

Week 3: Spiritual Learning Journal

This week focuses on the historical background of the Roman Empire as it would have affected the believers in these 7 churches. After you have watched the videos and listened to the PowerPoint discussions, answer the following questions.

1. Do you see any similarities between what 1st c. believers faced with the Roman Empire and what we Christians struggle with today? Explain briefly.

Revelation has been described as resistance literature, "a thorough-going prophetic critique of the abuse of power." Yet, it is not a document that simply stands against something! Like all biblical prophecy, it promotes true worship of the one true God, expressed not merely in worship songs and religious ceremonies, but also in faithful living.

Wow, describing Revelation from a standpoint of a "prophetic critique of the abuse of power" made me think of the 1st c. situation for believers so differently. And it is very similar to some of the ways we struggle today. Where we live, you only get into power if you abuse the system that gets you there, and that can't turn out well for ANYBODY.

I'm not so concerned that we live in a "Sodom and Gomorrah" situation and that the world is melting around us, but I am very concerned that just as John had to remind them that they had lost their first love, we (by "we" I mean Christians) have really lost perspective. If we truly believe His Word, His promises, and blessings, wouldn't our daily outlook, obedience, fruit, and blessing we walk in look a little different than it does?

2. Considering the description of Jesus to the Church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1), "These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands," what would be the impact of that description to someone from that church? In other words, does the description tie into the message as you understand it?

That description would be very strong, intimidating, and illustrative to me if I were a member of that church! As I understand it, the church at Ephesus was a bit lax and compromised into assimilation into the world around them due to their proximity to and pressure from a Roman society. Being reminded that our savior holds the seven stars (angels of the churches!) in His hand, and walks among the seven golden lampstands (the seven churches, namely, us!) is a very strong picture of His vast power, sovereignty, strength, and total control

3. Take time to write out a prayer to the Lord expressing what the Spirit lays on your heart from studying Jesus' message to Ephesus. If you want to keep your prayer private, simply share how writing out your prayer and lifting it up to Jesus impacted you.

Lord, thank You for painting such beautiful pictures of who You are. Thank You for using such beautiful words and detailed, cohesive, and incredibly complex connections throughout Your Word to keep showing me pictures of who You are in deeper ways as I grow and mature. I am humbled. Let me always remember my first love, let me always honor Your authority and walk in obedience. And if and when I fail, I thank You that just as You did with Peter, I would be brought right back in and set in a place to do even more work for You so that other may get to know You and I can continue to carry out the purpose You have created me for. Amen.