

Revelation 2 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

Apostle John on Isle of Patmos

LINKS TO
Revised Commentary on Revelation 2
Dr Bruce Hurt

NOTE: The revision includes all of the information on this page with many additional notes.

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REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST
THE BIG PICTURE

REVELATION 10-22
EVENTS OF THE END TIMES

HISTORICAL SETTING OF REVELATION

NOTE - These comments on **Revelation 1 and Revelation 2** are separate and distinct from the main Revelation Commentary by Tony Garland which has verse by verse comments on the entire book of the Revelation. For those studies click [Revelation 1 Commentary](#) and [Revelation 2 Commentary](#) or see the complete index on the [Verse by Verse listing](#).

Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

NET Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write the following: "This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who has a firm grasp on the seven stars in his right hand— the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

NLT Revelation 2:1 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

ESV Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

NIV Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:

GNT Revelation 2:1 Τ ἄγγελε τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ ἐφῆσου· ὁ ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας, περιπατῶν ἐν μέσσοις τῶν ἑπτὰ λυχνιῶν χρυσεῶν·

KJV Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

ASV Revelation 2:1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:

CSB Revelation 2:1 "Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus: "The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand and who walks among the seven gold lampstands says:

NKJ Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, `These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

NRS Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

YLT Revelation 2:1 'To the messenger of the Ephesian assembly write: These things saith he who is holding the seven stars in his right hand, who is walking in the midst of the seven lamp-stands -- the golden:

- **the angel:** Rev 2:8,12,18 3:1,7,14
- **church:** Rev 1:11
- **holds:** Rev 1:16,20 Rev 8:10-12 12:1 John 5:35
- **walks:** Rev 1:12,13 Eze 28:13,14 Mt 18:20 28:20

[Ephesus on Cayster River in Asia Minor](#)
[Click to Enlarge](#)

THE RISEN REDEEMER ADDRESSES THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Related Passages:

Revelation 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I **saw seven golden lampstands**;

Revelation 1:13 and in the middle of the **lampstands** I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

Revelation 1:16; **In His right hand He held seven stars**, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Revelation 1:20 "As for **the mystery of the seven stars** which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: **the seven stars** are the angels of the seven churches, and **the seven lampstands are the seven churches**.

The seven letters to the 7 churches are "**the things which are**" (Rev 1:19+), i.e., the things (the churches) which was physically in existence when he received this letter from Jesus.

To the angel of the church- The recipient of the letter is named first as **the angel**. The **angel** ([aggelos/angelos](#)) is addressed in all 7 churches (Rev 2:8,12,18 Rev 3:1,7,14) and while there is some disagreement as to whether this could be a created **angel**, the evidence points to this as a man who functions as a messenger. As **MacArthur** says "the New Testament nowhere teaches that angels are involved in the leadership of the church. Angels do not sin and thus have no need to repent, as the messengers, along with the congregations they represented, are exhorted to do (cf. Rev 2:4–5, 14, 20; 3:1–3, 15, 17, 19)." Furthermore, angels are never described as head of a local church anywhere in Scripture. Finally, **angel** ([aggelos/angelos](#)) is translated as "messenger" several times in the NT - Mark 1:2 has " I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU," and this refers to John the Baptist (cf other NT uses that mean "messenger" - Lk 7:24, Lk 9:52, Jas 2:25). In sum, this "**angel**" is a messenger of the Church, which refers to some leadership role in the church (pastor, elders, etc).

In Ephesus - This is the "postal address" of this letter. **Ephesus** means **desirable**. [See below](#) for background on Ephesus to get a good sense of the social/cultural/historical context.

Write -The glorified Christ gives John this command to **write** ([aorist imperative](#) = do this now; don't delay; it is important), the same command He gives for each of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2:1; Rev. 2:8; Rev. 2:12; Rev. 2:18; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:7; Rev. 3:14). John then records the words of the risen, ascended, glorified Christ (Rev 1:10-17+). Recall that earlier Jesus had commanded John to "**Write** ([aorist imperative](#)) in a book what you see ([present tense](#) = what you are seeing), and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." (Rev 1:11+) To what does this writing refer? From the context this passage would indicate that John recorded the entire vision from Revelation 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 and that it was this scroll that was to be sent to each of the churches. The reason that this is almost surely the entire Revelation that was to be circulated and not the letters to each individual church is because each of those letters was not what HE SAW but what HE HEARD, in effect representing the "dictation" of Christ's letter to each individual church.

Write (1125)([grapho](#) from root **graph-** = primarily means to scratch on or engrave as on an ornament, reports, letters, etc; **English** = graph, graphic, etc) means to engrave or inscribe with a pen or stylus characters or letters on a surface which can be wood, wax, metal, leather, stone, parchment, dirt (John), paper, etc. Note that John is given 12 commands to **write** what he **SAW** (**NOTE: THIS IS A VERY "VISUAL" BOOK!**) - Rev 1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5) and one command to not write (Rev 10:4+).

Grapho - 30x in 29v in Revelation - Rev. 1:3; Rev. 1:11; Rev. 1:19; Rev. 2:1; Rev. 2:8; Rev. 2:12; Rev. 2:17; Rev. 2:18; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:7; Rev. 3:12; Rev. 3:14; Rev. 5:1; Rev. 10:4; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 14:1; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 17:5; Rev. 17:8; Rev. 19:9; Rev. 19:12; Rev. 19:16; Rev. 20:12; Rev. 20:15; Rev. 21:5; Rev. 21:27; Rev. 22:18; Rev. 22:19

GET A GRIP! JESUS HAS A GRIP!

The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand - **The One** from the context is clearly the risen, ascended, glorified Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church. The verb **holds** is [krateo](#) which means to be strong, possess power and in the [present tense](#) pictures Jesus' continually having a firm grasp on all His churches. **His right hand** depicts the hand of power and authority (the churches belong to Jesus), indicating the churches are safely and securely in His grasp. **Holds** would also picture His close contact with His churches, His control of them and the firm foundation He provides for each of the churches. The use of the verb [krateo](#) would also be another way to say He is sovereign over His Church, that He is Lord and Master over His Church.

Holds (2902)([krateo](#) from **kratos** = strength) has basic meaning to be strong or possess power and then means to take hold of, to grasp, to hold fast. **Krateo** is used most often in the sense of "take hold of forcibly" as when Pharisees wanted to "take hold of" Jesus (Mt 21:46; Mark 12:12). **Krateō** can also mean "hold fast" with the idea of being loyal to or closely united with someone or something. The Pharisees were admonished for holding fast to the traditions of the elders (Mark 7:3ff.), while Christians are encouraged to hold to the traditions of Christianity (2 Th 2:15).

Krateo is a **KEY WORD** in Revelation 2 because it is used 5 times in chapter 1 (out of a total of 46 NT uses) - Mt. 9:25; Mt. 12:11; Mt. 14:3; Mt. 18:28; Mt. 21:46; Mt. 22:6; Mt. 26:4; Mt. 26:48; Mt. 26:50; Mt. 26:55; Mt. 26:57; Mt. 28:9; Mk. 1:31; Mk. 3:21; Mk. 5:41; Mk. 6:17; Mk. 7:3; Mk. 7:4; Mk. 7:8; Mk. 9:10; Mk. 9:27; Mk. 12:12; Mk. 14:1; Mk. 14:44; Mk. 14:46; Mk. 14:49; Mk. 14:51; Lk. 8:54; Lk. 24:16; Jn. 20:23; Acts 2:24; Acts 3:11; Acts 24:6; Acts 27:13; Col. 2:19; 2 Th 2:15; Heb. 4:14; Heb. 6:18; Rev. 2:1; Rev. 2:13; Rev. 2:14; Rev. 2:15; Rev. 2:25; Rev. 3:11; Rev. 7:1; Rev. 20:2



A Menorah

The One who walks among the seven golden lampstands - Walks is [peripateo](#) which literally pictures Jesus walking around and the [present tense](#) depicts Him continually walking around. He is always in the middle of all that goes on in His church. Nothing is hidden from Him. He is not distant from the life of the church. He IS the life of the church! Comparing Scripture with Scripture (**the seven lampstands are the seven churches** Rev 1:20+), Jesus is continually walking around the seven churches. This speaks of His omniscience, His authority, His headship, etc. Dear pastor or church goer, He is also walking around your church, with eyes aflame, perfectly assessing each person's heart. How does He see your church? Are you in danger of having the lampstand removed?

Why are they referred to as **lampstands**? Literal lampstands were stands on which lamps were placed to provide light in the darkness. Spiritually speaking, each church was to provide spiritual light to the moral darkness of the lost world. The churches were to be the source of the proclamation of Jesus, the Light of the world (Jn 8:12). Jesus charged those who would be His disciples ""**Let your light shine** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mt 5:16+) Paul wrote "For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Cor 4:6+) And to the Philippians he wrote "**Do** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) - which he had just described in Php 2:13+) all things without grumbling or disputing; 15so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." (Phil 2:14-15+)

A holy life will make the deepest impression.

Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine.

-- D L Moody

Related Resource:

- [What was Jesus' message to the church in Ephesus in Revelation?](#) - Gotquestions

REPETITION OF THE PHRASE "SAYS THIS" = "TADE LEGEI"

Says this - Literally the Greek reads "These things says" **Says this** could be accurately paraphrased ""**this is the solemn pronouncement of**" (NET)

Greek = "**These things says** [the One] ..." The expression **τάδε λέγει (tade legei)** occurs eight times in the NT, seven of which are in Rev 2-3 [Rev. 2:1; Rev. 2:8; Rev. 2:12; Rev. 2:18; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:7; Rev. 3:14]. "The pronoun (tade) is used to add [solemnity](#) to the prophetic utterance that follows....In classical drama, it was used to introduce a new actor to the scene (Smyth, Greek Grammar, 307 [§1241]). But the **τάδε λέγει** formula in the NT derives from the OT, where it was used to introduce a **prophetic utterance**. Thus, the translation "**this is the solemn pronouncement of**" for **τάδε λέγει** is very much in keeping with the OT connotations of this expression (because) the expression **This is the solemn pronouncement of** reflects an OT idiom. The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) has the same Greek phrase (**τάδε λέγει, tade legei**) about 350 times, with nearly 320 of them having "the LORD" (Heb יהוה, Yahweh) as subject. That the author of Revelation would use

such an expression seven times with the risen Christ as the speaker may well imply something of Christ's sovereignty and deity. Cf. also Acts 21:11 in which the Holy Spirit is the speaker of this expression. ([NET Note](#) - Bolding added)

EDITORIAL COMMENT - "TADE LEGEI" is used over 350 times in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) - here are a few representative uses which are as noted above usually are from the LORD Himself and begin "Thus says the LORD (or "Lord God" or "LORD of hosts")" -

Amos 1:6; Amos 1:9; Amos 1:11; Amos 1:13; Amos 2:1; Amos 2:4; Amos 2:6; Amos 3:11; Amos 3:12; Amos 5:3; Amos 5:4; Amos 5:16; Amos 7:11; Amos 7:17; Mic. 2:3; Mic. 3:5; Obad. 1:1; Nah. 1:12; Hag. 1:2; Hag. 1:5 = "Now therefore, **thus says** the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways!"; Hag. 1:7; Hag. 1:9; Hag. 2:6; Hag. 2:11; Zech. 1:3; Zech. 1:4; Zech. 1:14; Zech. 1:16; Zech. 1:17;

JESUS' PATTERN TO ALL HIS CHURCHES

TO	"To the angel of the church in..."
FROM	"The One...says this..."
CONTENTS	"I know..."
COMMENDATION	"I am pleased about this..."
CONCERN	"I have this against you..."
CORRECTION	"Repent..."
CALL TO ACTION	"He who has an ear, let him hear..."
COMPENSATION	"To him who overcomes..."

Guzik adds "The letters to the seven churches share a similar structure. They each feature:

- An address to a particular congregation
- An introduction of Jesus
- A statement regarding the condition of the church
- A verdict from Jesus regarding the condition of the church
- A command from Jesus to the church
- A general exhortation to all Christians
- A promise of reward

We can see the state of each of these seven churches—and the state of our own walk with Jesus—by looking at what Jesus has to say to each church in each section.

BACKGROUND ON EPHESUS William Barclay

WHEN we know something of the history of Ephesus and learn something about its conditions at this time, it is easy to see why it comes first in the list of the seven churches.

Pergamum was the official capital of the province of Asia, but Ephesus was by far its greatest city. It claimed as its proud title 'The first and the greatest metropolis of Asia'. A Roman writer called it Lumen Asiae, the Light of Asia. Let us look at the factors which gave it its preeminent greatness.

(1) In the time of John, Ephesus was the greatest harbour in Asia

All the roads of the Cayster Valley—the Cayster was the river on which it stood—converged upon it. But the roads came from further afield than that. It was at Ephesus that the road from the far-off Euphrates and Mesopotamia reached the Mediterranean, having come by way of Colosse and Laodicea. It was at Ephesus that the road from Galatia reached the sea, having come by way of Sardis. And from the south came the road from the rich Maeander Valley. Strabo, the ancient geographer, called Ephesus ‘**the Market of Asia**’—and it may well be that, in Revelation 18:12–13, John was setting down a description of the varied riches of the market place at Ephesus.

Ephesus was the gateway of Asia. One of its distinctions, laid down by statute, was that when the Roman proconsul came to take up office as governor of Asia, he must disembark at Ephesus and enter his province there. For all the travellers and the trade, from the Cayster and the Maeander Valleys, from Galatia, from the Euphrates and from Mesopotamia, Ephesus was the highway to Rome. In later times, when the Christians were brought from Asia to be flung to the lions in the arena in Rome, Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, called Ephesus the Highway of the Martyrs. Its position made Ephesus the wealthiest and the greatest city in all Asia—and, because it resembled so well John Bunyan’s picture in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, it has been aptly called the Vanity Fair of the ancient world.

Ruins of Main Street of Ephesus

(2) Ephesus had certain important political distinctions.

