A president falls from the highest office in the land never to be considered for even the least of positions again. The highly ranked and appreciated ball player falls from the trust and confidence placed in him, and never again is considered worthy of the least of places in baseball. The once sought after actor, whose face everyone knew and skills everyone respected, falls into deep crimes against decency, and is never restored to prominence. These examples concern high positions among men and show the effect of falling from prominence among men. But the height to which man in Adam was elevated is unknown among men today. God made man in His own image and in His own likeness, entrusted to his keeping all the created universe and all its creatures, and placed him as head and king over all in His Kingdom. But we fell from that great height; and yet our names can now be re-written in heaven. When the height from which we fell is considered, it is a cause of great joy that our names are again written among the highest clique possible in God's Kingdom. To have such original joy is one plateau, but to lose it only to regain it with more is to reach a higher level of joy altogether.

This Writing in Heaven is the Occasion for Joy because of the Depths to which Man Fell.

After knowing the true joy, then falling from it as far as is possible, only then to recover it all and more, is cause of astonishing joy. The wonder of it all! One has but to look around at television, movies, newspapers, to see the depths to which we fell. The problems of liquor, pornography, drugs, promiscuity, and the violence of men against men, all tell the story of the depths of man's depravity. The history of Israel as God's

chosen people is one of a downward trek until they crucified their own Messiah. Even while the Law was being given them, they committed luteness, made an idol, and forgot their God. Throughout her history she made the practices of the vilest imaginings her regular style. Even in her greatest spiritual splendor and divine blessings her leader threw a fit of anger and forfeited his place in the Promised Land. Later, her greatest king committed murder and adultery, followed by a son who did worse. The history of man generally is no better. The second man on earth murdered the third. Sodom and Gomorrah showed the debauchery and perversion of the lowest order. The over-all caste of man is one of the vilest kind wherein he is not satisfied with just doing evils, but even has *pleasure in them that do them* (*Romans 1:32*). All of this evil and the ruin of it is rebutted and refuted when men in this fallen state of the darkest hue are lifted up as permanent dwellers of heaven. What a great source of true joy that even though such black creatures, we can have our names *written in heaven*.

This Writing in Heaven is the Occasion for Joy because of the Abandonment with which Man Fell.

To depart utterly from God for fondness of one's own way, only to find that a loving God is seeking, pleading, dying for us is the source of true Christian joy.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
Isaiah 53:6.

Every day men quit, forsake, and even seemingly forfeit God, yet He makes possible their names to be *written in heaven*. Peter was wooed back to Christ after three times denying Jesus. He is the classic example of abandonment of God by man's depravity. Judas' walk in Jesus' presence for over three years ended with his betrayal of the One Who could not be chargeable with any wrong whatever, which was admitted by Judas himself (*Matt. 26:4*). Reckless and utter abandonment of God and His ways have

always been the practice of even the most enlightened, encouraged, and enlivened men. Whether it was the Apostle Peter or *the son of perdition*, Judas, all men without exception default heaven by their resignation to the evil in their hearts, even when given the greatest knowledge and familiarity of, and opportunity from, God.

There is wantonness and unrestrained willfulness in man's sins, because they are clear-cut violations of strict, well-defined commands. Adams's transgression was of a plain nature. He freely chose to violate God's will (*Romans 5:12-21*). We, all of us—even those seventy missionaries sent out by Christ, though chosen and appointed—have likewise gone the way of all men, into death by sin. Men by nature are morally irresponsible with a disposition and way of life that is marked by indifference to the just, moral restraints of God. Men take the regimen of God lightly and are in themselves by human nature incapable of faithfulness or seriousness in the ways of the Lord. Yet, in spite of this wantonness and this wild abandonment, God makes it possible for our names to be written in heaven. Jesus says this writing in heaven is the greatest source of joy for men.

