

WEEK FORTY | VICTORY IN JESUS

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

I believe that You are my Lord and Savior. As I have walked through Your Word this year, I have been transformed by drawing nearer to You.

Thank You for this journey, for the people I have traveled with this past year, and for all the ways that You have blessed me along the way.

When I am tempted to despair, draw close to me, and help me remember that You are victorious!

Amen.

Prayer Concerns:

WEEK FORTY | DAY ONE

READ: Revelation 4-7

JOURNAL: Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

LEARN: John uses a great deal of Old Testament imagery to describe the exalted throne room of God. Through these vivid descriptions, John is declaring that God truly is holy and worthy of our praise. This might seem obvious, but one of John's main points in this letter is just that: God is king of Heaven, and He deserves our worship. And because of His sacrifice, Jesus, the lamb of God, is worthy to open the scrolls handed over by God, which is a nod to the Trinity – God and Jesus are both worthy of our praise as king of Heaven. And in chapter 7, we find John's first description of Jesus' final victory over sin and death. John addresses those who have been saved by the lamb as the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. This Old Testament reference is crossed with the New Testament reference of the 12 disciples to declare that Jesus' victory offers salvation to the Jews and the Gentiles.

RESPOND: In today's reading, John describes Jesus as both the proud lion of Judah and the lamb who was slain. Which of these images do you tend to associate with Jesus more? What can you learn about Jesus from the one you don't think about as often?

WEEK FORTY | DAY TWO

READ: Revelation 8-12

JOURNAL: Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

LEARN: The seven trumpets in today's reading are intimately connected to the seven seals from yesterday and the seven bowls that we will read about tomorrow. Each of these three series represent the same set of spiritual realities, but John depicts them from different perspectives using different Old Testament metaphors. Each of these series is supposed to connect John's reader to God's larger story to show how God has been working out our salvation throughout history and how His plan has come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. John is also very honest with his readers about the hardships they were facing. Following Jesus is not always peaches and daisies, and there are times when we all experience struggles that draw us away from God. But we are encouraged to persevere in the face of difficulty, because this is how we will be victorious with Christ on the last day.

RESPOND: The dragon from chapter 12 represents another perspective on the spiritual battle that John addresses in chapters 10 and 11. This monster represents the forces of evil that seek to distract us from God and His great love for us.

- If every bad thing in our lives looked like a dragon, it might be easier to keep away from these distractions to our faith. Take a few moments to list some of the things that commonly distract you from your faith. How can you rework these distractions to honor God through them?

WEEK FORTY | DAY THREE

READ: Revelation 13-16

JOURNAL:

Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

LEARN: The mark of the beast in today's reading is a reference to the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In the same way that God's followers should bind His law on their hands and their foreheads, the beast wants the world to mark themselves against God. This mark represents allegiance to political and economic powers, which John declares to be the ultimate threat to God's reign on earth. But John is encouraging his readers to reject these earthly powers and instead put their trust in God alone, just as the followers of the slain lamb (Jesus) do in the face of these great beasts.

As we learned yesterday, the seven bowls are a reiteration of the spiritual realities that John has already addressed through the seals and the trumpets. The seventh bowl is poured out on Armageddon, which was a real battlefield north of ancient Israel. This is an allusion to the many battles that were fought over Israel's freedom throughout her history, and a declaration that God will be victorious in His battle over sin and death.

RESPOND:

- By contrasting the faithfulness of the slain lamb with the aggression and perversion of the beasts from the earth, John is posing the following questions to his initial readers and to all believers today:
- Will you continue to follow Jesus and resist the evil forces in this world?
- Or will you follow the beast of the earth and be swallowed by greed?

WEEK FORTY | DAY FOUR

READ: Revelation 17-20

JOURNAL: Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

LEARN: Babylon the prostitute is another personification of the same evil political and economic powers that John addressed earlier in his letter. He references several Old Testament kingdoms that opposed Israel and links them to their current oppressor: Rome. John is saying that no matter what the flag looks like or who is declared the leader, the powers of this world will always exist in some form, and it is the duty of all who follow Jesus to resist them. But hear this good news: Jesus wins! Jesus destroys every Babylon, every Rome, and every other expression of evil or oppression. He does this through His sacrificial death and resurrection from the grave, which is why the lamb comes to the battle already bloodied. And as followers of Jesus, He offers us this assurance so that even when there seems to be so much wrong in the world, we can still find hope in His promise.

RESPOND: So far in our journey through Revelation, we have read about chanting saints, plagues, spiritually significant spans of time, spiritual battles, and evil forces. What has been your impression reading this book? Is it what you expected when you first began? What has been different? How have you encountered God through this mysterious book?

WEEK FORTY | DAY FIVE

READ: Revelation 21-22

JOURNAL: Write your initial thoughts on today's reading. What words or phrases stuck out to you? What questions do you have about what you read?

LEARN: The last two chapters of Revelation contain the vision that John has of what life will be like after God's final victory over sin and death. God brings His Kingdom to earth, because all evil has been expelled from it. God's desire from the very beginning has been to live in perfect, intimate relationship with His creation, and now that reality is fulfilled. The power of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection is enough to make all things new and good – a restoration of all creation into a new Garden of Eden. And John writes this letter to assure us of this reality. Our great Christian hope is to live eternally with God, and He will make this happen.

RESPOND: In response to this, our last reading on this Word ALIVE journey, I want you to give praise to God. Praise Him for all you have learned along the way, and I want you to praise Him for His final victory over all evil, which will restore creation to its perfected state, just as God intended. Amen!

“For the Word of God is Alive and Active”

Hebrews 4:12

Word Alive has come to a close and you need to take a moment to celebrate your accomplishment. For forty weeks, you have faithfully poured over books of the Bible, chapter after chapter, verse by verse. This is not easy to do, and yet you did it! As you close out this book, take a moment to remember. Remember some of your aha's, whether from reading about creation found in Genesis, or the order and laws found in Leviticus. Maybe it was the poetic songs of the Psalms that touched you or reading Jesus' words. No matter the book, each week was a new opportunity for God to come active and alive within you. The hope and prayer in all this was that the Word would come alive and active in you! May it be so!

Let's close with a prayer.

God,

Today we say thank You! Thank You for the gift of time spent in Your Word. None of it was wasted. Thank You for each moment of frustration or confusion by Your Word, a gentle reminder that You are God and we are not. Thank You for each verse that brought me comfort or brought me to tears, a reinforcement that never will You leave us nor forsake us. Your Word is the source of all that is needed for the source of our faith and salvation. May this not be the end of our study and exploration of Your Word. Stir our desire to lay hold of the active life You have for us. Give us strength, courage, and grace to lay hold of all You have for us. It is in the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.