It was a free city. In the Roman Empire, certain cities were free cities; they had had that honour conferred upon them because of their services to the empire. A free city was within its own limits self-governing, and it was exempted from ever having Roman troops garrisoned there. It was an assize town. The Roman governors made periodic tours of their provinces; and, at certain specially chosen cities and towns, courts were held where the governor tried the most important cases. Further, each year, Ephesus held the most famous games in Asia, which attracted people from all over the province.

Artemis

(3) Ephesus was the centre of the worship of Artemis or, as the Authorized Version calls her, Diana of the Ephesians.

Model of Temple of Artemis (Diana)

The Temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was 425 feet long by 220 feet wide; it had 120 columns, each sixty feet high and the gift of a king; and thirty-six of them were richly gilded and inlaid. Ancient temples consisted mostly of colonnades with only the centre portion roofed over. The centre portion of the Temple of Artemis was roofed over with cypress wood. The image of Artemis was one of the most sacred images in the ancient world. It was by no means beautiful but a squat, black, many-breasted figure, so ancient that no one knew where it had come from. We have only to read Acts 19 to see how precious Artemis and her temple were to Ephesus. Ephesus also had famous temples to the godhead of the Roman emperors Claudius and Nero, and in future years it was to add temples to Hadrian and Severus. In Ephesus, the ancient religion was at its strongest.

COMMENT: This was a cesspool of iniquity filled with temple prostitutes, dancers, eunuchs, drunkenness, orgies. In the middle of this, God birthed church. God does His greatest work in the most difficult places because He gets all the glory. Ephesus was in a sense the "gates of Hell!"

Ruins of Temple

(4) Ephesus was a notorious centre of superstition.

It was famous for the [Ephesian Letters](#), (Ephesia Grammata) small objects and charms which were supposed to be infallible remedies for sickness, to bring children to those who were childless and to ensure success in any undertaking; and people came from all over the world to buy them.

(Acts 19:1-41-commentary) 1It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. 2 He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.” 4 Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in

Jesus.” 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. 7 There were in all about twelve men. 8 **And he entered the synagogue (IN EPHESUS) and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.** 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 This took place for **two years**, so that **all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord**, both Jews and Greeks. (NOTE: THIS IS LIKELY WHEN THE OTHER 6 CHURCHES IN ASIA MINOR WERE BIRTHED BY PAUL'S PROCLAIMING THE "WORD OF THE LORD.) 11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. 13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.” 14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” 16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

PRACTICE OF MAGIC

17+ **This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.** 18 **Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.** 19 **And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.** 20 **So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.**

WORSHIP OF IDOL ARTEMIS

21 Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. 23 About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made **silver shrines of Artemis**, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. 26 “You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, **this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.** 27 “Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that **[the temple of the great goddess Artemis](#)** (SEE [PICTURE ABOVE](#)) be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.” 28 When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 The city was filled with the confusion (THERE WERE 250,000 to 500,000 IN EPHESUS), and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. 30 And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. 31 Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. 32 So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 35 After quieting the crowd, the town clerk *said, “Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven? (cf Ro 1:21 = “they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”) 36 “So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. 37 “For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples (TEMPLE OF DIANA FUNCTIONED AS A MAJOR BANK) nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 “So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another. 39 “But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. 40 “For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering.” 41 After saying this he dismissed the

assembly.

“The Temple of Artemis was also a major treasury and bank of the ancient world, where merchants, kings, and even cities made deposits, and where their money could be kept safe under the protection of deity.”
(Longenecker commentary on Acts)

(5) The population of Ephesus was very mixed.

Its citizens were divided into six tribes. One consisted of those who were descendants of the original natives of the country; one consisted of those who were direct descendants of the original colonists from Athens; three consisted of other Greeks; and one, most probably, consisted of Jews. Besides being a centre of religion, the Temple of Artemis was also a centre of crime and immorality. The temple area was a recognized place offering asylum; criminals were safe if they could reach it. The temple possessed hundreds of priestesses who were sacred prostitutes. All this combined to make Ephesus a notoriously evil place. Heraclitus, one of the most famous of ancient philosophers, was known as ‘the weeping philosopher’. His explanation of his tears was that no one could live in Ephesus without weeping at its immorality.

Such was Ephesus; a more unpromising soil for the sowing of the seed of Christianity can scarcely be imagined; and yet it was there that Christianity had some of its greatest triumphs. R. C. Trench, the nineteenth-century Archbishop of Dublin, writes: ‘Nowhere did the word of God find a kindlier soil, strike root more deeply or bear fairer fruits of faith and love.’

Paul stayed longer in Ephesus than in any other city (Acts 20:31). It was with Ephesus that Timothy had a connection, so that he is called its first bishop (1 Timothy 1:3). It is in Ephesus that we find Aquila, Priscilla and Apollos (Acts 18:19, 18:24, 18:26). Surely Paul was closer to no one than to the Ephesian elders, as his farewell address so beautifully shows (Acts 20:17–38). Later on, John was the leading figure of Ephesus. Legend has it that he brought Mary the mother of Jesus to Ephesus and that she was buried there. When Ignatius of Antioch wrote to Ephesus, on his way to being martyred in Rome, he could write: ‘You were ever of one mind with the apostles in the power of Jesus Christ.’

There can be few places which better prove the conquering power of the Christian faith.

We may note one more thing. We have spoken of Ephesus as the greatest harbour of Asia. Today there is little left of Ephesus but ruins, and it is now at least six miles from the sea. The coast is now a harbourless line of sandy beach, unapproachable by a ship. What was once the Gulf of Ephesus and the harbour is a marsh dense with reeds. It was always a battle to keep the harbour of Ephesus open because of the silt which the Cayster brings down. The battle was lost, and Ephesus vanished from the scene. ([Daily Study Bible - Revelation - William Barclay](#))

Revelation 2:2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

NET Revelation 2:2 'I know your works as well as your labor and steadfast endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil. You have even put to the test those who refer to themselves as apostles (but are not), and have discovered that they are false.

NLT Revelation 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.

ESV Revelation 2:2 ""I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

NIV Revelation 2:2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.

GNT Revelation 2:2 Ο δα τ ργα σου κα τ ν κ πον κα τ ν πομον ν σου κα τι ο δ ν βαστσαι κακο ς, κα πε ρασας το ς λ γοντας αυτο ς ποστ λους κα ο κ ε σ ν κα ε ρε ς α το ς ψευδε ς,

KJV Revelation 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

ASV Revelation 2:2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false;

CSB Revelation 2:2 I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars.

NKJ Revelation 2:2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

NRS Revelation 2:2 "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false.

YLT Revelation 2:2 I have known thy works, and thy labour, and thy endurance, and that thou art not able to bear evil ones, and that thou hast tried those saying themselves to be apostles and are not, and hast found them liars,

- **know:** Rev 2:9,13,19 3:1,8,15 Ps 1:6 Mt 7:23 1Th 1:3 2Ti 2:19 Heb 6:10
- **that you cannot tolerate evil men:** Rev 2:6,14,15,20,21 Ga 1:7 Eph 4:14 1Th 5:21 2Pe 2:1-3 1Jn 4:1
- **you put to the test :** 2Co 11:13-15 1Jn 2:21,22 4:1

CHRIST'S COMMENDATION

I know - Know ([eido](#) used in all 7 introductions - Rev 2:9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15) "speaks of absolute, beyond the peradventure (chance) of a doubt knowledge, a knowledge that is self-evident...a positive knowledge...to know absolutely and finally...to know absolutely...a sure knowledge, a positive knowledge...an absolute acquaintance with something." (Wuest) The use of this verb ([eido](#)) indicates that Jesus is intimately acquainted with every aspect of this church. He has perfect knowledge of this church. Nothing is hidden from Him. Notice that [before He corrects, He commends](#), which is a good pattern for all of us in authority! And note the many positive things He has to say about Ephesus (they are numbered to make a list). Someone has said this verb for **know** "emphasizes better the absolute clearness of mental vision which photographs all the facts of life as they pass"

THOUGHT - This truth applies to all of us. Jesus sees perfectly into our heart, and knows our every thought whether we speak it or not (Ps 139:1-4). He knows every motive, even for our "good deeds." (cf 1 Cor 4:5) "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare ("naked and exposed" = Heb 4:13NET+) to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do ("to Whom we must render account" - cf 2 Cor 5:10+)." (Heb 4:13+, cf Eccl 12:14) The reality of this truth should give us cause to pause when we are being tempted to stray (Jas 1:13, 14+), because we can never stray from or hide from His perfect, piercing, righteous gaze! This truth should motivate us enabled by His Spirit to "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." (Titus 2:12+)

How could Christ **know** so perfectly? Of course He is the omniscient God. And in the context John tells us "His eyes were like a flame of fire." Nothing could be hidden from Him. We might try to put up barriers through which He could not see, but His eyes like a flame of fire burn away every excuse, every rationale we might try to offer.

Spurgeon - "There are also working Christians who do not approach to laboring; yet a lifetime of such work as theirs would not exhaust a butterfly. Now, when a man works for Christ he should work with all his might."

(1) your deeds - This could refer to specific deeds are encompass all the deeds that follow in Jesus' commendation. Most versions have "Your works." Works don't save a person. We are not saved by good works (Eph 2:8,9+, Titus 3:5+), but for [good works](#) (Eph 2:10+) and if Jesus commended their deeds, they are [Good Deeds](#)! Jesus should know for as He told the disciples "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit (aka "[Good Deeds](#)"), for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Good deeds are evidence of genuine faith (see James 2:17-26+).

Related Resources:

- [What does it mean that good works are the result of salvation? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why is faith without works dead? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is salvation by faith alone, or by faith plus works?](#)
- [How can salvation be not of works when faith is required? isn't believing a work?](#)
- [Why is salvation by works the predominantly held viewpoint? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the biblical understanding of faith vs. works? | GotQuestions.org](#)

and (2) your toil - Church at Ephesus was not a lazy church, but whiling to work up a little "holy sweat," so to speak, because the

Greek word for toil refers to exhausting physical or mental labor and in some contexts describes work that is fraught with difficulties, hardships or burdens. The saints at Ephesus did not shrink back for this type of work.

MacArthur on their **toil** - The Ephesians were diligent workers for the cause of Christ. Theirs was no spectator mentality; they did not want merely to be entertained. Nor were they content to eat the fruit of others' labor, but were willing to plow, plant, and harvest their own crop. In the midst of the pagan darkness that surrounded them, they were aggressively evangelizing the lost, edifying the saints, and caring for those in need.

Toil (2873)(**kopos** from **kopto** = chop, hew, cut down, strike; figuratively to lament which apparently came from the idea of striking one's breast) (See related verb **kopiao**) is strictly a smiting as a sign of sorrow, then sorrow itself. **Kopos** (toil) denotes labor to the point of sweat and exhaustion. It describes an all-out effort, demanding all that a person has to give—physically, mentally, and emotionally. **Kopos** thus describes a state of discomfort or distress, trouble, difficulty, transferring the sense of the primary meaning which is beating. **Kopos** referring to labor conveys the sense that the labor involves toil, fatigue, suffering, weariness and sorrow. It thus speaks of an intense effort which can be united with trouble. In short **kopos** conveys the idea of arduous toil involving sweat and fatigue and emphasizes the weariness which follows as a result of the straining of all of one's powers to the utmost.

and (3) perseverance - Jesus goes on to commend their **perseverance** (**hupomone**), a word which speaks of steadfastness endurance when circumstances are difficult. This is not a passive acceptance but a strong fortitude even when faced with opposition. Jesus uses this same word (**hupomone**) again in Rev 2:3 stating "you have **perseverance**."

The difficulties in our lives,
The obstacles we face,
Give God the opportunity
To show His power and grace.

Perseverance - see [note below](#) "This commendation indicates that, despite their difficult circumstances, the Ephesian believers remained faithful to their Lord" (MacArthur)

Swindoll on **perseverance** - The Greek term **hupomone**, used already in Rev 1:9, implies endurance under extreme hardship, in the face of life-threatening challenges or against seemingly impossible odds. The Ephesian Christians faced special challenges. Because they refused to bow the knee to the goddess Diana or the images of the emperor, they found themselves maligned, slandered, boycotted, and abused. Not unlike Jewish merchants in Berlin in the 1930s, Christians in Ephesus would have been the objects of physical violence, social ostracism, and economic repression. Yet they endured. They bore up under the load. Clearly, Ephesus had been taught well by its predecessors, Paul, Timothy, and John. (Insights on Revelation)

Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about perseverance? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Perseverance of the Saints - is it biblical? | GotQuestions.org](#)

DOCTRINAL DISCERNMENT

and (4) that you cannot tolerate evil men - **Tolerate** is **bastazo** used again in Rev 2:3. More literally this reads "you (absolutely) cannot tolerate evil." ESV = "you cannot **bear with** those who are evil." In context the **evil** was men who were lying and claiming to be apostles.

MacArthur - Four decades earlier Paul had commanded them not to "give the devil an opportunity" (Eph. 4:27+), and they were still reluctant to do so. (MNTC-Rev)

Spurgeon - This was grand of them: it showed a backbone of truth. I wish some of the churches of this age had a little of this holy decision about them; for nowadays, if a man be clever; he may preach the vilest lie that was ever vomited from the mouth of hell, and it will go down with some."

William Newell - "Ministerial courtesy" had no place at Ephesus! Plain scripture tests are given. The saints have "an anointing from the Holy One." (1 John 2:20+) They may know, if they will, false teachers, those who do "not abide in the teaching of Christ" (2Jn 1:9) We are not to receive them into our house, and we are to give them no greeting (2 John 1:10); much less are we to suffer them to preach and teach in our assemblies. Ephesus had both the discernment and the spiritual energy to reject those whom she "found false." ([Commentary on the Revelation](#))

Evil (bad, harm) (2556) (**kakos** related word = **kakia**) is a word which basically denotes a lack of something so that it is "bad" or "not as it ought to be. **Kakos** means not meeting accepted standards of behavior, and thus worthless, bad or inferior. **Kakos** then speaks of lack of goodness, of a bad nature. morally, of persons characterized by godlessness evil, bad

and (5) you put to the test those who call themselves apostles (apostolos), and they are not, and (6) you found them to be false - NLT = "examined the claims." The Ephesians sought to ascertain the character and truthfulness of those who continually claimed or professed to be **apostles**. The also tested and hated "hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans" (Rev 2:6+). Today people call themselves **apostles** but by Biblical criteria they cannot be true apostles because they have had no first person exposure to the resurrected Christ (Read Acts 1:21, 22+, 1 Cor 9:1).