This Writing in Heaven is the Occasion for Joy because of the Terrible Cost of the Imprint.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Revelation 1:5-6

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

Since we have the testimony of the Word of God that only through the death of Christ is any heavenly imprint of our names possible, is Jesus telling us to rejoice in His death? Yes! He is most definitely stating that. Can we be joyous because of Christ's

suffering for us? Yes, we can and should. Only His death writes our names in heaven, and assures our place *in the kingdom of his dear Son*, and makes *us kings and priests unto God and his Father*. “Oh God! We are sorry that such a price had to be paid because of our sinfulness, but how thankful and how joyous we are that it was paid, and that through the Savior’s blood our names are written down in heaven.” Could anyone question that Christ’s work in the cross is the greatest source of joy among us sinners? Should we really rejoice unreservedly at the shedding of our Lord’s innocent blood? No, we cannot find joy in the act or in the ordeal of it, but certainly in the fact of it.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Romans 5:8*

How can men rejoice as the spotless Son of God suffers at the cruel hands of us sinners, when He is nailed to a cross and made to agonize in the misery of crucifixion? Who are these men and women and boys and girls who take delight in the awful miseries heaped upon this precious loving One? How can even the vilest of creatures take pleasure, find solace, and achieve triumph in this dastardly wicked act of slaying the Son of God? Who are these? And how are these? Why, these are those who have their names written in heaven as its result. It is the significance of that death which has those who benefit from it so happy.

Our shame is great that the cross was necessary, yet His death removes all our shame. Our guilt is great that it is our fault as sinners before God that caused His death. But here is the root of all the joy; here is the reason for our rejoicing in the death: It is by that same death for which we are so ashamed and by which we are deemed so guilty that all our shame and guilt is absolutely taken away. That truth is the cause of the most exceptional joy among all beneficiaries of the death of Christ. Those who take no such delight in the cross, who find no joy in its awfulness, and who know nothing of its glorious ecstasy are not inheritors of its victorious gifts. Only through the definite vileness of the cross,

and only if we take such delight in it, are our names written in heaven. When the angels announced the birth of Jesus in *Luke 2:9-11*, they spoke as on an occasion of greatest joy. But the joy was not that evil spirits would be destroyed, or that demons would suddenly become subject to Him, for Christ needed not to come to earth to accomplish that. No, the joy was in another area altogether, as we hear:

For unto you [you shepherds, you sinners, you estranged-from-God-and-heaven kind of men, *for unto you*] *is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.*

[Added emph.] *Luke 2:11*

The angels said that this message of spiritual salvation was the *good tidings of great joy*. The same emphasis is seen in the early church; in Acts Peter and the other Apostles were ministering to *a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one* (Acts 5:16). But when they spoke later to the priests and Sadducees, their first words did not concern healings from or exorcisms of evil spirits, but were these: *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin* (Acts 5:31). The consideration was placed upon the greater source of joy, namely, the saviorhood of Jesus. Again, when John the Baptist saw Jesus He did not say, "Behold, the One Who casts out spirits and grants physical healings." NO! But John said, *Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* (John 1:29). John was not interested in pointing out the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, but the thing to arrest and to attract, to fill with awe, about this Man is that He *takes away the sin of the world*. The cost of our names being written in heaven is the death of Jesus, which fact is the cause of the greatest joy among those who benefit from it. That is the rejoicing to which Jesus referred when He said, *Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

This Writing in Heaven is the Occasion for Joy because of the Extreme Heights which that Writing Secures for Us.

Heaven as Jesus spoke of it is the highest dwelling place of God. He has no other higher place to reside. Furthermore, the security of the place of heaven is unquestionably great. Jesus contrasted treasure in heaven with that in earth (*Matthew 6:19-20*). Clearly, the significance is one of safety when He said, *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.* God has a masterroll book with the names of every safe person written within its eternal pages in permanent blood. In fact, every thing in heaven is lasting. It is as eternal as God. In heaven there are no temporary leases, or any impermanent books or scrolls or records of any kind. Not the rust, nor the thief, nor the moth cannot destroy the writing in this eternal book of God's record.

