

Week 1 Journal

For every hearer, John presents overcoming as necessary to participate in God's new creation.

3. **Obedience:** Keep the commandments and do good works (Rev. 1:3; 2:2, 5, 19, 26; 3:3, 8; 12:17; 14-12-13; 22:7)

a. What do you learn about obedience from these passages?

Rev 2.1 God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.

Obedience is an action- a response to a request/command from God. Here God identifies

(these are incremental steps):

step 1 = READING

step 2 = LISTENING - give ear, pay attention

step 3 = OBEYING- respond to what you've heard

Rev 2.2 "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars.

steps- HARDWORK and ENDURANCE - led to discovering false teachers, liars, evil people (not true)

*Here the Lord identifies the results of obeying- **discovery**- because truth and responding to truth will reveal the false.*

Rev 2.5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

Rev2.19 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

*REMEMBERING and REPENTANCE - is an act of obedience that is **restorative**- not an empty gesture and also failure to repent has consequences*

Rev 2.26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.

Rev 3.3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

an addition- WATCH- pay attention and look upon

rev 3.8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

(denied= DISOWN) - this would compare to the people who did denounce Christ. It takes STRENGTH of character and heart to hold fast to the Lord

Rev12.17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus

here the Lord adds the concept of TESTIMONY as a response to keeping God's words. which is a presentation of evidence - objective substance/facts.

Rev 14.12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

another concept- PATIENCE = endurance, continuance involved in keeping/obeying God's commands.

Rev 14.13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

DIE- keeping God's commands even to death- an ultimate act of obedience

Rev 22.7 Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

another concept- PROPHECY= predictions - a specific kind of words of God

b. How does this teaching compare to 1 Peter 1:13-25? What does Peter add to your understanding?

Peter highlights that we should live soberly and purposefully- not carelessly or aimlessly- and not conforming to the ungodly world but to being HOLY - set apart to the things of God. Peter calls us "obedient children" --- what we can and should be. Our obedience is not an empty command and that we are capable to being obedient. Obeying God is more important than just living for the ease in the rest of our lives.

c. Write out a prayer to God that incorporates the need for or a commitment to obedience.

O Lord God, obedience was key in the old testament and is key also in the new. Help me Lord value obedience as You do. Help me see what I must do and help me be responsive and not g drag my feet in responding- that You may be pleased. Thank You Lord God that the Holy Spirit helps me. Amen.

Week 2 Journal

This is what **Blessed** means to me- **TO BE LIFTED UP** - can be in any realm- body, soul, spirit, home, car, family, etc and in any fashion- strength- peace - wisdom. Contrast this to CURSED -which is to BE BROUGHT DOWN or a BRINGING DOWN.

A. What does “**blessed**” mean in the following contexts, and what are the reasons for being considered blessed?

The Greek term **Makarios** (blessed) refers to “being especially favored, blessed, fortunate, happy, and privileged.” *For John, the blessing is pronounced on humans privileged to receive divine favor in a variety of situations recorded in Revelation.*

1. Read through the following verses in your favorite Bible:

Rev. 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good deeds follow them!" (NLT)

Context: the 3 angels proclaim judgment (the Lord's anger and wrath to those who would not believe) and blessing (to those who endure the persecutions and obey God).

Blessed here are believers who are favored with eternal life- and enter God's rest (with Him)- from the earthly labors of life- helping others, working, being a good parent, following the Lord, etc. And our good deeds follow us to the Bema seat of Jesus when some of our deeds will be rewarded. We are MOST fortunate- a great future lies for us. There is a clear distinction for those who follow the Lord and those who have not- who will receive God's judgment!

16:15 "Look, I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their clothing ready so they will not have to walk around naked and ashamed." (NLT)

Context: the 7 Bowls of the 7 Plagues.
Here - Blessed are those who are actively watching- staying connected for Jesus,

for His return is at a unexpected time- therefore we should be preparing at all times, following Jesus in faith and hope. We are blessed if we maintain our righteous coverings to avoid any ill effects of bowl judgments, which are horrid. I think the Lord is telling us how we are to stay focused while the world is undergoing the judgments.

19:9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he added, "These are true words that come from God." (NLT)

Context: Songs of victory in heaven- John and the angel, servants of God.

Blessed are the ones that are invited to wedding feast of the Lamb- the believers come to the conclusion of their faith and hope and get married to Christ and have a great celebration of the wedding feast. Our hopes and faith are in vain!

20:6 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. For them, the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with him a thousand years.

Context: The 1000 year Kingdom
Satan is locked for this 1000 yrs and the believers are resurrected to life (in flesh)= the 1st resurrection and the 2nd death has no power over the believers.
This is the MOST fortunate blessing for all believers to be be priests and reign with Christ. This is contrasted to those who will have a 2nd death.

22:7 "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book." (NLT)

Context: Jesus is coming!
The Lord tells John to tell His servants to inspire them with these words- that He is coming soon. Those who respond with faith and obedience are the most fortunate - goodness from God (His great favor) and he is bringing REWARDS for each- blessings.