Tony Garland points out that "A key attribute of those who are not what they appear to be is their self proclamation." **PRINCIPLE** - Be suspect of anyone who comes into your fellowship and begins to proclaim their glorious abilities!

The New Testament repeatedly insists on the necessity of testing spiritual ideas and people -- (1) the spirits of men who claimed to be sent from God were tested by their willingness to accept the Incarnation of Jesus Christ "and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." (1Jn 4:1-3+). (2). Paul wrote "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1Th 5:21+). (3). Paul insisted that, when the prophets preached, they were to be subject to the testing of the other prophets (1Co 14:29). (4). Jesus demanded the hardest test of all which was to test them "By their fruits" (Mt 7:15,16+).

Test (3985)(**peirazo**) can have several nuances depending on the **context**: (1) trials with a beneficial purpose and effect, (2) divinely permitted or sent, (3) with a good or neutral significance, (4) of a varied character, (5) definitely designed to lead to wrong doing, temptation, (6) of men trying or challenging God. The trials may come from God or under His permissive will from Satan, or may be the result of our own wrong doing. The solicitations to do evil come from the world, the evil nature (the "flesh"), or the **Devil**.

Even though it was some 40 years (or so) prior that Paul had warned the Ephesian elders, they seem to have for the most part (see exception below) taken to heart Paul's clear warning to...

"Be on guard (**present imperative** see **our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey**) for yourselves (**THEY SEEM TO HAVE MISSED THIS PART - THE LEADERS WERE NOT GUARDING THEIR OWN HEARTS - AND THEY LOST THEIR FIRST LOVE**) and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore **be on the alert**, (**present imperative** see **our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey**) remembering (**THEY FORGOT TO REMEMBER!!!**) that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. (Acts 20:28-31+)

Paul writes of some of the ways of false apostles

For such men are **false apostles, deceitful** workers (dolos from dolos = bait - LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON - 2 Cor 11:3), **disguising** (**metaschematizo** - alter the outward appearance in such a way as to deceive to be what one is not) themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. (2Co 11:13-15)

Related Resources:

- [What is an apostle? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is God restoring the offices of apostle and prophet in the church today? | GotQuestions.org](#) (Short answer = No).
- [Was the Apostle Paul actually a false prophet? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the difference between a disciple and apostle? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I increase my spiritual discernment? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about discernment? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Revelation 2:3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

NET Revelation 2:3 I am also aware that you have persisted steadfastly, endured much for the sake of my

name, and have not grown weary.

NLT Revelation 2:3 You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

ESV Revelation 2:3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

NIV Revelation 2:3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

GNT Revelation 2:3 καὶ ἔστασας διὰ τὸν ὄνομα μου καὶ οὐ κέκοπται αἰσες.

KJV Revelation 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

ASV Revelation 2:3 and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.

CSB Revelation 2:3 You also possess endurance and have tolerated many things because of My name and have not grown weary.

NKJ Revelation 2:3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

NRS Revelation 2:3 I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary.

YLT Revelation 2:3 and thou didst bear, and hast endurance, and because of my name hast toiled, and hast not been weary.

- **you have perseverance** Ps 69:7 Mic 7:9 Mk 15:21 Lu 14:27 1Co 13:7 Ga 6:2 Heb 13:13
- **have endured:** Rev 1:9 Rev 3:10 Ps 37:7 Lu 8:15 Lk 21:19 Ro 2:7 Ro 5:3,4 Ro 8:25 12:12 Ro 15:4,5 Col 1:11 2Th 3:5 Heb 6:12,15 10:36 Heb 12:1 Jas 1:3,4 James 5:7-11 2Pe 1:6
- *hast laboured (ONLY IN KJV):* Ro 16:12 1Co 16:16 2Co 5:9 6:5 10:15 11:23 Php 2:16 4:3 1Th 1:3 2:9 5:12 2Th 3:8 1Ti 4:10 5:17 Heb 6:10
- **have not grown weary:** Lu 18:1 2Co 4:1,16 Ga 6:9 2Th 3:13 Heb 12:3-5

CHRIST'S COMMENDATIONS CONTINUE

(7) and you have perseverance - NRSV is an accurate rendering "you are enduring patiently" (Rev 2:3NRSV) because **Have** is in the [present tense](#) indicating that they had continued perseverance, or as the **NRSV** renders it "you are enduring patiently." Although they had moved away from their first love (Rev 2:4), they continued to manifest an attitude of of patience and steadfastness, continuing to manifest the capacity to bear up in the face of difficulty. **Perseverance** pictures the saints at Ephesus steadfastly and unflinchingly bearing up under a heavy load, a quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. The picture is that of steadfastness, constancy and endurance. While they shared some of the commendable traits of the church at Thessalonica, they lacked love (Rev 2:4), Paul commending this first church in Europe writing they (1 Th 1:1) were "constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and **steadfastness** ([hupomone](#)) of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father." Earlier **John** had described his own **perseverance** ([hupomone](#)), the Source of his perseverance being "in Jesus." (Rev 1:9+).

Perseverance ([5281](#)) ([hupomone](#) from **hupo** = under + **meno** = stay, remain, abide) literally means abiding under. The root idea of **hupomone** is to remain under some discipline, subjecting oneself to something which demands the submission of one's will to something against which one naturally would rebel. And so **hupomone** does not describe a grim resignation or a passive "grin and bear" attitude but a triumphant facing of difficult circumstances knowing that even out of evil God guarantees good. It is courageous gallantry which accepts suffering and hardship and turns them into grace and glory. For believers, it is a steadfastness, especially as God enables us to "remain under" (or endure) whatever challenges, trials, tests, afflictions, etc, He providentially allows in our life. **Vincent** adds **hupomone** is "Not merely endurance of the inevitable, for Christ could have relieved himself of his sufferings (Heb. 12:2, 3; compare Matt. 26:53); but the heroic, brave patience with which a Christian not only bears but contends."

Hupomone - 31v - Lk. 8:15; Lk. 21:19; Rom. 2:7; Rom. 5:3; Rom. 5:4; Rom. 8:25; Rom. 15:4; Rom. 15:5; 2 Co. 1:6; 2 Co. 6:4; 2 Co. 12:12; Col. 1:11; 1 Th. 1:3; 2 Th. 1:4; 2 Th. 3:5; 1 Ti 6:11; 2 Ti 3:10; Titus 2:2; Heb. 10:36; Heb. 12:1; Jas. 1:3; Jas. 1:4; Jas. 5:11; 2 Pet. 1:6; Rev. 1:9; Rev. 2:2; Rev. 2:3; Rev. 2:19;

and (8) have endured for My name's sake - The **CSB** is a good rendering = "have tolerated many things because of My name." **NET** has "endured much for the sake of My Name." This commendation indicates that the saints at Ephesus continued "bearing up" (NRSV)([bastazo](#) in the [present tense](#)). What motivated their endurance? They **endured** for the sake of Christ's Name and clearly did not deny His Name or their association with Him. Jesus had warned His disciples that when they stand for Him, the world would come against them (see Mt 5:10, 11, 12+, Mt 10:22, cf 2 Ti 3:12+, Php 1:29+, et al). This attitude would speak to some degree of devotion and reverence to Christ, despite the fact that they generally had left their first love. One more point of caution -- we need to make sure when we are reviled, persecuted, slandered, etc, it is for HIS sake.

Have endured (used also in Rev 2:2)([941](#))([bastazo](#) from **basis** = foot) literally means to take up and hold (Jn 10:31) or to bear/carry (Mk 14:13). In Acts 9:15 "to bear My Name" means to announce it to "Gentiles and kings and sons." Metaphorically **bastazo** means to bear, support, endure, i.e., labors, sufferings (Mt. 20:12, burden or weight, implied in Rev. 2:3). To bear a burden, whether physically, as of the cross, John 19:17, or metaphorically in respect of sufferings endured in the cause of Christ (Luke 14:27+; Rev. 2:3);

And (9) have not grown weary - The Ephesian saints seemed to have been heeding the exhortation of Paul "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." (Gal 6:9)

Warren Wiersbe writes "No matter how you examine this congregation, you conclude that it is just about perfect. However, the One among the lampstands saw into their hearts, and He had a different diagnosis from ours."

Grown weary ([2872](#)) ([kopiao](#) from **kopos** = labor, fatigue) means to exhibit great effort and exertion, to the point of sweat and exhaustion. becoming worn out, weary and/or faint. Figuratively **kopiao** means to become emotionally fatigued and/or discouraged and thus to lose heart and/or give up. The work described by **kopiao** was left one so weary it was as if the person had taken a beating. **Kopiao** describes not so much the actual exertion as the weariness which follows the straining of all one's powers to the utmost. **Kopiao** was sometimes used to refer to athletic training. **Lightfoot** says that **kopiao** "is used especially of the labor undergone by the athlete in his training. **MacArthur** adds that **kopiao** "does not stress the amount of work, but rather the effort. A man's reward from God is proportional to the excellence of his ministry and the effort he puts into it. Excellence combined with diligence mark a man worthy of the highest honor. ([1 Timothy Moody Press](#)) Paul gave us the secret of how one can work like this and not become weary - "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I **labored** (**kopiao**) even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1 Cor 15:10+). - See the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" ([100/100](#))

Richard Mayhue writes that Jesus' confrontation of the Ephesian church models how believers are to confront:

First, confronting was done with love and with the goal of restoration (2:4–5).

Second, encouragement preceded correction (2:2–3, 6).

Third, Christ openly and concisely stated the problem (2:4–5).

Fourth, He told them how to be restored (2:5): remember your past, repent of your error, return to your best.

Fifth, Christ clearly laid out the consequences if they did not obey (2:5).

Sixth, He wrote with the expectation that they would respond positively (2:7).

(What Would Jesus Say About Your Church? [Scotland, G.B.: Christian Focus Publishers, 1995], 51)

Commended and Corrected

Read: Revelation 2:1-7

You have persevered and have patience . . . Nevertheless I have this against you. —Revelation 2:3-4

Imagine 8-year-old Danny coming to bat three times in a Little League game. He strikes out twice and singles once. After the game, a famous major league player approaches him. "Danny," he says, "I liked the way you hit that single and hustled to first. You're going to make a good ball-player someday."

Danny beams. He's receptive and eager to improve. So he's all ears when the pro adds, "But Danny, you tend to top the ball. You've got to change your stance and the way you hold the bat. Let me give you a few tips." The advice is heeded because it combines

commendation with correction.

Many people view God as a stern disciplinarian who issues warnings and threats without praise. But that's not the picture we get in today's Scripture reading. The Ephesian church had left its first love (Rev. 2:4) and needed to renew the warm glow it once had or it would cease to exist (v.5). Jesus gave the Ephesians a stern warning, but in calling them to repent He also recognized all that was good in the church (Rev 2-3,6).

That's how God motivates us. He affirms our faithfulness to Christ and reminds us of what we can become. But He also points out where we fall short. We can be thankful that God not only corrects us, but He also commends us. Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study

Read Revelation 2 and 3. Seven times Jesus said, "I know your works." For what did He commend the seven churches? For what did He correct them?

God's commendation gives us encouragement;

God's correction gives us hope.

Revelation 2:4 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

NET Revelation 2:4 But I have this against you: You have departed from your first love!

NLT Revelation 2:4 "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!

ESV Revelation 2:4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

NIV Revelation 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

GNT Revelation 2:4 ἅλ λω κατ σο τι τ ν γ πην σου τ ν πρ την φ κες.

KJV Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

ASV Revelation 2:4 But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.

CSB Revelation 2:4 But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first.

NKJ Revelation 2:4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

NRS Revelation 2:4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

YLT Revelation 2:4 'But I have against thee: That thy first love thou didst leave!

- **I have:** Rev 2:14,20
- **because:** Rev 3:14-17 Jer 2:2-5 Mt 24:12,13 Php 1:9-11 3:13-16 1Th 4:9,10 2Th 1:3 Heb 6:10,11

First Love Lost

CHRIST'S CORRECTION

But - This is one of the more dramatic **terms of contrast** in the Bible. What is Jesus contrasting? One would think all the positive things the Ephesian church had accomplished (total of 10 if you include Nicolaitans) would be enough "credit" (so to speak) to offset their debit (love). But love trumps everything else! And their lack of love had consumed all of the credit stored up by their good deeds! **But** means all the good in the Ephesian church did not cancel out the bad Jesus is about to describe.

Swindoll on but - Like an unexpected twist in the road during a pleasant drive through the countryside, Christ interrupted His commendation of the Ephesians with one abrupt word: "but" (2:4). The small Greek word *alla* indicates a sharp contrast, and in the case of Ephesus, it's very significant: The church in Ephesus had everything but the greatest thing. The erosion of the love they had at the beginning didn't happen overnight. No one suddenly wakes up one morning and says, "I don't love Jesus anymore. I'm tired of Jesus and I'm finished with all this Christianity stuff." It doesn't happen like that. It happens over the years—after hardship, questions you can't get answered, trials that don't seem to have reason, loss of health, loss of hope, loss of a loved one. In the midst of the Ephesians' hard work and endurance for Jesus, their love for Him began to wane.