Earth has many books wherein are written many names. But these records are fleeting and transitory accounts. We all read them regularly. The world's newspapers carry their accounts. Headlines are made by great persons with power and vast amounts of amassed wealth. Or we read their names in the book of earth on the entertainment page. They have such prominent notoriety as to be recognized by everyone. Again, we read of these who are written in earth's book in the sport's section. They have achieved great success in their field. They are extremely wealthy, and they are recorded as outstanding figures of renown. And on and on could the references go. Many are written down in earth's book of success. They achieve the Hall of Fame, or are recorded as one of the world's richest men, or are known as the greatest box office drawer of all time, and even have their handprints placed in the concrete sidewalks of Hollywood. That is the writing of the book of earth. But these *elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10)*. Man's book will pass away with all its inscribed names destroyed and forgotten, *and there*

was found no place for them (*Revelation 20:11*). The concrete imprints will be no more. The Hall of Fame will be gone with all its memories. The applause of the appreciative audiences will not be at all heard, and the roar of sports fans will have faded. The fame of wealth will have been forgotten and the book of earth's favorites will mean nothing. This world and all therein is *passing away, and the lusts thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*, because his name is written in heaven (*I John 2:17*).

Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like unto a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:9b-14

In the eternal heavenly city, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the names of the twelve Apostles of Christ are placed in the gates and in the foundations of the city respectively. These are names that are *written in heaven* literally. That is the meaning of Jesus also in our text. The height to which we fallen men have been lifted by the work of Jesus is that we share in all that God's city has and is. The light of it is the Son of God and the inhabitants of it *are they which are written in the Lamb's book of life* (*Revelation 21:23, 27*). That record of names in *the Lamb's book of life* is dependent upon what the twelve tribes and Apostles testified concerning the Lamb. The names written in the gates and in the foundations refer to the testimonies of the nation

of Israel and the church of Christ, and that their promises will be fulfilled precisely as recorded by Israel's prophets and the church's Apostles.

Those who are written in the Lamb's book of life are those who believed what Israel and the Apostles testified about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*. That the ones who gave testimony to the Lamb's saving power have their names recorded not only in the Lamb's book of life but in the very entrance into, and in the basic foundations of, the final heavenly home is a guarantee to every believer in their testimony. These names in the heavenly city are an endorsement of their witness as true, and is an indication of the validity of their claims concerning the Lamb's work on the cross. This is a verification of the believer's surety as having also his name *written in heaven* with the names of the tribes of Israel and the Apostles of the Lamb, who promised those engravings would be there. In this *rejoice, because your names are written in heaven*.

III. THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN SPIRIT SUBJECTION AND SPIRITUAL SALVATION

²⁰Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.
Luke 10:20

Jesus Made a Great Distinction between the Physical and the Spiritual.

Christians are to joy in the salvation of the human soul more than in the physical deliverance from the effects of evil spirits. According to Jesus' words of *verses 19 and 20* the two are incomparable. The disciples were not to rejoice because they were preserved physically, but because their names were written in heaven, that is, that they were saved spiritually. Eternal destiny is the priority matter, and preservation of the eternal soul is the monument of joy. Subjection of demons occurs when doing the more important work of spiritual ministry, and is not to be regarded as a primary work of discipleship. The subordination of evil by the use of Jesus' authority is to be expected as a matter of course, and is not to be sought as an end in itself, *but, rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

Jesus Made an Incomparable Distinction between the Defeat of Satan and the Defeat of Sin and Death.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.
Luke 10:20

With these words Jesus emphasized His victory over sin and death through His redemptive work of the cross as an unsurpassed work, which is not to be counted as in the same scope or category with demonic subjection. This is because of the necessity of the cross for sinners' names to be written in heaven, while no such necessity existed for Him to defeat Satan. The atonement was essential for sinners to have heaven for a home because sin and death had to be defeated in man by a Man in order

for man to share in heaven. Only because Jesus defeated Satan through the cross can man be included in His victory over Satan.

