

## Week 1 \_Reflections

### Theme 5\_Worship

1. Definition

2. What did I learn?

- Revelation 4:1-11 – There is worship in Heaven around the throne of God. These beings worshiped God **without ceasing**, day & night. They worshiped Him with **song**. Worship is an act of **surrender** to the only One who deserves all the glory, honor and praise.  
*(In response to Revelation 4:10, the song rising up in me is, "I fall down, I lay my crown, at the feet of Jesus. . .and I sing Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lamb.")*
- Revelation 5:6-14 – We are to worship Jesus with instruments and singing. Even our prayers are an act of worship. Worship is thunderous and we should hold nothing back. All of Heaven, angels and all creation are to worship God with loud voices, as one voice. Again, there is another picture of total surrender as the elders throw themselves facedown to the ground.  
*(Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole? Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll? The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave, He was David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave Is He worthy? Is He worthy? Of all blessing and honor and glory Is He worthy of this? He is)*
- Revelation 7: 9 -17 – By our worship we minister to Jesus and as we minister to Him, He dwells with us. "The Lord inhabits the praise of His people." Worship satisfies our souls and our worship cancels the power of Satan. Worship refreshes us restores our joy.
- Revelation 11: 15-19 – Worship is an act of giving thanks
- Revelation 12: 10-12 – In worship, we rejoice because Jesus has won the victory. Worship is celebratory!
- Revelation 14: 1-5 – Worship is pure. We are to worship out of obedience. Worship binds us to Jesus. Worship is like a new song that is only known by Jesus and His Bride.
- Revelation 15:1-4 – God is the author of worship! He made us to worship Him! He owns His own harps! Very cool!
- Revelation 16:1-7 – Angels worship God from within the heavenly sanctuary.
- Revelation 18: 1-5 – Worship sets us apart from the world. We are to worship only God; we are to worship Him while we are in the world, but not in the ways of this world.
- Revelation 19: 1-8 – Worship comes from a place of reverence. Worship is part of the Wedding Celebration of the Lamb.

## Week 2\_Meaning of being BLESSED

### Revelation 14:13

"Then I heard a voice from the heavenly realm, saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead – the ones dying in the Lord from now on.'"

"Yes," says the Holy Spirit, "they will rest from their trouble, for their deeds will live on!"

Before - The Message of the Three Angels

1. "You must reverence God and glorify him for the time has come for him to judge."
2. Babylon has fallen
3. Whoever worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or hand, will also drink the wine of God's wrath.

Verse 12 - "This is a call for the endurance and faithfulness of the holy believers – those who follow God's commands and cling to the faith of Jesus" (Even unto death)

After - The Harvest of the Earth

Verse 16 - "So the one sitting upon the white cloud gave his sickle a mighty swing over the earth and reaped its harvest."

**Blessed** - Those who have died to self and live for Christ even unto their own death will be taken up into Heaven and find rest. The Lord sees and will count the deeds we have done in His name and for God's glory.

### Revelation 16:15

"Behold, I come like a thief! God's blessing is with the one who remains awake and fully clothed in me and will not walk about naked, exposed to disgrace."

Before - Seven Bowls Are Poured Out (on earth, sea, rivers & springs of water, sun, throne of the wild beast, good & abounding river - Euphrates). Despite the bowls being poured out, the people of the world continued to curse God and refused to repent and give Him glory.

After - Seventh Bowl - Into the air/a loud voice from the Heavenly Temple and from God's Throne; Judgment of the Harlot, Babylon.

**Blessed** - Those who remain faithful to the Creator of Heaven, Earth, and Sea and to the Son of God who sits enthroned as the One and Only True King of Kings. Those whose roots have formed deep by the rivers and springs of water where we've been "planted" by God, to be in this world but not of it. Those whose hope has remained in Jesus, our River of Life, our Bridegroom. Those who have hidden themselves in Christ and wear the robe of His Righteousness.

Those who remain awake/watchful - gregoreuo, from egeiro - lift up, raise up, stand, take up - images of one who lifts up the name of Jesus, who takes a stand against the darkness, and who takes up his/her cross for Christ's sake.

### Revelation 19:9

"Then the angel said to me, 'Write these words: Wonderfully blessed are those who are invited to feast at the wedding celebration of the Lamb!' And then he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.'"

Before - Heaven Rejoices

After - The Bridegroom-King on the White Horse Appears

**Blessed** - Jesus knows my name and calls me His own! He chose me to be His bride and gave me His name which was written in red!

