

## I Love THE LORD

This is a transcript of Dave Hunt's final talk at our TBC Conference in 2008.  
It has been edited for space and readability.

**WE ARE IN A COSMIC BATTLE.** This is a mystery. How could there be a battle between God and Satan? Isn't God much stronger than Satan? It depends on what you mean by "strong."

**God draws His people to himself with love; Satan, with deception.** There are so many mysteries that it's beyond our comprehension. In Revelation 5:1-6 "I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof? No man in heaven, nor on earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me. Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals. And I [turned around to see this Lion] and I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain."

In Revelation 22:1 "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." I think you know that is not H<sub>2</sub>O. The Bible does use metaphors. When you take the bread and the cup in remembrance of Christ that is not His body and blood. It's a symbol, and we do this in remembrance of Him. "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life..." (v.2). Adam and Eve got thrown out of the Garden lest they should eat of the tree of life and live forever. And now, here it is. "...the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits..." I don't understand this. We're in glorified, resurrected bodies. This is in eternity. So we're talking in mystery language here, but it's something that God wants to reveal to us. "...Bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Why do they need healing? I don't understand it, but our focus is on the Lord. "There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servant shall serve him" (v.3). So the throne of God to the very end is the throne of God and of the Lamb. And the Lion of the tribe of Judah is the Lamb, and He is there as though He had just been slain.

We were talking about the cosmic battle being fought. It's for control of the universe! Why does God still have to fight with Satan for control of the universe? This is not a Star Wars battle with weapons of mass destruction. It's something deeper than that. Revelation 12:17 "There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon fought with his angels."

The Bible says so much in a few words. Why would you find dragons everywhere—all over the East, on the temples, and so forth? Why do you find serpents? Satan loves to be called a dragon. He's not ashamed to be called a serpent. He loves to be the serpent?

"The great dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven" (Revelation 12:7-8).

Praise God! “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and **Satan, which deceiveth the whole world....**” (v.9). He is the deceiver. He deceives the whole world! “...He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night” (vv. 9-10).

We see that “**accuser**” in the book of Job. The sons of God appear before God, and Scripture says, “And **Satan** came with them.” Satan still has access to God, and he has authority.

Then it turns the focus onto us, because **we have a very important part to play in this battle**. This is a battle for the soul, for the heart, and for the mind of man. And what was our part? “**They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony**, and they loved not their lives unto the death.” **Satan** still doesn’t understand. Look at what he offers to mankind: “**Follow me, and you’ll have all the free sex you want**, all the drugs—everything! How could they resist it” I think of that poem “On the King’s Highway”:

‘Twas on the King’s highway near a century ago  
That a preacher stood, though of noble birth,  
Telling the fallen and low  
Of a Savior’s love and a home above  
And a peace and a joy they all might know,  
While slow through the crowd a lady proud  
Her gilded chariot drove.  
“Make way!” cried the haughty outrider.  
“You’re blocking the king’s highway.  
Our lady is late, and her majesties wait.  
Give way there, good people, I pray.”  
But the preacher heard, and his soul was stirred,  
And he cried to the driver, “Nay!  
This is the king’s highway, but I hold it today,  
In the name of the King of kings.”

And then he says that there is an auction for this woman’s soul and for all that she has, and he continues (loosely quoted):

I see three bidders, the world steps up at the first, and Satan, and so forth, and they tell what they’re offering, and then the third bidder speaks:

And what hast thou to offer, thou man of sorrows unknown?

He gently said, “My **blood** was shed to purchase her for my own.

To conquer the grave and her soul to save, I trod the winepress alone.”

And then she's converted. She takes off her jewels and her coronet, and lays them, as it were, at the Savior's feet.

**Satan thinks he's going to win. Look at what he offers! But what does Jesus offer? "You're not of the world. I've chosen you out of the world. Because you're not of the world, the world will hate you. If you want to follow me, take up the cross, follow me. That's where we're going" (John 15:29; Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23; Mark 8:34; 10:21).**

So, we come to the climax throughout the Bible. In Job 13:15, Job says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Job was an overcomer through the blood of the Lamb!