However, at the first sign of Lucifer's rebellion, Christ could have destroyed him and all his evil works. Before and certainly anytime since Satan's temptations materialized in the garden of Eden, Christ could have destroyed him and all his demonic hosts in their wicked purposes and ways. Christ needed no cross to defeat the Devil, unless Christ would include man in His plans. It took the cross to defeat Satan apart from destroying man with the same effort. That is, the cross destroyed Satan without destroying man. It is that distinction which Jesus would have us disciples always to remember. Satan's defeat was sure, with or without the cross, but because of His death on the cross for our sin, and because of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ gained a victory for man. Now we rejoice not just at the defeat of Satan, but at the defeat of the power of Satan over our lives and our final destinies through the cross of our Savior.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.
Hebrews 2:14

The destruction of him that had the power of death over man was the greater work of Jesus. Because of the cross of Jesus, we now have victory over the devil, and over his power to cause us to persist in sin, which if persisted in would cause us to end in a conclusive and eternal death by sin.

The Finger of God

But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.
Luke 11:20

Jesus' reference here to the *finger of God* was meant to show the relative ease with which God overcomes the evil of Satan. God has but to speak or just to think and Satan is destroyed with all his wicked works. The *finger of God* suggests little effort on God's part, and is no great occasion for rejoicing by His disciples

when compared to the much greater work of the cross. It took much more than *the finger of God* to write our names in heaven. It took the separation of the eternal Son from the eternal Father. That revealed *the arm of the Lord* (Isaiah 53:1-11). That revelation consisted of a payment that involved the entire Person of the Godhead in terrible agony and difficulty. The finger and hand and arm and entire body and strength and all of the resources of God were implicated on the cross. God displayed all His might of grace and love and wisdom and justice and all His energies, in order that He would not destroy man with the destruction of Satan. *Notwithstanding in this [use of the finger of God] rejoice not..., but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven [through the bared muscled arm of the Lord].*

Our Names are not Sketched in the Sands of Earth,
but are Forged into the Rock of Heaven

*O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be
ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the
earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of
living waters.*
Jeremiah 17:13

Written in Heaven and Not in Earth. God warned Israel that for those who forsook Him that He would *write them in the earth*. This meant that their remembrance would be limited to the winds of earth or to the fleeting and shifting movements of dust from which they were made. To *be written in the earth* was to be given only a temporary place, only to be washed away with wind or water, that is, to be subject to the changing elements of earth's physical environment. To *be written in the earth* was to be limited to the physical, the transitory, and the temporal. The Hebrews actually used a board covered with sand upon which their school children could write. The writing was easily removed, and was replaced with more *writing in the earth* by students during their school day. God used this picture in antithesis to His writing in the book of life. It is permanent and lasting, and not of this mutable earth.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.
Luke 10:20

Carved into the Rock of Ages. To be written in heaven is to have one's name carved into the Rock of Ages and into the Lamb's book of life. Jesus is the Lamb and the book of life is Christ Himself.³ When one comes to Christ, one's name is recorded in the gates and foundations of heaven itself through the testimony of the prophets and apostles.⁴ But Jesus is heaven and all that is good in eternity. To have Christ and the forgiveness of sin through the work of the cross is to have recorded in heaven the particulars of His death and resurrection as counts for that believer, recorded for eternity in Jesus' own eternally scarred body. That is weighty writing in heaven that counts for much because one's personal name is in Him, recorded in permanent and lasting letters of Jesus' own blood. Security comes only from that writing in heaven, and it is uniquely the basis for uninhibited rejoicing. Amen.

But nothing unclean shall enter it [the heavenly city], nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

And if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.⁵

Revelation 21:27; 20:15

³ John 14:6; I John 1:1-2; 5:20 Revelation 21:12-14

⁵ The Revised Standard Version