## **Week 2, cont'd**

### **Revelation 20:6**

"Wonderfully blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection! The second death holds no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of the Christ. And they will reign as kings with him a thousand years."

Before - Binding Satan

Jesus defeated Satan by His death and resurrection and holds the keys to heaven and hell. A vision of the first resurrection.

After - The Final Destruction of Satan & Judgment Day

**Blessed** - We have been given eternal life and will not be judged in the same manner as those who never made Christ their Lord and Savior. We are the sons & daughters of God the Father and we will never taste the "second death" which means to be eternally separated from God & Jesus and thrown into the lake of fire. We will not hear Jesus say, "I don't know him." We will hear, "She is mine!"

### **Revelation 22:7**

"Behold, I come quickly! Wonderfully blessed is the one who carefully guards the words of the prophecy of this book!"

Carefully guards/keepeth - tereo - akin to theoreo - discern, experience, earnest, continued inspection

**Blessed** is the one who guards The Word/Jesus who is written upon his/her heart. Like Mary we are blessed when we "ponder" God's Word in our heart. We are blessed when we meditate upon His Word day and night.

### **Revelation 22:14**

"Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) are those who wash their robes [in the blood of Christ by believing and trusting in Him - the righteous who do His commandments], so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city."

Before - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

After - "I, Jesus. . . I am the Root (the Source, the Life) and the Offspring of David, the radiant and bright Morning Star."

**Blessed** - Those who have been made the "Righteousness of Christ" and put on the garment of righteousness will have eternal life, living in the Presence of God forever. By contrast, Adam and Eve, had access to the "Tree of Life" which was God's presence, but chose self-righteousness and were cut off from God's Presence. They once walked with Him and talked with Him, as He was present with them in the Garden. Now, because of Jesus, our righteousness has been restored and we will again walk and talk with God "in person" for all eternity.

**Summary Statement** - Studying what comes before and what comes after a particular verse gives God a greater opportunity to reveal His heart for us. The Holy Spirit is better able to unlock the "mystery" and provide revelation. The Word takes on new meaning, making it

easier to hold it in our hearts and remember what God said. Finally, it makes it easier to interpret and apply Scripture correctly or as we say “Divide The Word”.

### **Week 3 Reflections**

#### **1. Similarities Between What 1<sup>st</sup> Century Believers Faced & What Christians Face Today**

A few similarities come to mind. The first is that we are often tempted to make an idol out of our leaders, specifically the President of the United States. We put more stock in what “our” candidate says and does than we do in God who can turn the hearts of kings. We get our “truth” from talk show hosts such as Oprah or Ellen and from the news & social media which the Enemy uses to try and tell us what we should believe, all the while distorting the truth and painting a hopeless, grim picture, which causes us to forget who we belong to. Like the Romans the news media perpetuates violence. Thirdly, God is being silenced in our schools. Children are now being told they have the right to decide what gender they want to be identified as belonging to and Christian teachers have to abide by the law that allows this. Yet, we are not allowed to teach our children about Jesus for fear of being fired. We can have a club for LGBT but not afterschool prayer groups or Christian Clubs. If Christians speak up and stand-up for Biblical Principles we are labeled as close-minded, judgmental, homophobic, or prejudicial. These are just a few of the challenges that come to mind.

#### **2. Impact of the description of Jesus as the one who holds seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:**

So, I had to cheat a little on this one, to really understand the significance and meaning of the seven stars and seven lampstands. From what I could gather, I think that anyone from the Church of Ephesus would have understood the significance of this description. I don’t know if their first thought would have been of the promise in Leviticus, but I think they would have known the significance of the lampstand. As one of the seven churches that existed in John’s day, they would have known that they were commissioned to be a lampstand and be bearers of light to the world, testifying of Christ. They would have understood that Christ came to establish His Church and by His Holy Spirit would remain with them. They would have understood this to be a prophetic message from Jesus, Himself, and would have understood the gravity of the rest of His letter to them.

The reference to Jesus as the one who holds seven stars in his right hand shows that the “messengers” or pastors of the churches were under His authority. *(If the source I read was correct in suggesting that the seven stars were the pastors of the churches)*. The people would understand this to be a reference to Jesus who holds us in His right hand and promised that no one could snatch them from His right hand. Again, they would have understood this message as one coming from Jesus through prophecy.