COMMENT (see also [Newell's comment](#)) - While the picture above says "lost" that is probably not the best translation. In English **LOST** means to no longer be in the possession, care, or control of something, no longer in existence; vanished or spent. No longer known or practiced and clearly they had denied Christ. **LEFT** on the other hand means gone away from or abandoned. Clearly this love is not completely gone out of existence or else how could they return to it. It would seem a better picture is like a fire where blazing flame has died down and all that is left is the live coals. The coals have not completely lost their glow and therefore when blown on (as by a bellows) they can be made to flame up again. So too the love of a genuine believer has not been totally lost but is clearly at low ebb, with "coal" barely glowing, so to speak. When the wind of the Spirit (and the Word) come "blowing" on such a heart, the potential is there for spiritual renewal and revival. Jesus says the "steps" to "revival" are (1) remember (2) return and (3) re-do. The psalmist writes of a heart with barely glowing coals in Psalm 119:25+ "My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word." If the "coals" of your heart, your love for Jesus, has grown cold, obey the commands of Jesus and consider adding the prayer of the psalmist. Then wait on the Lord. It is in His will that you experience revival, for in that state He is most glorified. So wait on the Lord's timing for "those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength (literally exchange their strength for His strength); They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. (Isaiah 40:31+)

Some 40 years earlier Paul had described their **love** in his letter writing "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and **your love for all the saints.**" (Eph. 1:15+) And then he added multiple references to **love** in his letter to the church at Ephesus (Love is mentioned 20x - see below! Contrast the letter to the Colossians which has a number of parallels with the letter to the Ephesians but not when it comes to the subject of love! Colossians has only 4 mentions of **love** compared to 20 mentions of **love** in Ephesians! What is the **upshot**? The Ephesians could not claim ignorance of this vital topic of **LOVE!**

LOVE in the Letter to the Ephesians - Eph. 1:4; Eph. 1:15; Eph. 2:4; Eph. 3:17; Eph. 3:19; Eph. 4:2; Eph. 4:15; Eph. 4:16; Eph. 5:2; Eph. 5:25; Eph. 5:28; Eph. 5:33; Eph. 6:23; Eph. 6:24.

Note especially the command the church seems to have forgotten some forty years later...this is part of what they needed to REMEMBER! - Therefore **be** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) imitators of God, as beloved children; and **walk** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in love, just as (TERM OF COMPARISON) Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us (THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE!), an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:1-2+)

Related Passage: (OT Example of Leaving First Love)

Jeremiah 2:2-5 "Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, The love of your betrothals, Your following after Me in the wilderness, Through a land not sown. 3 "Israel was holy to the LORD, The first of His harvest. All who ate of it became guilty; Evil came upon them," declares the LORD.'" 4 Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. 5 Thus says the LORD, "What injustice did your fathers find in Me, That they went far from Me And walked after emptiness and became empty?"

I have this against you, that you have left your first love- The verb for **left** is [aphiemi](#) in the [aorist tense](#) (at a point in time in the past) and [active voice](#) signifying they volitionally or of their own volition/will left their first love. What is their **first love**? In a word it is JESUS (but see MacArthur below)! It is interesting that [aphiemi](#) is the very word God uses of forgiving out sins, but it is also the word used for sending one's wife away or divorce.

Spurgeon - A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Lose love, lose all." When love dies orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus depart.

Left (863)(aphiemi) from **apo** = prefix speaks of separation, putting some distance between + **hiemi** = put in motion, send) conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation. Literally **aphiemi** means to send from one's self, to forsake, to put away, disregard. It conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation and refers to detachment and/or separation from a previous condition. In secular Greek [aphiemi](#) initially conveyed the sense of to throw and in one secular writing we read "let the pot drop" ([aphiemi](#)). From this early literal use the word came to mean leave or let go. It is translated forgive/forgave/forgiven 48 (of 133 uses). **Aphiemi** in Revelation - Rev. 2:4; Rev. 2:20; Rev. 11:9

Steven Lawson - As in any relationship our love for Christ is subject to fluctuation. While this relationship can never be broken, it

can suffer a severe waning of intensity. Sometimes our passion for Christ explodes and grows. And at other times it grows stale. It can become stagnant, mechanical, routine and we begin to simply go through the empty motions of Christianity without a blazing, fiery love for Him. Sadly, that is precisely what took place at Ephesus. The church there was a great church. They believed correctly, they served exhaustively, they defended valiantly, but something over time was missing and that which was missing is that they had left their first love. They had not left it in total, for such is impossible, for nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. (Ro 8:35+, Ro 8:39+). But they had left it in part. Once on fire for Christ, their blazing passion had cooled off to a flickering. They still coming, serving, believing rightly, but their hearts were no longer an altar upon which the fire of Christ was burning brightly. Their activities FOR Christ had begun to suppress their intimacy WITH Christ. And rather than it being a relationship, their Christianity had become a performance. They had full heads, busy feet, and cool hearts. The glow was gone....Where are you. Because sometimes the more involved we become in serving the Lord, there can be a sacrifice in our personal communion with and fellowship with the Lord. Is your passion for Christ dynamic?...Has your love faded?

Vincent on first love - The first enthusiastic devotion of the Church to her Lord, under the figure of conjugal love.

MacArthur - That **love** could include love for God and Christ, love for each other, and love for the lost. It is love defined as obedience (2 John 6). They had sunk to the place where they were carrying out their Christian responsibilities with diminishing love for their Lord and others. (MNTC-Rev)

A T Robertson on your first love.- "Thy love the first." This early love, proof of the new life in Christ (1 John 3:13f), had cooled off in spite of their doctrinal purity. They had remained **orthodox**, but had become **unloving**." (Aka, **orthodoxy** without **orthopraxy**!)

Paul said it this way "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." (1 Cor. 13:1).

Then Paul reminded the church in Corinth "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is **love**." (1 Cor 13:13) Swindoll writes "Over and over again the New Testament emphasizes the primary place of love in the Christian faith. In fact, 1 Corinthians 13:13 tells us the golden virtue is love—beating out the silver and bronze winners, faith and hope, every time. "The greatest of these is love."

Love (26)(agape) is unconditional, sacrificial love and Biblically refers to a love that God is (1Jn 4:8,16), that God shows (Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9) and that God enables in His children (see fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22+). **Agape** love does not depend on the world's criteria for love, such as attractiveness, emotions, or sentimentality. Believers can easily fall into the trap of blindly following the world's demand that a lover **feel** positive toward the beloved. This is not **agape** love, but is a love based on impulse. **Impulsive love** characterizes the spouse who announces to the other spouse that they are planning to divorce their mate. Why? They reason "I can't help it. I fell in love with another person!" Christians must understand that this type of impulsive love is completely contrary to God's **decisive love**, which is decisive because He is in control and has a purpose in mind. **Agape** is a love that impels one to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of the object loved...(it) speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in the object loved, an apprehension of its preciousness. There are many reasons a proper understanding of the truth of God's word (and of the world's lie) is critical and one of the foremost is Jesus' declaration that "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** (agape) for one another." (John 13:35). **Agape** may involve emotion, but it **must** always involve **action**. **Agape** is unrestricted, unrestrained, and unconditional. **Agape** love is the virtue that surpasses all others and in fact is the prerequisite for all the others. Jesus when asked "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" replied "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the great and foremost commandment." (Mt 22:36, 37, 38)

PRAYER - AN ANTIDOTE FOR A "DRIFTING/DYING" LOVE

A good antidote for a church to not lose their first love is to frequently intercede (daily, weekly or monthly) for the members of the body with Paul's prayer...

And this I pray, **that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment**, 10 so that (TERM OF PURPOSE) you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Php 1:9-11+)

Wiersbe - This busy, separated, sacrificing church really suffered from "heart trouble"—they had abandoned their first love! They displayed "works ... labor ... and patience" (Rev. 2:2), but these qualities were not motivated by a love for Christ. (Compare 1 Thes.

1:3—"work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope.") What we do for the Lord is important, but so is why we do it! **What is "first love"?** It is the devotion to Christ that so often characterizes the new believer: fervent, personal, uninhibited, excited, and openly displayed. It is the "*honeymoon love*" of the husband and wife (Jer. 2:1–2). While it is true that mature married love deepens and grows richer, it is also true that it should never lose the excitement and wonder of those "honeymoon days." When a husband and wife begin to take each other for granted, and life becomes routine, then the marriage is in danger. **Just think of it: it is possible to serve, sacrifice, and suffer "for My name's sake" and yet not really love Jesus Christ!** The Ephesian believers were so busy maintaining their **separation** that they were neglecting **adoration**. **Labor** is no substitute for **love**; neither is **purity** a substitute for **passion**. The church must have both if it is to please Him.

John Phillips says "It is possible to serve the Lord for a variety of motives—for the praise of men, for prestige or position, for the sake of reputation, because it is simply the thing to do. because of a sense of duty. If service for God is not born of a devoted passion for the Lord Jesus it is worthless."

MacArthur writes "The current generation was maintaining the doctrine handed down to them, but they had left their first love. That love could include love for God and Christ, love for each other, and love for the lost. It is love defined as obedience (2 John 6). They had sunk to the place where they were carrying out their Christian responsibilities with diminishing love for their Lord and others....As it had in Israel, the honeymoon had ended at Ephesus. The loss of a vital love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ opened the doors to spiritual apathy, indifference to others, love for the world, compromise with evil, judgment, and, ultimately, the death of the church altogether. Despite its outwardly robust appearance, a deadly spiritual cancer was growing at the heart of the Ephesian church.

William Newell on **left your first love** - Note, the word is "**leave**," not "**lose**." To love lies in the power of the will, otherwise it would not be commanded. Now the love of Christ and the Church is that of bridegroom and bride. You cannot judge by what you see in the lukewarm churches today of the intense devotion to Christ's Person into which such assemblies as Ephesus were brought by the Holy Ghost. You may see it in the martyr days, sometimes today on the mission field, and in supremely devoted souls like Samuel Rutherford, Fletcher of Madeley, Madame Guyon, Brainerd, Payson, McCheyne, and Cookman. **We regard such cases of devotion as unusual; no, we should say they are normal.** Christ has immeasurable love, and that continually, for every redeemed one; and love yearns for love. **Consider newly-married people.** Their life is one continuous story of affection—delight in one another. Service is not service, but gladness, for such a bride. Two New England girls worked in a textile factory. Mary went away on a visit of several months. Returning, and meeting her friend on the street, she asked her, "Maggie, are you working at the same old factory?" "I'm not working at all," burst out Maggie: "I'm married!" Doubtless such a one was busier with her housework than ever she had been at the factory! **But she toiled unconscious of the work as such—it was for him.** She parted from him with an embrace as he went to work in the morning, and she prepared the evening meal ever looking out at door or window for his coming. As he neared home, she went to meet him. **All her labor was a mere circumstance, swallowed up in her devotion to her husband.** But days, weeks, months pass, and she becomes occupied with the details of her housekeeping, of her own life. She prepares just as good meals, keeps the house in as good, perhaps even better, order; but she has gradually changed her habit of watching for her husband at night, or going eagerly to meet him. **She calls, "Goodbye" from somewhere upstairs in the morning, instead of holding him fast every moment she can. Now this was Ephesus; and this was the departure from first love: while Christ, the Bridegroom, has love in all its freshness, and will evermore have, for the Church. It was Ephesus, leaving that devoted pouring out of response to His love that grieved His very heart!** This is the beginning of that decline which ends in Laodicea, and Laodicea's awful state: "I have need of nothing," yet loathsome, in poverty, wretchedness, misery, blindness, nakedness! Men that question the very virgin birth, and the deity of Christ, and His physical resurrection, are suffered today! The "Christian religion" has taken the place of personal devotion to the Bridegroom. ([Commentary on the Revelation](#))

Related Resource:

- [What does it mean to have left your first love \(Revelation 2:4\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
-

How do you know if you have lost your first love for the Lord?

-- Rod Mattoon

- What causes the Word to be scarce or rare in my life?
- Why can't we seem to stay revived all the time?
- What extinguishes one's enthusiasm for God?

Let me give you some reasons.

1. Delighting more in someone or something other than the Lord. We tend to crowd the Lord out of our lives, get sidetracked or distracted and get our priorities out of whack.

Mark 12:30—AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

2. Losing the desire and longing in my soul for times of close fellowship with the Lord in the Word and prayer Notice the word "soul" in Mark 12:30 above.

3. Giving in to those things which I know displease the Lord.

John 15:10—If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

4. When I will not willingly and cheerfully give to God's work or to the needs of others, I'll lose my first love.

1 John 3:17— But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

5. When I cease to treat every Christian as I would the Lord. Rudeness, hatefulness, arguing, selfishness, etc., will rob you of your spiritual enthusiasm, zeal, and closeness with the Lord.

John 13:34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

6. I will lose my first love if I inwardly strive for fame, popularity, and the acclaim of this world rather than the approval of Jesus Christ. Ask yourself, "Who is more important? Whose opinion and favor do I value the most... the crowd or Christ?" John warned in

1 John 2:15—Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Some complain, "If I live for Jesus people will mock or make fun of me." Jesus addressed this issue in

John 15:19, 20—If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

7. Becoming complacent and apathetic to sinful conditions around me or in my life. When a person gets use to his sin and doesn't care anymore about the consequences, he get harder in his heart.

Matthew 24:12—And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

8. I will lose my first love if I am unwilling to forgive another who has hurt or offended me Bitterness and blessing don't get along in one heart. Only one will reside. Some folks are not growing because they will not forgive their offenders. Some are so bitter, they do not want to hear their names. Bitterness will cause you to get stuck in the mud spiritually. You will spin your wheels and get messier and muddier in your Christian life.

1 John 4:20—If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Have you lost your first love?

Desert Of Diversion

You have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen. —Revelation 2:4-5

Today's Scripture: Revelation 2:1-7

Muynak was once a thriving fishing port on the Aral Sea. But today Muynak sits on the edge of a bitter, salty desert. Sand dunes are strewn with the rusted, hollow hulls of a fishing fleet that once sailed high above on the surface of Central Asia's fountain of life.

Things began changing around 1960 when Soviet government planners began diverting the Aral's water source to irrigate the world's largest cotton belt. No one, however, envisioned the environmental disaster that would result. Weather has become more

extreme, the growing season has been shortened by 2 months, and 80 percent of the region's farmland has been ruined by salt storms that sweep in off the dry seabed.

What happened at Muynak parallels the history of the church of Ephesus. Once a thriving spiritual community, the Ephesian believers diverted their attention from Christ to the works they were doing in His name (Revelation 2:2-4). They had lost sight of what was most important in their relationship with Christ—their love for Him.

Lord, help us to recognize and repent of whatever it is that diverts our attention from loving You. Flood the desert of our souls with Your living water. Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The works we do in Jesus' name
And battles that are won
Will not be pleasing to the Lord
Unless in love they're done.
—Sper

**To renew your love for Christ,
review Christ's love for you.**

Revelation 2:5 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent.'