22:14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life." (NLT)

Context: Jesus is coming!
Fortunate are those whose robes are washed (in Christ's blood) by faith and can enter through the gates of the city of Jerusalem where Christ's throne will be .
And then have access to eat from the eternally tree of life. Greatest blessing is eternal life with God because of Jesus !!!
This all is the in contrast to those who will not - the dogs and those who love to live a LIE.

2. Using the chapter and sectional headings, consider the context. What is going on in the verses or paragraph sections just before this blessing and what is going on in the verses or paragraph sections following the blessing? How does considering the surrounding context give you insight into what being blessed means?

The contrasts of the judgments of God spoken in Revelation to the blessings- elevate out understanding of the blessings and add great HOPE !!!

Week 3 Journal

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.

While I don't see the pagan temples that seemed to be prevalent during this time - we do have pagan songs and ideas that actually are quite prevalent. These past years you are hard pressed to hear sacred Christmas - it's all lite fluffy vanity! But I think what we do see is that STRONG pushing away in the culture of the Word of God and references to God altogether. Just like with the Romans- they didn't tolerate Christianity much and it came with great cost- either through compromising of paganism mixed in or through outright harm to the believers.

We seem to be on a path here of pushing out God as well , that may advance to outright harm to us the believers in the near future.

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?

I found that focusing (meditating) on this these verses adds such great comfort to know that each church body has a leader(s) assigned by Jesus that He Himself HOLDS (God's holding is a seizing holding) and that their light (stars- to carry the shining LIGHT of God's word) brings or should bring light to that body and as they incorporate that LIGHT - they become lampstands- which implies a "structural" support of that Light - a tangible building. I think this verse add so much to a believer's understanding of the CHURCH of Jesus.

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 Jesus, I thank that the letter to the Ephesians expanded my understanding of HOW You relate to each "church" body in particular (stars and LIGHT). Help me see this more as I go forward. I see Your encouragement to these believers living in a pagan society as we do also. Help me hold fast to MY first LOVE of You !!!

Week 4 Journal

Part of growth is facing our challenges with an honest look at who we are and what thoughts are attempting to take us captive. It is tempting to look for the comforting words of Christ that show He is for us than at the warnings that may be a word against us in our present condition.

1. In what way/s do you see yourself and/or the church today in Jesus' message to the Church at Smyrna?

When I was working, for a number of years I was faced with how was I going to work amidst the ongoing pagan ideologies. Depending on my responses - I was faced with people's reactions that as I drew away from spending time among gossip or talking about ungodly things - I felt the separation from the peoples - though we got along- friendships and inclusions among them diminished and I could feel that I was no longer part of their inner circle. The requirement for me to maintain righteousness - be a good worker- when I felt so emotionally hurt - also - in the end made me stronger. I faced a measure of persecution when someone came against me- but I learned to hold fast to Jesus and in the end- they were the loser and I was upheld. Will I be steadfast enough if persecution comes against our church in the future as I suspect it will? I have a foundation to stand on- but I suspect it could get rough.

To the Church at Pergamum? *We must always be aware of the potential for false teaching and the only way to do that is to stay- abide- in God's word and take part in solid teaching with pastoral staff such as my church and gifted teachers as your self. So far I think I've been able to be wary at - easy faith type teachings.*

2. Of what specifically should we as a community of believers comprised of all churches repent?

Are we shallow or committed Christians? Do we want the easy path or are we willing to take the hard road? Our background in America is life is relatively easy and we're not much used to hardships. I think we have to be honest with ourselves and open to the Spirit to be able to endure and have the greater experience in Jesus. Do we really want the greater experience in Jesus?

3. In what ways does the Spirit redirect our lives to get us back on the right path?

I find the Spirit redirects my life primarily through His word as He points out righteousness- a guiding light. Secondly He points out to me internally in regards to my personal interactions with people- whether they were loving or not, so I can face correction.

Do you find places where you tend to resist the Spirit? *In my flesh I still resist obeying God in giving up what God wants me to give up - even though it's been many years. My flesh does not like discomfort. Another place is my hesitancy sometimes to reach out to other people. I am shy.*

4. What reorienting path needs to be taken for the church to be faithful to Christ?

Perhaps the idea of maintain teachings of Scriptures that discuss hardship and narrow paths and serving the interests of others - not just ourselves (self-centered Americans), and what are the true goals of life- is it materialism?

If you have time, write out a prayer that expresses your heartfelt experience from studying these letters to Smyrna and Pergamum. Do you have something to praise God for? Do you have something you would like to confess to God?

Lord God, I expect that we in America may face persecution and unpleasantness in our lives that we don't like and would normally run from. Help me Lord not run, but remain steadfast and faithful during these times- I don't look forward to them- just thinking about them makes me sad. Thank you Lord You are always with me and for me.