## Week 4\_Reflections

1. I take comfort in Jesus' words to the **Church in Smyrna** when He commends them for their enduring faith even through suffering. I have been through some pretty significant trials in life and while I did not face everything perfectly, I never waived in my faith. I never blamed God or got angry with Him, but rather simply leaned into Jesus and asked Him to show me what it was that He needed me to learn and/or how He would turn it for good. I have new understanding of what it means to "move from faith to faith". God has used every circumstance and temporary affliction to increase my faith in Him. I also can hear Jesus telling me to not fear impending suffering or testing. Despite all that He has brought me through, fear can still "get me" sometimes, but I do take comfort in Jesus' words, and try to recall the times before that He brought me through and remember his promise that this too is a momentary trouble.

I am challenged by Jesus' words to the **Church in Pergamum**. While I hold fast to Jesus' name, I too, can become tolerant of things that God calls sin and not speak up as I should. I need to do better at taking a stand for what is right and lifting up the name of Jesus when it is hard to do so.

2. I believe that the thing that perhaps grieves God the most about His Church is the denominational divides. I don't believe he ever intended for us to be divided. As long as we are divided on doctrine and engage in passing judgment against one another because we practice our faith differently (some denominations still sing hymns, while others worship with contemporary praise & worship; some baptize by immersion and others celebrate infant baptism; some recite the Lord's Prayer every week and others rarely if ever recite it; some celebrate Pentecost and Lent and Epiphany with different colored altar cloths and some make no mention of these "seasons"). . . None of these things should matter! I think these divisions weaken our testimony especially when we fight over such things and say, "Ohhhh! You go there? You must not be a Christian!"

I also believe that as of late we've made idols out of politicians and this has caused there to be even more division within the Church. If we are fighting among ourselves, how can we then out of the same "mouth" tell others that they need Jesus. I think the hypocrisy of it all grieves the heart of God.

3. **How does Holy Spirit redirect our lives?** I think He does this in multiple ways. If we are "in The Word" like we should be then He can highlight certain Scripture verses to bring conviction and correction. He speaks to us through our shepherds. If they are good shepherds then they will not hold back if we need to be admonished or redirected. The Holy Spirit can also redirect our lives by speaking through our friends or even "enemies". And, finally, I think the Holy Spirit can use times of trial and tribulation to redirect our lives. God may not bring the trial, but He certainly can use it to "grow" us up!

**Where do I resist the Spirit?** (Did I mention that the Holy Spirit can redirect our lives through questions like these? LOL) Oh, yes! I can think of a place or two that I resist the Holy Spirit! I am so bad at taking the time to pray for my “enemies”. Lately, I know God keeps placing “enemies” in my way, and I even feel the conviction to pray for “them”. I say that I don’t know what to pray, but I think it is more that I don’t want to pray. I have a friend who keeps reminding me to pray, especially in tongues, but that leads to the second way I’m resisting the Holy Spirit. Praying in tongues is just not my preferred way of praying. I’ve only started developing my prayer language and it is just not “comfortable”. It’s not my “go to” way of praying. But, I do understand the value and know I need to repent and obey!

I actually had a bit of a revelation today about this. I believe, like so many, that Jesus has got to be close to returning. And, I don’t want to stand before the judgment seat and have God show me all the opportunities, I missed to pray for others just because I refused to obey a exercise the gift He gave me. I know that I’m called to be a prayer warrior, a watchman on the wall, and in order to be as powerful as I know He created me to be, I have to start praying “better”, day and night, and allowing the Holy Spirit to show me how. The spirit is willing! It’s time for me to get my flesh lined up with my calling!

4. What reorienting path needs to be taken for the church to be faithful to Christ?  
As I considered this question, the Holy Spirit laid John 14:12 on my heart. “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.” I think the church has forgotten who we were created to be and the authority and power that has been given to us. We should be out performing miracles! We should be speaking to mountains! We should be taking a stand against Satan. We should be uniting our voices in prayer. Especially, in these end times. I just thought of Frank Peretti’s books “This Present Darkness” and “Piercing the Darkness.” God’s people win the battle against the principalities and dominions who have tried to occupy towns and people in those towns by responding to the call to prayer. We need to re-position ourselves on our knees and get back to praying fervently for each other and for the world. We should be following Christ’s example! He prayed a lot! The more we pray, the more we’ll know His heart. And, the more we know His heart, we will know how to pray.