NET Revelation 2:5 Therefore, remember from what high state you have fallen and repent! Do the deeds you did at the first; if not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place— that is, if you do not repent.

NLT Revelation 2:5 Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.

ESV Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

NIV Revelation 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

GNT Revelation 2:5 μνημ νευε ο ν π θεν π πτωκας κα μεταν ησον κα τ πρ τα ργα πο ησον· ε δ μ , ρχομα σοι κα κιν σω τ ν λυχν αν σου κ το τ που α τ ς, ν μ μετανο σ ς.

KJV Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee **quickly**, (ONLY KJV) and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

ASV Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.

CSB Revelation 2:5 Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.

NKJ Revelation 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.

NRS Revelation 2:5 Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

YLT Revelation 2:5 remember, then, whence thou hast fallen, and reform, and the first works do; and if not, I come to thee quickly, and will remove thy lamp-stand from its place -- if thou mayest not reform;

- **Remember:** Rev 3:3,19 Eze 16:61-63 20:43 36:31 2Pe 1:12,13
- **you have fallen:** Isa 14:12 Ho 14:1 Ga 5:4 Jude 1:24
- **repent:** Rev 2:16,21,22 3:3,19 9:20,21 16:9 Ac 17:30,31
- **do:** Rev 2:19 3:2,3 Isa 1:26 Jer 2:2,3 Ho 9:10 Mal 3:4 4:6 Lu 1:17
- **else:** Rev 2:16 3:3 Mt 21:41-43 24:48-51 Mk 12:9 Lu 12:45,46 20:16

- Steven Lawson's sermon - [Rekindling Your Spiritual Fire](#)

JESUS' FORMULA FOR PERSONAL REVIVAL

Therefore - This is a **term of conclusion**. What is Jesus concluding and what is His basis for making this conclusion?

Remember from where you have fallen - **Remember** is a **COMMAND** in the [present imperative](#) which can not be obeyed by relying solely on our strength or power. We must learn to depend [on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). How important is it to obey Jesus' **commands**? Jesus tells us "If you **love** Me, you will **keep** My commandments." (John 14:15) Spirit enabled (not legalistic) obedience to Jesus' command to remember begins to demonstrate one's *rekindled* love for Jesus! Are you becoming as convicted as I am? And I would submit that one of the things they most needed to remember regarding their "fall" is the letter which Paul personally penned to the church at Ephesus. As discussed above, that letter is filled with descriptions of LOVE and commands to LOVE ([see above](#)).

MacArthur - Forgetfulness is frequently the initial cause of spiritual decline, and the Ephesians needed to recognize the seriousness of such a lapse.

Guzik - When the Prodigal Son was in the pigpen, the first step in restoration was remembering what life was like back in his father's home (Luke 16:17-19+). This is always the first step in getting back to where we should be with the Lord. What are the first works? Remember how you used to spend time in His Word? Remember how you used to pray? Remember the joy in getting together with other Christians? Remember how excited you were about telling others about Jesus?

Garland on importance of **remember** - The solution is found in retracing our steps back to where we went astray and calling upon the Lord as we did at the first. After straying in Egypt, Abraham returned to "the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abraham called on the name of the Lord" (Ge 13:3-4).

THOUGHT - Jesus puts this command **remember** in the [present tense](#) which indicates that our heart is prone to wander and will **always** need to recall when we by grace through faith first fell in love with Jesus and our passion for Him was at a fever pitch, red hot. **Remember** is also in the [active voice](#) which means we each individually must choose to make a definite decision of our will to **remember** Jesus, our first love. I would submit that such a continual obedience to Christ's command is **IM**-possible but is only **HIM**-possible. In other words we need to continually, daily rely not on our natural strength to **remember** our first love of Jesus but we must learn to rely wholly on the Holy Spirit's supernatural power to enable us to successfully obey this command! There is simply no other way. It is either to try and obey in our power (and fail, and begin to "fall" or drift or "cool" in our love for Christ) or it is in His Spirit's power! This necessitates that we are daily filled with His Spirit (Eph 5:18+) Who is controlling us "at work ([energeo](#) in [present tense](#) = "continually energizing") in (us), both to will and to work (giving us the "desire" to obey and the "power" to obey) for His good pleasure." (Php 2:13NLT+). One other important point is to note the clear association of being filled with His Spirit and filled with His Word. (See the chart comparing [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#) which shows the incredible parallel in Ephesians 5:18ff+ and Colossians 3:16ff+) In short, our remembering needs to be energized by the Spirit and the Spirit flame is fueled to full blaze by us choosing to spend time in God's Word, daily sitting at the Master's feet, listening to His Word. We need to be more like kneeling Mary than like busy Martha to whom Jesus gently said "**only one thing is necessary**, for **Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.**" (Lk 10:42+). Only **one thing** is really necessary to enable us to continually remember our first love. Have you chosen that one thing? Are you daily in His Word, sitting and soaking, even singing (play [My One Thing](#))? Or are you in His Word with a stopwatch in your hand, ready to race off into the busyness of your day?

A T Robertson on **fallen** - [perfect tense](#) active indicative of *piptō*, state of completion. Down in the valley, look up to the cliff where pure love is and whence thou hast fallen down.

Newell - "**Fallen**!" With all their earnestness and activity, the leaving of their first intense love made them a fallen assembly! "**Remember—repent—do first works!**" Recalling, even with severe effort and anguish, our moments of greatest devotion to our Lord, the hours when we felt most deeply His tender love, and our own response—to **remember** such times—this is our first task. Thus His love, His goodness, will lead us to repentance (cf Ro 2:4+). **Repentance** is not mere sorrow (though godly sorrow works repentance—2 Corinthians 7:10); but **repentance** is a changed state of soul. It is "the judgment we have passed, in God's presence, under grace, upon ourselves and all we have done and have been." In this case especially it will be "the goodness of God that leadeth us to repentance." (cf Ro 2:4+) Christ's unvarying, undiminished affection for us, even through our coldness and neglect, will

break us up. If not, nothing will! ([Commentary on the Revelation](#))

Tony Garland on **fallen** - Their current estate is said to be lower than before. As they drifted apart from God in their relationship, their spiritual state also declined. have fallen is in the [perfect tense](#)—the fall had already taken place (AND WAS NOW THEIR STATE), and Jesus is concerned about their present spiritual condition.

One might ask from where had they **fallen**? Recall what Paul said about them in Ephesians 2:6+ "**and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.**" They had in a sense fallen from an understanding of their lofty, exalted position in Christ!

Rod Mattoon - The first step in being rescued is acknowledging your need. They needed to **remember** or keep on remembering from where they had fallen. It is when we forget what God had done for us or decisions we have made for the Lord, that we begin to digress spiritually and fall flat on our face. God tells them they need to remember where they came from. Memory is precious and also haunting.

That this falling is not beyond repair Jude 24-25+ assures us

"Now to Him who is able to **keep you from stumbling**, and to **make you stand** in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

and repent - **Repent** ([metanoeo](#)) is a command in the [aorist imperative](#) (JUST DO IT! DO NOT DELAY! DO NOT PROCRASTINATE! - see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) and for God to grant it - see below) and calls for a change of mind and purpose that in turn results in an individual turning from sin and unto God. It is an "**urgent appeal for instant change** of attitude and conduct before it is too late." (A T Robertson). Such a change involves more than fearing the consequences of God's judgment. Genuine repentance knows that the evil of sin (in this case leaving one's first love) must be forsaken and the person and work of Christ totally and singularly embraced. John gives us an excellent working definition of repentance declaring to the Pharisees "bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance." (Mt 3:8+). In other words, a genuine change of mind (repentance) is shown to be genuine by the subsequent production of "fruit" or "good works." Good works are Spirit initiated and energized works, *works* such as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Gal 5:22+) Note their first aspect of the Spirit's fruit is **LOVE**, the very thing in which the saints at Ephesus were deficient!

Swindoll - Repentance is a true inward change, not a fake reformation of life or a mere outward modification of behavior. It's a work powerfully wrought by the grace of God in our innermost being, which involves a deeply personal decision.

Repent (3340)([metanoeo](#) from **meta** = with, among + **noeo** = to think, exercise the mind <> from **nous** = mind; cf [metanoia](#)) means to have another mind. One of the best definitions of repentance is in the Gentiles in Thessalonica - For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." (1Th 1:9-10) **Repentance** is aptly depicted by the military command "**About, face!**" The repentant person in effect turns around 180 degrees and goes the other direction. Acts 26:20 gives a good picture of repent declaring "they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." Acts 11:18 teaches that ultimately repentance is a gift from God "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." We see a similar divine dynamic in 2 Timothy Paul writing that "24 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, **if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.** 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." (2 Ti 2:24-26) The upshot is that repentance is a divine gift but true repentance is also a human responsibility. God gives us the ability/desire to repent, but we still have to exercise our will and repent!

and do the deeds you did at first- This command (**do...deeds**) parallels John the Baptist's charge to "**bring forth** ([aorist imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) fruits (deeds) in keeping with repentance." (Lk 3:8+). In other words the deeds would indicate they had genuinely repented. That is a basic truth regarding repentance. If you say you repent and there is no change (no good deeds), then you have most likely not truly repented! **Do** is a command in the [aorist imperative](#) calling for the doing to be done **NOW!** Do not put this off! And don't attempt to "do" these deeds in your own natural power or you will fail! See [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) Note also that the **doing** demonstrates the reality of the **repenting**. If we say we repent and do not do, we are deceiving ourselves. **Ironside** says "If lips and life do not agree, the testimony will not amount to much"

William Newell on **do the deeds** - This (DOING) is not a call to "Christian service" or "renewed activity." Ephesus had toil, patience,

intolerance toward evil, patience in suffering,—everything. **But the “first works” are the goings forth of affection to Christ, freely, devotedly, as in our first love.** It is the story of the bride of the Song of Solomon (Song 5:2–16). Her slowness caused His withdrawal, and it caused her much trouble; but it brought her at last to cry, “My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand; he is altogether lovely!” **“First deeds”** with her, were, finding again Him whom her soul loved! Most Christians—yes, real Christians—let Christ go, when He “makes as if He would go further.” This, those walking to Emmaus did not: “They constrained him, saying, **Abide** ([aorist imperative](#)) with us.” (Lk 24:29KJV+) And He went in with them. In Laodicea we shall find Him standing outside (Rev 3:20+). Astonishing! Outside of the Church when His place is in their midst! ([Commentary on the Revelation](#))

Or else - Only two words but they are so terribly ominous and threatening (as they should be!)

I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent([metanoeo](#)) - In a sense this is a prophetic warning. Note the key to opening our heart and let in our first love is to **repent** (repeated because of its importance!) So the key is not doing more works but repenting. It is not getting **busy** but getting **broken**. How do we know **I am coming to you** is not the **Second Coming**? Historically the church in Ephesus is in ruins because Jesus came and removed their light! Recall that Rev 1:20+ shows that the **lampstand** is a symbol for the church.

I am coming - The [futuristic present](#), [erchomai] is in the [present tense](#): “**I am coming.**” His impending arrival is imminent! It could occur at any time! We see this same futuristic present in 2 Ti 4:1ESV where we read Paul's warning to Timothy that Jesus “is to judge the living and the dead” where the verb “is” means “is about to” and speaks of His imminent appearance (See notes [“Future Focus”] on the only sermon I have ever preached and it was on 2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Remove (2795)(**kineo** - gives us kinetic) means to move, put in motion, stir up, shake, remove, excite, wag (Mt 27:39, Mk 15:29). Speaks of general activity of humans (Acts 17:28). Of moving mountains (Rev 6:14). Removing a local church (Ephesus). Figuratively of exciting passions (Acts 21:30).

Gilbrant - In classical Greek *kineō* means “to set something in motion, to propel forward.” When used figuratively of the mental or spiritual realm it means “to disturb, move, cause” (cf. Bauer). In matters of politics and law *kineō* usually means “to instigate” or “employ action against.” It is also a sign of contempt in the sense of “call into question.” In the Septuagint *kineō* frequently translates the Hebrew *nûa'* which means “to shake one's head as a sign of derision or scorn” (Job 16:4; Lamentations 2:15). In the New Testament *kineō* expresses the hypocrisy of the Pharisees' behavior in relationship to the Law. Jesus accused the Pharisees of putting heavy burdens on other men and yet they would not “move” even “one of their fingers” to help (Matthew 23:4). Luke used *kineō* when he recorded Paul's address to the men of Athens; in a figurative sense it referred to the omnipresent spiritual realm of God in whom “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). *Kineō* also means “removal” or “rejection,” as in the case of the church at Ephesus whose punishment was removal of their lampstand if they did not repent (Revelation 2:5). It also means “to excite, to arouse passion, to incite to riot, to disturb,” or “to throw into commotion,” as was the case when the whole city of Jerusalem was set in motion against Paul (Acts 21:30). Finally, the New Testament also uses *kineō* to denote an expression of derision, revulsion, or contempt. When the people passed Jesus while He was on the cross, they “wagged” their heads, which was an expression of the contempt they felt for Him (Matthew 27:39). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Kineo - 8x in 8v - move(2), moved(1), provoked(1), remove(1), stirs(1), wagging(2). Matt. 23:4; Matt. 27:39; Mk. 15:29; Acts 17:28; Acts 21:30; Acts 24:5; Rev. 2:5; Rev. 6:14

Here is a sad woe...

The church that loses its love will soon lose its light,
no matter how doctrinally sound it may be!

--- Warren Wiersbe

William Newell - The words “I come to thee,” correspond to the judicial, personal visit of the Lord to Sodom ere its destruction (Genesis 18). These words do not signify operations by the Spirit, but an act of Christ, who is head over all things to the Church, and who is judging over each assembly. The fatal visit would not be recognized by the church, but it would definitely occur. After the Judge's visit there would be no more assembly there in Christ's eyes. The Spirit would be withdrawn, and darkness and desolation follow. So it happened at Ephesus, and, alas, to how many thousands of other careless “Christian” assemblies in the centuries since! No longer a lampstand! This “coming” is not His coming again at the rapture, to receive His own; but His special, necessary, judicial action toward an assembly persisting, after much light, and blessing, in neglect of Himself. Alas, the lampstand removed! The priceless privilege of setting forth such a Christ before a dying world, gone forever. I have before me a picture of the Ephesus of today—a ruined archway, a Moslem dwelling, and a forbidding castle, 'midst desolate hills. No lampstand for Christ where once Paul labored three years, night and day with tears!

