

## **Heaven Is Taken by Force!**

***And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (Mt 11:12).***

This is an introductory message. I will not deal in detail in this message but give you just enough so that the eyes of your Spirit may be open. Hopefully, like good students of the word you will search out the Scriptures to know the truth for yourself.

First, let's make it clear about the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Heaven is available for everyone under certain conditions. According to Christ's words, the journey to heaven begins when we enter through the narrow gate. Once entering the gate, we begin the journey to heaven. We journey then on the narrow road. The message for today will let us know that not everyone that starts the journey will complete it. I will reveal something to you that is imperative if you intend to complete the journey.

Actually, as I've been trying to tell you, everything of the gospel of Jesus Christ centers around the two verses that we have in Matthew 5:13-14. You should know what those are about by now. It is amazing what Christ had to say in just those two verses about life.

Today now, let's talk about the kingdom of heaven and how one enters into it. Let us look at a few Scriptures as I prove my point.

***From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" (Mt 4:17).***

What is Jesus preaching about?

***And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom,** and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Mt 4:23).***

Once again, what is Jesus preaching about?

***Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom,** and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. (Mt 9:35).***

***And as you go, preach, saying, '**The kingdom of heaven is at hand.**' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Mt 10:7-8).***

We see he is preaching about the kingdom of heaven. As we look further, we find an interesting verse. ***And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (Mt 11:12).***

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of peace and goodwill to men. But though we bring the message of peace, the world will hate us because of it. Jesus tells us the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. There is nothing that you can do to eliminate that.

If at all possible, you should be at peace with all men. But the world, the flesh, and the devil will not let you be at peace. You can deny that point all you want, but the world will hate you and seek to destroy you because of this gospel.

He states, ***from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.***

This violence is a spillover from the violence of the warfare that occurred in heaven between Satan and Almighty God. Satan wanted to be God and coerced one-third of heaven's angels to unite with him in rebellion against God.

***And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Re 12:7–9).***

When God created man and placed him in the garden, Satan also compelled him to rebel against God. All mankind, as a result, has rebelled in his sin against the creator. Thus when we are born into the world, we are born in sin and subject to Satan, who is the ruler of this world. He disciplines and trains us to submit to his authority using the world systems.

Again, if you would remember, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain ***and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." (Mt 4:8–9).***

Jesus did not challenge the authority of Satan over the world. Satan was given the deed to the world and its kingdoms by Adam. Thus, the kingdoms of this world and its rulers, and its subjects, unless converted, are in submission to Satan and in rebellion to Almighty God.

I tell you not to commit to any of the world systems or their doctrines. Behind everything of the world is its ruler who is seeking to deceive and ultimately destroy you by getting you on your own, with knowledge, or without knowledge, to violate the Word of God.

For instance, the kingdom of God suffers violence in this way. The word of God says that every life is valuable. But the world puts value on some lives, and on others, it puts no value. The reason we confess that black lives matter is because, at one point, black lives did not matter.

In the future, we may be able to say that all lives matter, but we can't say that now because the lives of babies in the womb don't matter to the world. The ways of the world are ways that wage war against the kingdom of God.

The Scripture warns you of this and says ***Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."*** (Ps 2:1–3).

The warfare between Satan and God involves you and me whether we choose to be a part of it or not. Even if we don't take a side, we will be subject to the winner of the warfare. God will ultimately win X mission point

Satan is against the word of Christ. He wages war against Christ and those that follow him. He does not worry about the hypocrites. He does not want to give ground on earth for the kingdom of heaven to be established. He does not want the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven. He will resist and even fight anyone that seeks to submit to the word of Almighty God. Thus, the kingdom of God suffers violence.

When we look in the Old Testament, we see so many examples of God seeking to find men and women who will submit to his authority so that he may establish his will on the earth. In every situation, we see violence against them as a result.