In 1 John 4:19, we read: "**We love him because he first loved us.**" **I love the Lord! Why do I love Him? There must be a reason why we love Him. In fact, there are many reasons! Have you told Him today, "I love you, Lord"? You should tell Him over and over.**

I tell my wife every day, "Ruth, I love you more today than before! You are beautiful, and I love you so much!" You ought to tell your wife, your spouse, but we need especially to tell the Lord.

In fact, it is a command. When He was asked, "What's the first and great command?" Jesus replied, "The first commandment is Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all of thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might, and the second is like unto it...thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37).

How can it be love if it's commanded? We've mentioned some of these **atheists**, Christopher Hitchens, very brilliant, Jewish, raised as a Christian, who really speaks in fond terms of his Sunday school teacher way back then. But **he hates the Lord**. And this is one of the things he would say: He calls God **"that heavenly dictator up there."** He says, "We've got to love him, but at the same time, we're supposed to fear him. Now, how are you going to work that out?"

### **Well, he doesn't understand.**

How can love be commanded? "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments." I love Psalm 27, a psalm of David. David writes, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord...."

What do I know of the beauty of the Lord? I think about that a lot "...To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

Why do I love Him? He's beautiful! Remember Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1? It's very powerful. Paul tells us in verse 15 "I cease not to pray for you...." In verse 16, he prays "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

And the psalmist, the apostles, cry out "O that I might *know* him!" And you know what keeps us from knowing Him? And being like Him? John gives that to us in 1 John 3: "When we see him, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." Now we see through a glass darkly.... I sometimes cry, "Lord, I don't even know You! I wish I knew you better!" It's beyond our

ability, but one day when the veil is removed, the blindness of our hearts and eyes will be gone. We will see it suddenly! *This is Jesus as He really is!* And that is going to transform us.

So Paul says "...that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened..." "We need understanding. In Matthew 13, the sower goes forth to sow. The first seed fails by the wayside, remember? And the birds of the air come and pluck it. The disciples don't understand the parable at all. They say, "Lord, tell us, what does this mean? And what about these birds plucking up the seed?"

And **Jesus says**, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and *understandeth* it not..." We're not trying to just talk people into something, They've got to *understand* what they're getting into. That's what Jesus said: "Take up the cross, and follow Me." He's telling us that this is not a beautiful trip that you're going on. It's going to be an arduous journey, a strait gate, a narrow way.

**He wants us to *understand***, so **He says**, "**When they hear the word and they don't understand, then comes the wicked one and takes out of the heart the seed that was sown.**" We've got to get people to understand!

This is **Paul's prayer**: "**The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints...**" We have an inheritance. We have an inheritance in Him. It's going to be glorious for all eternity.

But in Ephesians 1:19-20, Paul writes: "...what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power..."

What would you think would be **the greatest expression, the greatest demonstration of God's power**? "When I consider thy heavens, and the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars that you've made"? or when we sing, "How great Thou art"? No. What is it then? "...According to the working of his mighty power, **which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand** in the heavenly places..."

I don't fathom that, but I do get some inkling of it. **This is the greatest demonstration of God's power—that He could save sinners**, those who hate Him; that Christ would die for them, and that somehow He would pay the penalty. That is something that I've discussed with philosophers. It is not just! The innocent man is punished for the guilty! And that brings forgiveness? How can the innocent pay for the sins of the guilty? It's not just. How is that going to do anything for God—or for anybody?

Paul tells us, Galatians 2:20 "**I am crucified with Christ.**" It wasn't just that Christ died. **We died in Him.** I don't know how God works that out, but haven't we experienced it? I know that something happened to me.