John Phillips - No love, no light is the rule. Love is to be paramount: nothing less will do. If there is no real love for the Lord Jesus, the reason for the assembly's existence has vanished. A local church that is functioning without love for the Lord is worse than useless. It gives a wrong impression of what Christianity is all about, and it is best removed.

Vincent - "Its candlestick has been for centuries removed out of his place; the squalid Mohammedan village which is nearest to its site does not count one Christian in its insignificant population; its temple is a mass of shapeless ruins; its harbor is a reedy pool; the bittern booms amid its pestilent and stagnant marshes; and malaria and oblivion reign supreme over the place where the wealth of ancient civilization gathered around the scenes of its grossest superstitions and its most degraded sins" (Farrar, "Life and Work of Paul," ii., 43, 44).

Guzik - When their lampstand was removed, they could continue as an organization, but no longer as a true church of Jesus Christ. It would be the church of Ihabod, where the glory had departed (1 Samuel 4:21 = [What does Ihabod mean](#)).. Apparently, at least in the short term, the Ephesians heeded this warning. In the early second century (not too long after John wrote), Ignatius praised the love and the doctrinal purity of the Ephesians. "You, who are of the most holy Church of the Ephesians, which is so famous and celebrated throughout the world ... you, being full of the Holy Spirit, do nothing according to the flesh, but all things according to the Spirit. You are complete in Christ Jesus." (Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, Chapter 8. From the Ante Nicene Fathers Volume 1, page 52). From what Ignatius wrote, it seems that the Ephesians returned to their first love without compromising doctrinal purity. That isn't always an easy balance to keep, but the Ephesians apparently kept it, at least for a time.

Wiersbe "The glorious city of Ephesus is today but a heap of stones and no light is shining there."

THOUGHT - Just as He walked around and examined the lampstands, so Christ is walking around and examining whether our own lights of love have dimmed. How common it is for believers who were once ablaze with love for God and love for others to slowly soften to smoldering embers! Christ wants to fan the flame so we'll become brilliant beacons of love in a loveless world. Stop and think. Has your love grown cold? Reflect on your own love for the Lord and for others when you first came to Christ. Would you say your current attitudes and actions reflect a greater, lesser, or similar love? If you feel your love has lessened, what specific unloving behaviors have developed? (Charles Swindoll)

Revelation 2:6 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.'

NET Revelation 2:6 But you do have this going for you: You hate what the Nicolaitans practice—practices I also hate.

NLT Revelation 2:6 But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

ESV Revelation 2:6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

NIV Revelation 2:6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

GNT Revelation 2:6 ἄλλ' ὅτι τοὺς χεῖρας, πρὸς τὴν Νικολαίτην κτλ μισοῦς.

KJV Revelation 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

ASV Revelation 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

CSB Revelation 2:6 Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

NKJ Revelation 2:6 "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

NRS Revelation 2:6 Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

YLT Revelation 2:6 but this thou hast, that thou dost hate the works of the Nicolaitans, that I also hate.

- **that:** Rev 2:14,15 2Ch 19:2 Ps 26:5 101:3 139:21,22 2Jn 1:9,10

Yet - Another term of contrast.

This you do have, (10) that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate- Interesting contrast - just spoke of love and now of hate. Notice that they **hate the deeds**, not the doers. The verb **hate** ([miseo](#)) is used twice both in the [present tense](#) speaking of continual hate—both the Ephesian saints and Jesus were in ongoing opposition to the works of the Nicolaitans. As we

often hear, God hates the sin, but loves the sinner (enough to give His Son to die in their place - Jn 3:16+). It is too easy to fall into the trap to hate the doers more than their deeds. Who were the **Nicolaitans**? We cannot be sure, but Jesus uses the term again in Rev 2:15 which reads in context as follows...

But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel (HAPPENED IN Num 25:1-2), to **eat things sacrificed to idols** and to **commit acts of immorality**. 15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. (Rev 2:14-15+)

Comment - We may not know their exact identity, but we can definitely know their modus operandi. The trafficked in the trickery of Balaam and the result was they led people into idolatry and immorality. And Jesus hated their abominable deeds as did the Ephesian believers. Peter also mentioned false teachers "having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, **having followed the way of Balaam**, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." (2Pe. 2:14,15+)

Nicolaitans (3531)(**nikolaites** from **nikos** = conquer + **laos** = people) was an adherent of Nikolaos or a Nicolaitan, but that is not a very helpful "definition." **Nicolaos** means victor or conqueror of the people and **Balaam** means devourer of the people. See [Tony Garland's discussion of Nicolaitans](#).

Related Resource:

- [Who are the Nicolaitans mentioned in Revelation 2:6, 14-15?](#)

Revelation 2:7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

NET Revelation 2:7 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.'

NLT Revelation 2:7 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

ESV Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

NIV Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

GNT Revelation 2:7 χων ο ς κουσ τω τ τ πνε μα λ γει τα ς κκλησ αις. τ νικ ντι δ σω α τ φαγε ν κ το ξ λου τ ς ζω ς, σπιν ν τ παραδε σ το θεο .

KJV Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

ASV Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

CSB Revelation 2:7 "Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. I will give the victor the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in God's paradise.

NKJ Revelation 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

NRS Revelation 2:7 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.

YLT Revelation 2:7 He who is having an ear -- let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies: To him who is overcoming -- I will give to him to eat of the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God.

- **He who has an ear:** Rev 2:11,17,29 3:6,13,22 13:9 Mt 11:15 13:9,43 Mk 7:16
- **let him hear:** Rev 14:13 22:17 1Co 2:10 12:4-12
- **To him who overcomes:** Rev 2:11,17,26-28 3:5,12,21 12:10,11 15:2 21:7 Joh 16:33 1Jn 5:4,5

- **I will grant to eat of the tree of life** Rev 22:2,14 Ge 2:9 Ge 3:22-24 Pr 3:18 11:30 13:12 15:4
- **the paradise:** Lu 23:43 2Co 12:4

CHRIST'S EXHORTATION TO OVERCOMERS

He (singular) **who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**- This is combined entreaty and command is repeated to every church (See [Pattern](#)). This addresses any and every person who has a "spiritual" ear. As Paul says in 1 Cor 2:14- we know "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand (AKA CANNOT "HEAR") them, because they are spiritually appraised." The Spirit speaks to all 7 churches and also in Rev 14:13 and Rev 22:17. So in all 7 messages, both Christ and His Spirit deliver the message!

Garland - It is Christ's desire that "those who hear the words of this prophecy" (Rev. 1:3+) not only hear the subject matter, but understand its significance. This phrase recognizes the reality that those whose hearts are not open to Christ may hear (or read) the words, but will not understand the message: If we desire that God would reveal more to us, we must first respond in obedience to that which has already been revealed. If we fail to respond to what He has already revealed, then we stand to lose what we already understand (Mark 4:24-25; Luke 8:18).

Fausset writes that "'Every man 'hath an ear' naturally, but he alone will be able to hear spiritually to whom God has given 'the hearing ear'; whose 'ear God hath wakened' and 'opened.'"

THOUGHT - The picture of "open ears" (and I would add an "open heart") reminds us of Lk 24:45+ where Jesus "opened ([dianoigo](#)) their minds to understand ([suniemi](#)) the Scriptures!" Truth be told, if the Spirit of Jesus does not open our minds when we open His book, it will be like reading just another book! Pray Ps 119:18+ "Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law."

A T Robertson on **He who has an ear** - An individualizing note calling on **each** of the hearers (cf Rev 1:3+ = "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy") to listen and a reminiscence of the words of Jesus in the Synoptics (Mt. 11:15; Mt 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9+ = He who has ears to hear, let him hear.", Mk 4:23; Lk 8:8+; Lk 14:35+), but not in John's Gospel.

What the Spirit says to the churches - The speaker has been Jesus Christ, but now it is the Spirit of Christ. Notice the churches indicates all 7 churches will "read each others mail" so to speak!

Garland on the Spirit - When Jesus promised to send another helper (παράκλητον [paraklēton]), the Spirit of Truth, He said, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." [emphasis added] (John 14:18). It is the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Who initiates prophecy (1Pe. 1:11). He is the source of all spiritual revelation and illumination (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13)....Each letter is given for the benefit of all seven churches. The book of Revelation is given to: (1) John; (2) each individual church; (3) all seven churches; (4) all churches of all time; (5) all believers in every age.

MacArthur points out that **churches** is significant - The use of the plural noun **churches** signifies the universal nature of this invitation each time that it appears. This call cannot be limited just to a group of overcomers in a single church; it must apply to all churches. Every church needs to hear every message.

All true believers are overcomers,
who have by God's grace and power
overcome the damning power of the evil world system.
-- John MacArthur

To him who overcomes - First note that this is not a reference to some spiritually elite believers but to all believers. John explains who **overcomers** are writing "For whatever is born of God **overcomes** ([nikao](#) in [present tense](#) = in Christ we CONTINUALLY HAVE THE VICTORY OVER) the world; and this is the **victory** ([nike](#) = victory in battle, in the athletic games, over all opponents) that has **overcome** ([nikao](#) in [present tense](#)) the world—our **faith**. (NOT FAITH IN FAITH BUT AS HE EXPLAINS FAITH IN JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD) 5 Who is the one who overcomes ([nikao](#)) the world, but **he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**" (1 John 5:4-5+) **Robertson** observes "Faith is dominant in Paul, victory in John, faith is victory (1 Jn 5:4)."

Overcomes (conquers) ([3528](#))([nikao](#)) means to conquer, to be victorious or to prevail in the face of obstacles. **Overcome** describes the quality of a true saint who may stumble and fall but who God always picks up and he continues onward and upward in the power of the Spirit and in the motivation of the victory Christ has won for us on the Cross. As **Jesus** alerted His soon to be vigorously persecuted disciples "These things (Ed: Always ask "What things?" - forces you to read the preceding context - See Jn 14:1ff, esp Jn 14:23) I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but **take courage**

([present imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)); I have **overcome** ([perfect tense](#) pictures permanence of our Lord's victory over this evil world system and its evil ruler! Glory!) the world." (Jn 16:33)

Nikao with most uses in the Revelation - 25v - Lk. 11:22; Jn. 16:33; Rom. 3:4; Rom. 12:21; 1 Jn. 2:13; 1 Jn. 2:14; 1 Jn. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:4; 1 Jn. 5:5; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 2:11; Rev. 2:17; Rev. 2:26; Rev. 3:5; Rev. 3:12; Rev. 3:21; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 6:2; Rev. 11:7; Rev. 12:11; Rev. 13:7; Rev. 15:2; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 21:7

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO OVERCOMERS

I will grant to eat of the tree of life - A gift from Christ for all believers, because all believers are overcomers. The **tree of life** is first referred to in Genesis 2:9, in the paradise the Garden of Eden. Now this tree symbolizes eternal life in Christ. And yet while it does symbolize life, the **tree of life** will be a real tree in "Paradise Found," just like it was in "Paradise Lost!"

Tony Garland - The tree of life is a common motif for righteousness and wisdom in Scripture (Ps. 1:3; Pr. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4) for it is by righteousness and wisdom that life is lived to the full. For this reason, the Jews referred to the Word of God as the "tree of life". "[Torah scrolls are] written on parchment, sewn together, rolled onto wooden rollers called eytz chayeem (tree of life), and read regularly in the synagogue." During the present age, while man is barred from the tree of life, God has provided another tree of life: the cross of Jesus Christ. Those who place their trust in His atoning work upon the cross have eternal life (John 3:14-16). Even though every man has been bitten by the Serpent (Gen. 3:15), by merely looking upon this tree in faith, he will be healed (Num. 21:9). In the eternal state, believers will once again obtain full access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:2+, 14+). The promise made to the overcomer is an essential element of salvation. In the eternal state, man will still be dependent upon God for access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:2+) because independence from God is sin.

Related Passages: Tree of Life - speaks of immortality. Initially in the garden of Eden, now in the "garden of God!" (forever!)

Genesis 2:9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the **tree of life** also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the **tree of life**, and eat, and live forever"— 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the **tree of life**.

Revelation 22:2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the **tree of life**, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of **the tree** were for the healing of the nations. 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the **tree of life**, and may enter by the gates into the city.

Which is in the Paradise of God - This represents a reversal of the curse. Redemption by Christ makes all things new. As **A T Robertson** says **paradise** is "The abode of God and the home of the redeemed with Christ, not a mere intermediate state. It was originally a garden of delight and finally heaven itself as here."

Garland points out that " Significantly, the church which had lost its first love was given the promise of access to a tree which was in the midst of the garden wherein God and Adam used to have sweet fellowship (Gen. 3:8). This is the very essence of the first love which the Ephesians had left."

Trench on **paradise** - Paradise "passes through a series of meanings, each one higher than the last. From any garden of delight, which is its first meaning, it comes to be predominantly applied to the garden of Eden, then to the resting-place of separate souls in joy and felicity, and lastly to the very heaven itself; and we see eminently in it, what we see indeed in so many words, how revealed religion assumes them into her service, and makes them vehicles of far higher truth than any which they knew at first, transforming and transfiguring them, as in this case, from glory to glory".