God will speak a thing, and Satan will resist the establishment of it by force. Therefore understand this:

### **THOSE WHO WANT TO ACQUIRE WHAT GOD WANTS TO GIVE WILL HAVE TO TAKE IT BY FORCE.**

Was not violence necessary on Pharaoh when he resisted releasing the children of Israel? Did not God drown Pharaoh and his whole army in the Red Sea? Didn't Joshua have to fight the Amalekites?

Was not warfare required for them to take the promised land? But didn't God promise it to them? It was promised, but the only way it was taken, was by force.

When David was promised the kingship of Israel, did not he have to fight many forces to obtain it? Including Goliath, Saul, the Philistines, members of his own family, and another subtle enemy, himself?

Again, I can cite numerous occasions that reveal that before God's promises can come to pass, force must be used against the adversary.

We can also look at a few words of Scripture that discuss a militant attitude that we must have in our quest for the kingdom of heaven.

*For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war according to the flesh**. For the **weapons of our warfare** are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into **captivity** to the obedience of Christ, (2 Co 10:3–5).*

*Put on the **whole armor** of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not **wrestle against** flesh and blood, but **against** principalities, **against** powers, **against** the rulers of the darkness of this age, **against** spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 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. Stand therefore, having **girded your waist** with truth, having put on the **breastplate** of righteousness, and having **shod your feet** with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the **shield** of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the **helmet** of salvation, and the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the word of God; (Eph 6:11–17).*

*Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, **arm** yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has **suffered** in the flesh has ceased from sin, (1 Pe 4:1).*

*But I see another law in my members, **warring** against the law of my mind, and bringing me into **captivity** to the law of sin which is in my members. (Ro 7:23).*

*This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may **wage the good warfare**, (1 Ti 1:18).*

***Fight** the good **fight** of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Ti 6:12).*

*You therefore must endure hardship as a good **soldier** of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in **warfare** entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. (2 Ti 2:3-4).*

*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which **war against** the soul, (1 Pe 2:11).*

*I have **fought** the **good fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Ti 4:7).*

Even elsewhere, Christ himself said, ***“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ (Mt 10:34–36).***

Again he also said, ***Then He said to them, “But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. (Lk 22:36).***

I could go on and list you numerous of other Scriptures that confirm what Christ said, but his word should be enough, ***the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (Mt 11:12).***

Now let me undertake further discussion to understand that it is not enough just to say you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

### **IF YOU WANT TO TRULY EXPERIENCE HEAVEN, ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE IT BY FORCE!**

Let me show you something interesting.

***Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. (Mt 5:5).*** The meek will ultimately inherit the earth. Certainly, this will come with time when the Lord comes back. But from this, we can understand that if we want to experience heaven on the earth, we must bring it about by force. Otherwise, all we can look forward to in this life is what the earth has to offer. I want heaven!

There is no place for laziness in the kingdom of God! Why would you want to inherit the earth when you can have heaven? But if you want heaven, you will have to forcefully go for it. God cast out the lazy and those not fully committed and calls them wicked

Even when Christ returns, his word makes it clear; he is not coming back as a lamb. He is coming back to wage war ***Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Re 19:11–16).***

We must be aggressive and forceful at doing the things of God and for the kingdom. The children of Israel did not experience the promised land until they were willing to be aggressive. They had to fight the Canaanites, to get into the promised land. Joshua had to fight all the days of his life, but he had the same assurance; Our God is with us.

Those that were not aggressive and willing to fight died in the wilderness. If we want to experience the best that God has, we cannot be indifferent, we must be on the offensive, and we must be willing to be forceful. They did not enter into the promised land that would become the kingdom of Israel because they were not willing to fight for it.

Is it any wonder why so many of us are missing out on greater blessings in this life? Have we missed out on the best that God has for us because we are not forceful enough? Are we not aggressive enough to bring to pass the will of God in our lives in this generation and time? I believe the promises of God are for now. But I also believe, according to the word of God, they are only for those who are forceful enough to fight for them.