He did something that transformed us that Satan doesn't understand. We were born again through faith in Christ when we accepted Him as our Savior and we recognized that He died for us—in our place! That does something.

“The exceeding greatness of his power...that he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand...far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:19-23.) That’s what God accomplished. Satan doesn’t understand it to this day, and he probably never will—but he will face the consequences of it.

I need to say **a few words about \*Islam**, because it is growing everywhere. Let me just give you one contrast: *“La Ilaha Illa Allah, Muhammad rasulu Allah”*---“**There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.**” You either repeat that, or it is off with your head, wherever they can do it. And they don’t care—you don’t even have to believe it! That’s one of the things that Islam glories in: **“Just repeat the words, that’s all Allah wants.”**

In contrast, what does **\*the Bible** say? **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart”** (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37), and **“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus....”** (Romans 10:9).

According to **\*Islam**, **“If thou shalt confess Allah and Muhammad with your mouth—that’s okay.”**

But the Bible tells us, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and *believe in thine heart* that God has raised him from the dead...” You remember what Jesus said? He quoted from the Old Testament—\*God speaking to Israel: **“You honor me with your lips, you draw nigh to me with your mouth, but your heart is far from me. In vain you worship me.”**

**\*Islam is spread by the sword**, I sometimes quote them facetiously, “Islam is peace. And if you deny it, we’ll kill you to prove it!” I wish that I could reason with Muslims. Are they convinced?

We used to talk about “shotgun” weddings. But we don’t even bother with that any more. You don’t drag your bride to the altar by her hair with a gun in one hand and say, “You will marry me, and you will promise to love me!” That’s not the way it works. You haven’t won her heart, and **\*God is not going to get us to heaven by threats, but by love.**

This battle is going to be won by love. I remember the hymn, “O the deep, deep love of Jesus...” It’s a mystery. “I am crucified with Christ.” Something happened when I met Jesus. I was born again by the Spirit.

And He’s promised us something. We read it in Ephesians 1—Paul is praying that these people will know *the hope of His calling*. First Peter 5:10 tells us what is the hope of His calling: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you....” So the God of all grace has called us to eternal glory!

By contrast, **atheism is materialism.** There is nothing but matter. Francis Crick, atheist, co-discoverer of the DNA alphabet, said: “You, your joys, your sorrows, your memories, your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will are in fact no more than the behavior

of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.” Isn’t that wonderful to know! It is meaningless! It is hopeless! What is the hope that the atheist offers? According to them, a quiet grave at the worst.

Listen to Bertrand Russell: **“All the labor of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the death of the solar system.”** It couldn’t be said more clearly. One day all of the dreams, one day all of the corporate ambition and all of the monuments man has built, the skyscrapers and all the libraries will be burned up. They’re gone, like sandcastles washed into a cosmic ocean of nothingness. What did it all matter?

So you have to ask the atheist: “Richard Dawkins, why do you work so hard? Why do you write so many books? They’re all going to be burned up. Why do you struggle to stay alive a little longer so that you can pen a few more words to the glory of the molecules?”

And when “Sagan the Pagan” got in the presence of the cosmos, he exulted, “Oh! The *cosmos*! Do you want to know who you are? Why you’ve got nitrogen, you’ve got hydrogen cells in your body that once were part of a distant star system. And they’re in your body! And one day, some of the molecules in your body will be out there in another star system...” I think that’s insanity cloaked in pride, and they’ve all got a good dose of it.

By contrast, look at Werner von Braun, the German space scientist, founder and former director of NASA’s space flight center. He was always eager to testify. Listen to what he said: “Manned spaceflight has opened a tiny door for viewing the awesome reaches of space. An outlook through this peephole at the vast mysteries of the universe should only confirm our belief in the certainty of its Creator. I cannot understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe.”

The first Apollo astronauts to circle the moon sent a message back to planet Earth: “We’ve got a message for you.” And they read the first 10 verses of Genesis: “In the beginning, God created....”