Vincent on **paradise** - Originally an enclosed park, or pleasure-ground. Xenophon uses it of the parks of the Persian kings and nobles. "There (at Celaenae) Cyrus had a palace and a great park (παράδεισος), full of wild animals, which he hunted on horseback. ... Through the midst of the park flows the river Maeander ("Anabasis," i., 2, 7). And again: "The Greeks encamped near a great and beautiful park, thickly grown with all kinds of trees" (2:4, 14.) In the Septuagint, Gen. 2:8, of the garden of Eden. In the Jewish theology, the department of Hades where the blessed souls await the resurrection; and therefore equivalent to Abraham's bosom (Lk 16:22, 23+). It occurs three times in the New Testament: here; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev 2:7; and **always of the abode of the blessed**

Paradise (3857) ([paradeisos](#)) is a word borrowed from the Persian word for garden, park or enclosure full of

vegetable products (cf Eccl 2:5). It is used only 3x in the NT but some 45x in the OT and most of the uses in the Septuagint are translated garden, and specifically of the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:8). It is ironic that man sinned in the first Garden but in the future "Garden" will be forever sinless because of the blood of the Lamb. In Isaiah 51:3 **paradeisos** is used to describe future of redeemed and restored Zion (and the nation) in the Messianic Kingdom as like the bliss of the Garden of Eden before sin entered writing "Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody." 3x in NT - Lk. 23:43; 2 Co. 12:4; Rev. 2:7

Paradise is "the place where God lives." Where God is, that is Paradise!

-- David Guzik

Play Steven Curtis Chapman's old song [Paradise](#).

Related Passages:

Luke 23:43+ And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in**Paradise**."

2 Corinthians 12:4 was caught up into **Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

MacArthur - The example of the Ephesian church warns that doctrinal orthodoxy and outward service cannot make up for a cold heart. Believers must carefully heed Solomon's counsel: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Pr 4:23+)

Charles Swindoll closes this section - Let me challenge you to do something concrete in light of the importance of maintaining your love. Would you consider memorizing 1 John 4:19-21+? Take time right now to commit this short passage to memory so you can always be reminded of the need for growing in love.

Question: [What is the meaning of the tree of life?](#)

Answer: The tree of life, mentioned in the books of Genesis and Revelation, is a life-giving tree created to enhance and perpetually sustain the physical life of humanity. The tree was planted by God in the Garden of Eden: "The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the [tree of the knowledge of good and evil](#)" (Genesis 2:9). The centrally located tree of life would have been easily accessible to Adam and Eve from any point in the garden.

More details concerning the **tree of life** come after Adam and Eve's sin: "The LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever'" (Genesis 3:22+). In his disobedience, Adam lost his eternal life. The tree of life in Eden must have had some role to play in maintaining the life of Adam and Eve (and possibly the animals). Adam would "live forever," even in his fallen condition, if he had eaten the tree of life after his sin. God placed a sword-wielding cherub at the entrance to the garden specifically "to guard the way to the tree of life" (Ge 3:24+). It seems access to the tree of life would have prolonged Adam's physical life indefinitely, dooming him to an eternity in a cursed world.

It was a mercy that God kept us from the tree of life. By barring access to the tree of life, God showed compassion in His omniscience. Knowing that, because of sin, earthly life would be filled with sorrow and toil, God graciously limited the number of years men would live. To live eternally in a sinful state would mean endless agony for humanity, with no hope of the relief that comes with death. By limiting our lifespan, God gives us enough time to come to know Him and His provision for eternal life through Christ but spares us the misery of an endless existence in a sinful condition.

In His great love, God provided One who would redeem fallen mankind. Through one man, Adam, sin entered the world, but through another Man, Jesus Christ, redemption through the forgiveness of sin is available to all (Romans 5:17). Those who avail themselves of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross will be resurrected to see the tree of life again, for it stands in the middle of the Holy City, the [New Jerusalem](#), where it bears "twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2). In the eternal state, the curse will be no more (verse 3), access to the tree of life will be reinstated, and darkness will be forever banished (Rev 22:5). Eden will be restored. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

Related Resources:

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Tree of Life](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Tree of Life](#)

- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Tree of Life](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Tree of Life](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Tree of Life](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Tree of Life](#)

Question: [What is paradise? Is paradise a different place than Heaven?](#)

Answer: Paradise is a place of blessing where the righteous go after death. The word paradise is usually used as a synonym for "heaven" (Revelation 2:7).

When Jesus was dying on the cross and one of the thieves being crucified with Him asked Him for mercy, Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43+). Jesus knew that His death was imminent and that He would soon be in heaven with His Father. Therefore, Jesus used "paradise" as a synonym for "heaven." The apostle Paul wrote of someone (probably himself) who "was caught up to paradise" (2 Corinthians 12:4). In this context, paradise obviously refers to heaven.

There has always been a separation of believers and unbelievers after death (Luke 16:19-31). The righteous have always gone to paradise; the wicked have always gone to hell. For right now, both paradise and hell are "temporary holding places" until the day when Jesus Christ comes back to judge the world based on whether or not individuals have believed in Him. The first resurrection is of believers who will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards based on meritorious service to Him. The second resurrection will be that of unbelievers who will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment of God. At that point, all will be sent to their eternal destination—the wicked to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15), and the righteous to a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21-22).

There are cases in which paradise can refer to the Garden of Eden, such in the Douay-Rheims translation of Genesis 3:8, which speaks of Adam and Eve hiding "amidst the trees of paradise." The context of the word will determine whether it refers to heaven or Eden. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

Related Resources:

- [What happens after death?](#)
- [Is "Paradise Lost" by John Milton biblical?](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He said, "Today you will be with me in paradise"?](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Paradise](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Paradise](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Paradise](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Paradise](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Paradise](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Paradise Paradise \(2\)](#)
- King James Dictionary [Paradise](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Paradise](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Paradise](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Paradise](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Paradise \(2\)](#) [Paradise \(2\)](#) [Paradise](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Paradise](#)

Revelation 2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

- **the angel:** Rev 2:1
- **the first:** Rev 1:8,11,17,18 (KJV has "first and last" in Rev 1:11KJV)

Seaport of Smyrna

**THE FIRST AND LAST
RISEN FROM THE DEAD**

Related Passages:

Rev 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, **Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,**

Rev 22:13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, **the first and the last,** the beginning and the end."

Isaiah 41:4 "Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? **I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He.**"

Isaiah 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: **'I am the first and I am the last,** And there is no God besides Me.

Isaiah 48:12 "Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; **I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.**

Commiphora myrrha tree

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: Similar introduction in all 7 letters - see [Pattern](#). We have no record in the NT of the founding of this church in Smyrna but it may be related to Acts 19:10+ where Luke describes Paul's stay in Ephesus," with the result being "that all who lived in Asia (Smyrna is in Asia about 30-40 miles north of Ephesus) heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

Recall Jesus' command in Rev 1:11+ to **'Write** in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." So while each angel of the churches received a letter specifically for them, it is clear from Jesus' words that all 7 churches received all 7 letters.

Oil of Myrrh

Smyrna ([4667](#))(**smurna**) was a resinous gum oozing from a kind of balsam tree, used for incense and ointments. The tree would also yield its sweet smelling resin when it was crushed or bruised even to death. **Myrrh** describes various aspects of the relationship of the lovers in the Song of Solomon.

All uses of **myrrh** in Septuagint and the NT - 14x in 13v - Ex 30:23; Ps. 45:8; Song 3:6; Song 4:6; Song 4:14; Song 5:1; Song 5:5; Song 5:13; Mt. 2:11; Jn. 19:39; Rev. 1:11; Rev. 2:8.

EXCURSUS ON MYRRH - At Jesus' birth Matthew records that **"Magi from the east"** (Mt 2:1,2+), "After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and **myrrh (smurna).**" (Mt 2:11+) **Myrrh** was an ingredient in the **holy anointing oil**, Moses instructing the sons of Israel to "Take also for yourself the finest of spices of flowing myrrh (Lxx = smurna) five hundred shekels," (Ex 30:23+), which was used to anoint the high priest **Aaron** (Ex 28:41+, Ex 29:7+, Ex 40:13+ cf how lavishly Aaron was anointed in Ps 133:2+) Who foreshadowed the **Great High Priest** Christ Jesus (Heb 4:14+). And not only at His birth, but at His death our **Great High Priest** Christ Jesus was anointed with **myrrh** after His body had been crushed and bruised, and he was embalmed and prepared for burial, for "Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight." (John 19:39). Finally, **myrrh** is used in a clearly **Messianic psalm**, Psalm 45, where we read

6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. (**QUOTED** IN Hebrews 1:8,9+)

7 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

8 All Your garments are fragrant with **myrrh** ([Lxx](#) = **myrrh**) and aloes and cassia; Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You glad. (Ps 45:6-8+)

Spurgeon - The divine anointing causes fragrance to distil from the robes of the Mighty Hero. He is delightful to every sense, to the eyes most fair, to the ear most gracious, to the spiritual nostril most sweet. The excellences of Jesus are all most precious, comparable to the rarest spices; they are most varied, and to be likened not to myrrh alone, but to all the perfumes blended in due proportion. The Father always finds a pleasure in him, in him he is well pleased; and all regenerated spirits rejoice in him, for he is made of God unto us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Note that not only is Jesus most sweet, but even his garments are so; everything that he has to do with is perfumed by his person. All his garments are thus fragrant; not some of them, but all; we delight as much in his purple of dominion as in the white of his priesthood, his mantle as our prophet is as dear to us as his seamless coat as our friend. All his dress is fragrant with all sweetness. To attempt to spiritualise each spice here

mentioned would be unprofitable, the evident sense is that all sweetnesses meet in Jesus, and are poured forth wherever he is present.

The first and the last (see Rev 1:17+) - In ancient letters the writer of the letter always identified himself at the beginning of the letter, not the end. So Jesus begins His identification by a title that was used by the prophet Isaiah ([see passages above](#)). The Revelation ends with another designation of Jesus as the First and the Last (Rev 22:13+). Jesus' use of the first and the last which was used in Isaiah to describe God is tantamount to Jesus stating that He is God.

Related Resource:

- [First and the Last - study by A B Simpson](#)

Lehman Strauss said, He is the one who created, controls, and will consummate all things. (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:16-17)

Who was dead, and has come to life - The first and the last speaks to Jesus as the eternal God and yet here Jesus clearly alludes to His humanity and the incredible truth that the eternal God died as a man, but He came back to life, a description of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

MacArthur explains the practical significance of Jesus' title in this opening line of the letter - Knowing that they were undergoing difficult times, Christ was reminding them that He transcends temporal matters, and, through their union with Him, so should they. And should they face death at the hands of their persecutors, beside them is the One who conquered death (Heb. 2:14) and who promised, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die" (John 11:25–26). Jesus Christ also endured the most unjust and severe persecution anyone ever suffered (cf. Heb. 12:3–4), so He can serve as a compassionate and understanding source of power (Heb. 2:17–18; Heb 4:15)." (Ibid)

Says this - Literally this reads "These things says" Says this could be accurately paraphrased "**this is the solemn pronouncement of**"

TECHNICAL NET NOTE - Grk "**These things says** [the One] ..." The expression **τάδε λέγει** (tade legei) occurs eight times in the NT, seven of which are in Rev 2–3 [Rev. 2:1; Rev. 2:8; Rev. 2:12; Rev. 2:18; Rev. 3:1; Rev. 3:7; Rev. 3:14]. "The pronoun (tade) is used to add solemnity to the prophetic utterance that follows....In classical drama, it was used to introduce a new actor to the scene (Smyth, Greek Grammar, 307 [§1241]). But the **τάδε λέγει** formula in the NT derives from the OT, where it was used to introduce a **prophetic utterance**. Thus, the translation "**this is the solemn pronouncement of**" for **τάδε λέγει** is very much in keeping with the OT connotations of this expression.

EDITORIAL COMMENT - "**TADE LEGEI**" is used over 350 times in the Septuagint - here are a few representative uses - Amos 1:6; Amos 1:9; Amos 1:11; Amos 1:13; Amos 2:1; Amos 2:4; Amos 2:6; Amos 3:11; Amos 3:12; Amos 5:3; Amos 5:4; Amos 5:16; Amos 7:11; Amos 7:17; Mic. 2:3; Mic. 3:5; Obad. 1:1; Nah. 1:12; Hag. 1:2; Hag. 1:5; Hag. 1:7; Hag. 1:9; Hag. 2:6; Hag. 2:11; Zech. 1:3; Zech. 1:4; Zech. 1:14; Zech. 1:16; Zech. 1:17;

Glen Spencer - Smyrna represents a period of great persecution. The name Smyrna means myrrh. Myrrh is a fragrant spice which must be crushed to bring forth its full fragrance. The Christians of this era were crushed and persecuted, but the more they suffered, the more fragrant was their testimony. During this time thousands of Christians were brought into the theaters of Rome to be fed to lions while spectators cheered. Many were crucified, others were covered with animal skins and ripped apart by wild dogs. They were covered in tar and set on fire as human torches. They were boiled in oil and burned at the stake. It was during this time that Justin Martyr was beheaded and Polycarp the aged soldier of Christ was burned at the stake. When Polycarp was 86 years old, he was pressured by the Roman proconsul to renounce Christ to be set free. He answered, "Eighty and six years have I served Him and He never did me any injury. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

Related Resources:

- [Why is the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ so important? | GotQuestions.org](#)
 - [Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ important? | GotQuestions.org](#)
 - [Why should I believe in Christ's resurrection? | GotQuestions.org](#)
 - [Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ true? | GotQuestions.org](#)
 - [What is more important, the death of Christ or His resurrection? | GotQuestions.org](#)
 - [Can the various resurrection accounts from the four Gospels be harmonized? | GotQuestions.org](#)
 - [What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" \(John 11:25\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
-

Vance Havner - The First and the Last "**Fear not**; I am the first and the last." Rev. 1:17

Why should I fear? He is the alpha and omega, the author and finisher, the first and the last. He was here before there was any fear and he will be here when all fear has passed away! Before there was a universe he saw everything from the beginning. If I could stand for five minutes at his vantage point and see the entire scheme of things as he sees it, how absurd would be my dreads, how ridiculous my fears and tears! But I see only this mixed and muddled present. I snatch these hours out of the pattern of the ages and of course there are ragged edges and loose ends, and things don't seem to make sense. **Like jerking a text out of its context I tear this leaf of today out of the book of eternity and wonder why it looks so incomplete.** He sees it all and if I could see it all I would not fear. But why should I fear anyway? He has told me that there is nothing to fear and he knows. Can't I take his Word for it? He has overcome pain and sorrow and fear and death: he will outlast them all. **My life is in union with Christ in God** and I shall outlast all of life's pressures. We think of ourselves as transient and these things as permanent but really they are but transient and we are eternal! I am identified with him: "To live is Christ"... and even to die is gain! What is there to fear?

