

Handout Lesson 4

The Trials and the Promises to the Seven Churches of the Book of Revelation

<p>1. The Church at Ephesus Revelation 2:1-7</p>	<p><u>Acknowledgement of suffering:</u> <i>I know your activities, your hard work and your perseverance. [...]. I know too that you have perseverance, and have suffered for my name without growing tired.</i></p> <p><u>Promised victory:</u> <i>...those who prove victorious I will feed from the tree of life set in God's paradise.</i></p>
<p>2. The Church at Smyrna Revelation 2:8-11</p>	<p><u>Acknowledgment of suffering:</u> <i>I know your hardships and your poverty and though you are rich, the slander of the people who falsely claim to be Jews but are really members of the synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of the sufferings that are coming to you.</i></p> <p><u>Promised victory:</u> <i>Even if you have to die, keep faithful and I will give you the crown of life for your prize.</i></p>
<p>3. The Church at Pergamum Revelation 2:12-16</p>	<p><u>Acknowledgement of suffering:</u> <i>I know where you live, in the place where Satan is enthroned, and that you still hold firmly to my name, and did not disown your faith in me even when my faithful witness, Antipas, was killed among you, where Satan lives.</i></p> <p><u>Promised victory:</u> <i>...to those who prove victorious I will give some hidden manna and a white stone, with a new name written on it, known only to the person who receives it.</i></p>
<p>4. The Church at Thyatira Revelation 2:18-29</p>	<p><u>Acknowledgement of suffering:</u> <i>I know of your activities, your love, your faith, your service and your perseverance, and I know how you are still making progress. [...]. ... it is I who test motives and thoughts and repay you as your deeds deserve.</i></p> <p><u>Promised victory:</u> <i>...but hold on firmly to what you already have until I come. To anyone who proves victorious, and keeps working for me until the end, I will give the authority over the nations which I myself have been given by my Father, to rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like so many pots.</i></p>
<p>5. The Church at Sardis Revelation 3:1-6</p>	<p><u>Acknowledgement of suffering:</u> <i>I know about your behavior: how you are reputed to be alive and yet are dead. Wake up; put some resolve into what little vigor you have left; it is dying fast...</i></p> <p><u>Promised victory:</u> <i>There are a few in Sardis, it is true, who have kept their robes unstained, and they are fit to come with me, dressed in white. Anyone who proves victorious will be dressed like these in white robes; I shall not blot that name out of the book of life, but acknowledge it in the presence of my Father and his angels.</i></p>
<p>6. The Church at Philadelphia Revelation 3:7-13</p>	<p><u>Acknowledgement of suffering:</u> <i>I know that though you are not very strong, you have kept my commandments and not disowned my name.</i></p> <p><u>Promised victory:</u> <i>Because you have kept my commandment to persevere, I will keep you safe in the time of trial which is coming for the whole world, to put the people of the world to the test. [...]. Anyone who proves victorious I will make into a pillar in the sanctuary of my God, and it will stay there for ever...</i></p>
<p>7. The Church at Laodicea Revelation 3:14-22</p>	<p><u>Acknowledgement of suffering:</u> <i>I know about your activities: how you are neither cold nor hot. [...]. I warn you, buy from me the gold that has been tested in the fire to make you truly rich, and white robes to clothe you and hide your shameful nakedness, ...so repent in real earnest.</i></p> <p><u>Promised victory:</u> <i>If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person's side. Anyone who proves victorious I will allow the share my throne, just as I have myself overcome and have taken my seat with my Father on his throne.</i></p>

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The Blessings and Curses of the New Covenant [“alas” or “woe” = curse]. Compare these to the Old Covenant blessings and curses in Lev 26:3-46 and Dt 1-68.