Like all things God has promised, some effort must be taken. God gives, but God expects us to exert force by faith to obtain the material possession of what he has given. No man of God receives from God without the force of faith active in his life. Many Christians fail to experience heaven because they don't have the knowledge of this truth. Then, Satan bombards them with an attitude of entitlement and privilege and the expectation that things will be given to them. The only thing free in this world is eternal life, but then as the Scripture says, ***Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; (Php 2:12).***

This effort, and this working out occurs as you walk along the narrow road to eternity. You will experience resistance from the enemy, and you must stand your ground and fight the good fight of faith! The Lord says, ***Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. (Lk 13:23–24).***

There is no escaping it—the war wages on whether you participate in it or not. If you do not, you miss out on what God promises you. ***the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (Mt 11:12).***

***Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (Mt 16:24).***

***For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 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 6:12–13).***

What ways are you wrestling? Are you really wrestling with yourself?

- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO STUDY HIS WORD?**

- *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Ti 2:15).*

- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO BE FRUITFUL?**

- *BUT the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Ga 5:22–24).*

- **DO YOU WRESTLE TO KEEP YOURSELF RIGHT?**

- *But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Co 9:27).*

- **DO YOU WRESTLE YOURSELF TO PRAISE HIM?**

- *Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples, And I will sing praises to You among the nations. For Your mercy is great above the heavens, And Your truth reaches to the clouds. (Ps 108:2–4).*

- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO STAY IN CHECK?**

- *I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, And my spirit makes diligent search. (Ps 77:6).*

- **DO YOU WRESTLE TO KEEP YOURSELF IN PRAYER?**

- Remember Jacob strived all night?
- *pray without ceasing, (1 Th 5:17).*

- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO BE DILIGENT IN SERVICE?**

- *But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with **perseverance**. (Ro 8:25).*

- **DO YOU WRESTLE TO DENY YOURSELF?**

- *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (Mt 16:24).*

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- **DO YOU WRESTLE TO KEEP LOVING GOD MORE THAN YOURSELF?**

- *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Mt 10:37).*
- Peter? Do you love me? do you love me more than things?
- Do you love him more than the world?

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- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO STAY OBEDIENCE?**



- *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;*
- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO BE HOLY?**
  - *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pe 1:13–16).*
- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO CONFORM TO HIS IMAGE?**
  - *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Ro 8:29).*
- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO STAY CONFINED TO THE NARROW ROAD?**
  - *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. (Lk 13:24).*
- **DO YOU WRESTLE WITH YOURSELF TO BE PATIENT WITH OTHERS?**

This Scripture can be divided into two parts;

### **THERE IS COMBAT**

***The kingdom of heaven suffers violence.*** The kingdom of the world will come against you as a child of God. You will suffer violence from them, they will seek to deprive you of your God-given promises.

### **THERE IS A CONQUEST**

***The violent take it by force.*** Heaven is what you gain by the force of violence. No one can experience heaven except those who experience violence and are aggressive enough despite of the violence to take heaven by conquest.

God has given us a guaranty of the kingdom of heaven – but we must do combat in order to possess it. Every one of us expects to make it into the kingdom. The promise is clear like all other promises in the Bible, but let us understand, it will require combat, warfare in some form to make the conquest. We must not just be aggressive with this gospel, but we must also be violent.



Let me explain. I don't speak in terms of violence in the way that the world is violence. Our violence is bloodless. The life is in the blood. We have no right to combat in violence that draws blood. I am speaking of spiritual violence.

There are three areas that in the future we will ultimately speak about. I will just briefly touch on this today so that you know what direction we're going in.

We must offer violence in the following three areas

1. TO THE FLESH
2. THE WORLD
3. THE DEVIL

Now that you understand that violence is required, I will speak regarding violence to the flesh for the remaining few minutes.

This is in keeping with Matthew 16:24. ***Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Mt 16:24).***

It is very clear that you cannot follow Christ unless you deny self. You must be willing to do spiritual violence to yourself!

### **YOU MUST BE WILLING TO DO SPIRITUAL VIOLENCE TO SELF**

When we speak in terms of self, we are speaking in terms of the flesh. You were born with the flesh, but the flesh, if it is not mortified. That is put to death, crucified by force, it will overwhelm you through enticements. Then in the final situation, it will destroy your relationship with God.