Do you remember the first food and drink that was consumed on the moon? It was the bread and wine of communion! Atheists say, “No scientists believe in God.” Yet these men were scientists.

God is being glorified, and the poor atheist doesn’t understand that He has something wonderful for those who love Him: **“Eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).**

Listen to the **hopelessness of atheist** Sam Harris: “Tens of billions of viewer passed in the growing darkness of a universe condemned to become a galactic graveyard.” That’s what they have to look forward to. That epitaph is pronounced in advance upon everything that Bertrand Russell wrote, everything that Dawkins ever did or wrote, so why do they insist, “I want to convert you to atheism! I want you to hate God. And I want you to have this beautiful future lying ahead of you. What a hope we give you!” Expending such a great effort to extend their

life, merely to stave off death a short while longer in order to leave some meaningless record of one's having been there. But there's no record. Nothing will be left of all the proud structures that man has built.

Richard Dawkins writes: "We are staggeringly lucky. However, brief our time in the sun, if we waste a second of it, or complain, couldn't this be seen as a callous insult to those unborn trillions who will never be offered life in the first place?" He is speaking of those who apparently didn't get into the right space in the gene pool, and they were sloughed off. To the living he says, in effect, "But you made it in the lottery! And here you are. Your genes brought you here." He also says, "The knowledge that we have only one life should make it all the more precious. The atheist view is life-affirming and life-enhancing."

But we say it a little bit differently:

Only one life, 'twill soon be past.

Only what's done for Christ will last.

Because we have something that's going to last, but they have nothing like this: Daniel tells us, "We will shine as the stars of the firmament."

**"I love the Lord, because He's heard my cry, as long as I live"** (Psalm 116:1-2). And in eternity, we'll praise Him. In 1 John 4:4-8 we read: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for "God is love."

God is love. This says more than just that "God loves." It's saying that the very essence of God's being is love. God is love. We don't understand it. But then you get to verse 19 "We love him because he first loved us."

**I love you, Lord! Why? Spend a little time in His presence beholding the beauty of the Lord. Get to know Him.**

The testimony of **Rabi Maharaj, the ex-guru**, is written in his book *Death of a Guru*. At that time, Rabi, a young guru, was being worshiped as "god" by his followers. His cousin Krister, a believer in Christ, took Rabi to this little meeting. Rabi had come to the conclusion that the gods he worshiped were out to kill him! Krister had brought him to this old building with the paint peeling off and Rabi thought that he heard an orchestra in there—a huge crowd of people. They went in, and I think he said there were about 15 people, and the orchestra was a little girl with a tambourine! But he had never heard people sing "Sunlight, sunlight, in my soul today."

“No,” he said, “my heart was filled with darkness.” You don’t sing about how you love Krishna. You don’t sing about how you love Shiva, the Destroyer. You don’t sing about you love for Muhammad, or Allah. But these people—who were they? What had happened to them? And what a love they had for this God whom they serve and worship, and for this Jesus who had died for them.

Eventually, Rabi was on his knees before the preacher, who happened to be a former Muslim, a schoolteacher. And he didn’t need to have an “exorcism.” He said that as soon as he put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as the one who had died for his sins, “tons” of dark things went out of him.

Something happened to us all. We love the Lord. **I love the Lord because He’s heard my cry.** I love Him because He first loved me. How could you not love Him? I speak to my own heart.

It’s amazing what God can do in our hearts if we allow Him. It’s the new birth. We’re born from above, born in the Spirit of God, when we believe the gospel message.

Just as the DNA is in words, and there’s no life—no physical life—without words, there is no spiritual life without words. And you know what they are: 1 Peter 1: [23, 25b] “Being born again... by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever. ...And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

Why do we preach the gospel? People don’t have a transformation if the Word of God doesn’t come into their hearts and they don’t understand who they are in sin, or who Christ is and why He came, and then believe this. We don’t come to God as that proud lady driving in her chariot with all of her jewels. We come as broken sinners, recognizing our guilt and our need of Christ.