Blessings of Matthew 5:1-12	Curses of Matthew 23:13-32
<p>Matthew 5:3, 10: <i>Blessed are the poor in spirit the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.</i> <i>Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness, the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.</i></p>	<p>Matthew 23:13: <i>Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut up the kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces...</i></p>
<p>Matthew 5:4: <i>Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.</i> Those who mourn their sins and suffer trials shall be comforted.</p>	<p>Matthew 23:16: <i>Alas for you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the Temple, it has no force; but anyone who swears by the gold of the Temple is bound.’ [...]. And someone who swears by the Temple is swearing by that and by the One who dwells in it. And someone who swears by heaven is swearing by the throne of God and by the One who is seated there.</i> Temple sacrifice was the vehicle for confession and atonement for sins.</p>
<p>Matthew 5:5: <i>Blessed are the meek: they shall inherit the earth.</i> Meekness = humility and submission to the will of God.</p>	<p>Matthew 23:29: <i>Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build the sepulchers of the prophets and decorate the tombs of the upright, saying, ‘We would never have joined in shedding the blood of the prophets, had we lived in our ancestors’ day.’ So! Your own evidence tells against you! You are the children of those who murdered the prophets! Pride of Pharisees hinders humility.</i></p>
<p>Matthew 5:6: <i>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: they shall be filled.</i></p>	<p>Matthew 23:27: <i>Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of corruption. [...]. Pharisees exhibit righteousness only externally but are filled with corruption.</i></p>
<p>Matthew 5:7 <i>Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.</i></p>	<p>Matthew 23:23: <i>Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay your tithe of mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law—justice, mercy, good faith!</i></p>
<p>Matthew 5:8: <i>Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.</i></p>	<p>Matthew 23:25: <i>Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of cup and dish and leave the inside full of extortion and intemperance. [...]. Clean the inside of the cup and dish first so that it and the outside are both clean.</i></p>
<p>Matthew 5:9: <i>Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognized as children of God.</i></p>	<p>Matthew 23:15: <i>Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte, and anyone who becomes one you make twice as fit for hell as you are. They are making proselytes fit to be the sons of Satan.</i></p>

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Thirty references to the Sermon on the Mount within St. James' letter

Letter of St. James	Jesus' Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew	Context
1:2	5:12	Rejoice in persecution for the sake of the Kingdom
1:4	5:16; 5:48	Good works are praise to God and complete us
1:5	7:7; 21	Asking God for what is good
1:12	5:10-12	Blessings for all persecuted because of Christ
1:17	7:11	All that is good comes from God
1:19-20	5:22	God's justice is never served by anger
1:22-23	7:24-27	Listen to the words of God and put them into practice
1:26-27	7:21-23	One must be a doer of the word
2:5	5:3	The "poor in spirit" (those who admit they need God) are heirs to the kingdom of heaven
2:10	5:19	Believers must keep all of the commandments; to break one is to break all
2:11	5:21-22	The commandment against murder
2:12	5:10-12	Blessing for those who endure persecution
2:13	5:7; 6:14-15	The merciful will be shown mercy; the unmerciful will be shown no mercy
2:14-26	7:21-23	Give freely to those in need; faith without action is dead and worthless faith
3:12	7:16	The fruit a tree produces represents what kind of tree it is as the works a person produces represents the faith of that person
3:18	5:9	Blessing of peacemakers
4:2,3	7:7,8	God grants the prayers that are petitions of good intent
4:4	6:24	One cannot serve both God and the world
4:8	5:8	To please God one must have a pure heart
4:9	5:4	Those who mourn
4:11-12	7:1-5	Warning against being judgmental
4:13-14	6:34	Tomorrow is uncertain; it is in God's hands
5:1-2	6:19-20	Curse of the selfish rich
5:9	5:22; 7:1	God is the judge standing at the door
5:10	5:12	The prophets: our example of suffering and perseverance
5:12	5:33-37	Avoid making an oath (vow) unless you can faithfully keep it—do not swear by heaven or hell. You will be judged on the fulfillment of your oaths by God.