Your flesh is your enemy, plain and simple. It lures you by making you think it has your best interests, but that is a lie. If you allow your flesh to have its way, it will slowly but surely lead you the wrong way away from God.

You must not play with the flesh. The flesh is deadly! ***For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Ga 5:17).***

Notice, the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to one another. If you are in the flesh, you're not in the Spirit. If you're in the Spirit, you're not in the flesh. Just like you cannot walk on two different roads, the broad road and the narrow road, you cannot be in the Spirit and in the flesh.

The flesh will choke out the Holy Spirit. The flesh sides with Satan to destroy the works of God. It may not seem evident at first; what appears good in the flesh is always contrary to the Spirit. Don't allow your flesh to lead you!

When the Spirit wants to pray and praise, the flesh wants to play in party.  
When the Spirit wants to worship, the flesh wants to work. The flesh and the spirit will always be contrary to one another.

The flesh will appeal to you in what seems to be a warm embrace but it will be an embrace by the serpent who is a Python. The flesh will choke the life out of you.

What are we to do with the flesh? **Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Col 3:5).**

**KJV - Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (Col 3:5).**

**For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Ro 8:13–14).**

**KJV - For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Ro 8:13).**

It is you are your flesh. One of you has got to die. If you cling to the flesh, you will not experience all of the beautiful blessings of heaven here on earth. Ultimately, you will die.

There can only be one!

Get this! If you allow the flesh to reign in your body, it will kill you! The Bible says very clearly you will die! How plain can you get? But if you do violence to your flesh, you will live. You have a choice!

Notice in each of our verses we have the phrase, “put to death.” In the first century, the most common way of putting a thing to death was by crucifixion. In other words, we are to crucify the flesh. We are to put to death the flesh. We are to do violence to the flesh. In other places, we are told to mortify the flesh.

We are to put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and idolatry. Simply put ***Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Ga 5:19–21).***

Now from the Passion Bible we read

***The cravings of the self-life are obvious: Sexual immorality, lustful thoughts, pornography, chasing after things instead of God, manipulating others, hatred of those who get in your way, senseless arguments, resentment when others are favored, temper tantrums, angry quarrels, only thinking of yourself, being in love with your own opinions, being envious of the blessings of others, murder, uncontrolled addictions, wild parties, and all other similar behavior. Haven't I already warned you that those who use their "freedom" for these things will not inherit the kingdom realm of God! (Ga 5:19–21).***

We have had the flesh all of our life, but we were given a new spirit when we were born again. There is a new Lord over our life. The flesh and the Spirit cannot dwell in the same body and do the body well. A house divided cannot stand.

The flesh has been with us for so long. We are used to what the flesh says and tend to follow it more than we do anything else. But we must realize it must be put to death.

I want to give you one final point now. How do you offer violence to yourself and crucify the flesh?

- I. Withdraw the fuel that makes the lust burn. Avoid all temptations. You pray in the prayer, lead us not into temptation, but don't lead yourself into temptation.
- II. Fight against the flesh with spiritual weapons. Use the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God and have this confidence ***For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Ro 6:14).***
  - A. Sampson strength was in his hair but our strength is in our head. We have this confidence, the battle is not ours is the Lord's. Satan has already been defeated. All we have to do is present ourselves for battle. The Lord will do the rest.

There is more to come but for now just the summary.

### **Heaven Is Taken by Force!**

Remember nothing God gives is without resistance from the devil. If you want to be triumphant and receive the blessings of heaven here and in eternity, you must be willing to fight for what you want diligently.

The biggest enemy you have, is yourself! Therefore, deny yourself and crucify your flesh.

We must offer violence in the following three areas

- 1. TO THE FLESH**
- 2. THE WORLD**
- 3. THE DEVIL**

***And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (Mt 11:12).***

Be willing to put forth aggressive effort to experience the kingdom of God!