The Bible is so clear: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). That’s what Dawkins is reaping. That’s what “Sagan the Pagan” reaped. That’s what the cosmos gave him. Death. The cosmos—finally all dead. “The wages of sin is death...., “but it’s even worse than that. The second death is the Lake of Fire, and it goes on forever and forever and forever. An eternal dying, with regret and remorse: “How could I have been such a fool? I didn’t need to be here. Christ died for me. He paid the penalty for my sins, and here I am because I rejected Him.” No hope....

“... **But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (Romans 6:23). Let me remind you what a gift is. If you are going to receive forgiveness, if you are going to receive eternal life from God, you must receive it as a gift. A gift? What does that mean? It means you can’t work for it, you can’t earn it, you can’t merit it. A lot of people try to pay for the gift of God with church membership, good deeds, penance—it won’t work. Everybody’s on the same level. We come as hopeless, lost sinners for whom Christ died, and we must be willing to receive a gift. The gift of God is eternal life. You don’t want a gift? You want to work for it? You want to earn it? You want to show God how good you are? And that you deserve it? Sorry! You must receive this as a gift, and you can’t pay for a gift.

“The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” He can’t give it to you any other way, but only because Christ paid the penalty for our sins.



To summarize what's been going on here, we are in a cosmic battle for the universe, and we've read the end of the story: war in heaven, Satan and his demons—his angels—are fighting against Michael and his angels, and Satan does not prevail and he's thrown out, because the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who defeats them all, is the Lamb! A slain Lamb is on the throne. You think about that. You ponder it.

**I love the Lord because He first loved me.**

I don't want to forget the Father, because the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. He knew what was going to happen. He knew that His Son would be mocked and hated, spat upon, crucified, and you see that so beautifully in Genesis 22.

God call Abraham: "I want you to kill you only son, the son you love." What a picture of Christ: "The Father sent the Son..." The Father gave His Son to be the Savior of the world. In Genesis, Isaac says, "I've got the wood, father!" So he wasn't a little tiny kid. He was carrying the wood for the fire, as Jesus carried the cross. "Here's the wood, you've got the fire. Where's the lamb?"

Abraham replied, "God will provide himself a lamb."

I love that verse: "So they went both of them together." Abraham and his son. It was a joint operation. We don't want to forget God the Father, who gave His Son, and Christ, who suffered for our sins—they went both together.

Prayer: Father, you are so wonderful. Your grace and your love are beyond our comprehension. Lord, we love you because you first loved us, and herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And you demonstrate your love, Lord, in dying for our sins. Who could doubt it? Who could doubt that you love us? You never sinned, but you were treated as though you were all of the sins of the world, and you were punished in our place. Lord Jesus, we love you.

We love you with all of our hearts. Oh Lord, forgive us for not saying that often enough to you. Lord, we ask for a deeper understanding. Help us to know you. Help us to have an understanding. Lord, we grope. We see through a glass darkly. We understand so little, but we understand enough to know the gospel message that you sent your Son, and he came willingly and took our place. And Lord Jesus, we love you for this. We ask that you would reveal yourself to us more fully. We want to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in your temple. So draw us closer to you. We want to get to know you better. Like the song, "Down from His Glory" — "without reluctance, flesh and blood his substance, He took the form of man, revealed the hidden plan. O glorious mystery! Sacrifice at Calvary. Now I know He is the great I AM!"

God and the Son, the Holy Spirit—a joint operation, "I and my Father are one." We don't understand it, but, Lord, we want to draw closer to you. We want to please you in our lives, we want to serve you, we want to honor you, and, Lord, we want to take this glorious gospel, without which no man can be born again, wherever we go. So, Lord, give us opportunities and

help us. And, Lord, we just love you, and may that be reflected in our lives, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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**Presented by: Gary Westgerdes**

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