Related Resources:

- **William M Ramsay** - [The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and Their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse - See Smyrna: The City of Life](#)
- [First and the Last - study by A B Simpson](#)

BACKGROUND ON SMYRNA WILLIAM BARCLAY

IF it was inevitable that Ephesus should come first in the list of the seven churches, it was only natural that Smyrna, its great rival, should come second. Of all the cities of Asia, Smyrna was the loveliest. It was known as the ornament of Asia, the crown of Asia and the flower of Asia. The Greek satirist Lucian said that it was 'the fairest of the cities of Ionia'. Aristides, the Greek Christian writer, who sang the praise of Smyrna with such splendour, spoke of 'the grace which extends over every part like a rainbow ... the brightness which pervades every part, and reaches up to the heavens, like the glitter of the bronze of armour in Homer'. It added to the charm of Smyrna that the west wind, the gentle zephyr, constantly blew through its streets. 'The wind', said Aristides, 'blows through every part of the city, and makes it as fresh as a grove of trees.' The constant west wind had only one disadvantage. The sewage of the city drained into the gulf on which the city stood, and the west wind tended to blow the smell back upon the city rather than out to sea.

View from Lower Town towards hill of Pagos
from Ramsay's [Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia](#)

Smyrna was magnificently situated. It stood at the end of the road which crossed Lydia and Phrygia and travelled out to the far east, and it commanded the trade of the rich Hermus valley. Inevitably, it was a great trading city. The city itself stood at the end of a long arm of the [Aegean sea](#), which ended in a small land-locked harbour in the heart of the city. It was the safest of all harbours and the most convenient; and it had the added advantage that in time of war it could be easily closed by a chain across its mouth. It was fitting that on the coins of Smyrna there should be the [image of a merchant ship](#) ready for sea.

The setting of the city was equally beautiful. It began at the harbour; it crossed the narrow foothills; and then behind the city there rose the [Pagos](#), a hill covered with temples and noble buildings which were spoken of as **the Crown of Smyrna**. One traveller has described it as 'a queenly city crowned with towers'. Aristides likened Smyrna to a great statue with the feet in the sea, the middle parts in the plain and the foothills, and the head, crowned with great buildings, on the [Pagos](#) behind. He called it 'a flower of beauty such as earth and sun had never shown to mankind'.

Ruins of Agora in Smyrna

Smyrna's history was very much connected to its beauty, for it was one of the very few planned cities in the world. It had been founded as a Greek colony as far back AS 1000 BC. Round about 600 BC, disaster had befallen it, for then the Lydians had broken in from the east and destroyed it. For 400 years, Smyrna had been no city but merely a collection of little villages; then the Macedonian general [Lysimachus \(map of his kingdom\)](#) had rebuilt it as a planned whole. It was built with great, straight, broad streets. Strabo, the Greek geographer, speaks of the handsomeness of the streets, the excellence of the paving and the great rectangular blocks in which it was built. Most famous of all the streets was the Street of Gold, which began with the Temple of Zeus and ended with the Temple of Cybele. It ran across the foothills of the Pagos at an angle; and, if the buildings which encircled the Pagos were the crown of Smyrna, the Street of Gold was the necklace round the hill.

Here we have an interesting and a significant thing which shows the care and knowledge with which John set down his letters from the risen Christ. The risen Christ is called **'the one who died and came to life'**. **That was an echo of the experience of Smyrna itself.**

Smyrna had other claims to greatness. It was a free city, and it knew what loyalty was. Long before Rome was undisputed ruler of the world, Smyrna had thrown in its lot with Rome, never to waver in its faithfulness. The Roman statesman Cicero called Smyrna 'one of our most faithful and our most ancient allies'. In the campaign against Mithridates in the east, things had gone badly with Rome. And when the soldiers of Rome were suffering from hunger and cold, the people of Smyrna stripped off their own clothes to send to them.

Such was the reverence of Smyrna for Rome that, as far back as 195 BC, it was the first city in the world to build a temple to the goddess Roma. And in AD 26, when the cities of Asia Minor were competing for the privilege of erecting a temple to the godhead of Tiberius, Smyrna was picked out for that honour, overcoming even Ephesus.

Not only was Smyrna great in trade, beauty and political and religious status; it was also a city where culture flourished. Apollonius of Tyana had urged upon Smyrna the truth that only the people can make a city great. He said: 'Though Smyrna is the most beautiful of all cities under the sun, and makes the sea its own, and holds the fountains of the zephyr, yet it is a greater charm to wear a crown of men than a crown of porticoes and pictures and gold beyond the standard of mankind: for buildings are seen only in their own place, but men are seen everywhere and spoken about everywhere and make their city as vast as the range of countries which they can visit.' So Smyrna had a stadium in which famous games were held each year, a magnificent public library, an Odeion, which was the home of music, and a theatre which was one of the largest in Asia Minor. In particular, Smyrna was one of the cities which laid claim to being the birthplace of the Greek poet Homer; it had a memorial building called the Homereion, and put Homer's head on its coinage. This was a disputed claim. Thomas Heywood, the seventeenth-century poet, wrote the famous epigram: "Seven cities warr'd for Homer, being dead, Who, living, had no roof to shroud his head."

In such a city, we would expect magnificent architecture; and in Smyrna there was a host of temples to Cybele, to Zeus, to Apollo, to Nemesis, to Aphrodite and to Asclepius.

Smyrna had rather more than its share of a characteristic which was common to all Greek cities. The German historian Theodor Mommsen said that Asia Minor was 'a paradise of municipal vanity', and Smyrna of all cities was noted for 'its municipal rivalry and its local pride'. Everyone in it wanted to exalt Smyrna and had a personal desire to climb to the top of the municipal tree. **It is not without significance that in the address of the letter the risen Christ is called 'the first and the last'. In comparison with his glory, all earthly distinctions are worthless.**

There remains one feature of Smyrna which stands out in the letter and which had serious consequences for the Christians there. The Jews were especially numerous and influential (Rev 2:9). We find them, for instance, contributing 10,000 denarii to make the city beautiful. It is clear that in Smyrna they were particularly hostile to the Christian Church, no doubt because it was from them and from those interested in Judaism that Christianity drew many of its converts. So, we may well end this study of Smyrna with the story of the most famous Christian martyrdom which happened there.

[**Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna**](#), was martyred on Saturday, 23rd February, AD 155. It was the time of the public games; the city was crowded, and the crowds were excited. Suddenly the shout went up: 'Away with the atheists; let Polycarp be searched for.' No doubt Polycarp could have escaped; but already he had had a dream in which he saw the pillow under his head burning with fire; and, when he woke, he told his disciples: 'I must be burnt alive.'

His whereabouts were betrayed by a slave who collapsed under torture. They came to arrest him. He ordered that they should be given a meal and provided with all they required, while he asked for himself the privilege of one last hour in prayer. Not even the police captain wanted to see Polycarp die. On the brief journey to the city, he pleaded with the old man: 'What harm is it to say: **"Caesar is Lord"** and **to offer sacrifice and be saved?**' But Polycarp was adamant that for him only **Jesus Christ was Lord**.

When he entered the arena, there came a voice from heaven saying: *'Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.'* The proconsul gave him the choice of cursing the name of Christ and making sacrifice to Caesar—or death. **'Eighty and six years have I served him,' said Polycarp, 'and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?'** The proconsul threatened him with burning, and Polycarp replied: 'You threaten me with the fire that burns for a time, and is quickly quenched, for you do not know the fire which awaits the wicked in the judgment to come and in everlasting punishment. Why are you waiting? Come, do what you will.'

So the crowds came flocking from the workshops and from the baths with bundles of wood—and the Jews, even though they were breaking the Sabbath law by carrying such burdens, were ahead of everyone in bringing wood for the fire. They were going to bind him to the stake. 'Leave me as I am,' he said, 'for he who gives me power to endure the fire will grant me to remain in the flames

unmoved even without the security you will give by the nails.' So they left him loosely bound in the flames, and Polycarp prayed his great prayer:

O Lord God Almighty, Father of thy beloved and blessed Child, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received full knowledge of thee, God of angels and powers, and of all creation, and of the whole family of the righteous, who live before thee, I bless thee that thou hast granted unto me this day and hour, that I may share, among the number of the martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. And may I today be received among them before thee, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as thou, the God without falsehood and of truth, hast prepared beforehand and shown forth and fulfilled. For this reason I also praise thee for all things. I bless thee, I glorify thee through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Child, through whom be glory to thee with him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages that are to come. Amen.

So much is plain fact; but then the story drifts into legend, for it goes on to tell that the flames made a kind of tent around Polycarp and left him untouched. At length, the executioner stabbed him to death to achieve what the flames could not do. 'And when he did this there came out a dove, and much blood, so that the fire was quenched, and all the crowd marvelled that there was such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect.'

What is certain is that Polycarp died a martyr for the faith.

It cannot have been easy to be a Christian at Smyrna—and yet the letter to Smyrna is one of the two in which there is undiluted praise. ([William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Revelation 2:9 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.'

- **know:** Rev 2:2
- **tribulation:** Rev 7:14 John 16:33 Ac 14:22 Ro 5:3 Ro 8:35 Ro 12:12 1Th 3:4 2Th 1:6,7
- **poverty:** Lu 4:18 Lu 6:20 2Co 8:2,9 Jas 2:5,6
- **you are rich** Rev 3:17,18 Lu 12:21 2Co 6:10 1Ti 6:18 Jas 2:5,6
- **the blasphemy:** Lu 22:65 Ac 26:11 1Ti 1:13
- **who are Jews:** Ro 2:17, Ro 2:28,29 9:6
- **the synagogue:** Rev 3:9

Related Passages:

Mt 5:3+ Blessed are the **poor** ([ptochos](#)) in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

I know - Jesus begins every one of the seven letters with the words "**I know**" which speaks of His omniscience. "How blessed that Christ keeps saying, "I know"; no matter what the troubles and the poverty." (Newell)

John MacArthur writes "Throughout its history, the seemingly paradoxical truth has been that the more the church has been persecuted, the greater has been its purity and strength....The lifting of the Iron Curtain revealed a powerful, pure church, one characterized by genuine faith, deep spirituality, humility, zeal, love of the truth, and single-minded devotion to the Lord....As Scripture makes clear, persecution and trials are an inevitable and essential part of the Christian life (Acts 14:22+; 2 Tim. 3:12+). The example of the church at Smyrna instructs all churches on how to properly respond when they come." (MNTC-Rev)

The purest Christian graces are those forged in the furnace of adversity.

-- John MacArthur

Your (1) tribulation - Crushing, pressing circumstances were a reality in their lives and served to effectively separate genuine from false believers. The persecuted church has always been the purest church because hypocrites cannot take the "heat" and "jump ship!" **Smyrna** was a seat of emperor worship which would have been one source of tribulation especially when they were commanded to declare "Caesar is Lord," but refused. (see example of story of [Polycarp](#) above). **MacArthur** adds that "Under Emperor [Domitian](#), it became a capital offense to refuse to offer the yearly sacrifice to the emperor. Not surprisingly, many Christians faced execution."

John had warned His disciples of tribulation declaring "These things (WHAT THINGS? THE THINGS IN John 13-16) I have spoken to you, so that in Me (NOTE THE "IN" - IN UNION WITH, IN COMMUNION WITH, IN COVENANT WITH) you may have peace. In

the world you have **tribulation**, but **take courage** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)); I have overcome (WHICH IS THE REASON BELIEVERS CAN ALSO OVERCOME) the world." (John 16:33)

In Acts 14:21-22+ we read "After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, **"Through many tribulations we must** (speaks of necessity and [present tense](#) = continuous necessity) **enter the kingdom of God."** **Tribulation** are par for the course, if our course is headed Heavenward!

What would have been the effect of tribulation on the church at Smyrna? Jesus helps us understand when He explained in the parable of the soils that "the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy." So far so good, right? Jesus went on to explain that "they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when **affliction** ([thlipsis](#)) or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away." (Mk. 4:17) So let's ask the question again -- what effect would tribulation have on the Church at Smyrna? Clearly it would have a "purifying" effect, separating the "wheat" (true believers) from the "chaff" (those who simply professed belief).

Tribulation (2347) ([thlipsis](#) from [thlibo](#) = to crush, press, squeeze in turn derived from [thláo](#) = to break) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. [Thlipsis](#) is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships. Medically **thlipsis** was used of the pulse (pressure). It is a pressing together as of grapes. It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. The iron cage was [stenochoria](#). **Thlipsis** thus refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulty.

Vincent - Tribulation is perhaps as accurate a rendering as is possible, being derived from *tribulum*, the threshing-roller of the Romans. In both the idea of pressure is dominant, though $\theta\lambda\ \psi\iota\varsigma$ does not convey the idea of separation (as of corn from husk) which is implied in *tribulatio*. **Trench** cites, in illustration of $\theta\lambda\ \psi\iota\varsigma$, pressure, the provision of the old English law, by which those who wilfully refused to plead had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and so were pressed and crushed to death

And your (2) poverty (but you are [3] rich[\[plousios\]](#)) - Here is another paradox of Christianity, the poor who are rich. The world cannot understand these paradoxes but the Scripture clearly teaches this truth. James 2:5+ says "**Listen**, my beloved brethren: **did not God choose the poor** ([ptochos](#)) of this world to be **rich in faith** and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" Paul adds "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was **rich**, yet for your sake He became **poor**, so that you through His **poverty** might become **rich**." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

MacArthur - The church at Smyrna typifies the spiritual richness of faithful suffering churches throughout history.

Newell - He had no place to lay His head. But thou art rich—spiritual riches: they had the "gold refined by fire" which wretched Laodicea so woefully lacked. Riches in grace come when patience has its "perfect work" in trial (James 1:2, 4+).

Guzik - This is what Jesus thought of them, and if Jesus considered them rich, then they were rich. Our estimation of ourselves is far less important than God's estimation of us. In contrast, the Christians at Laodicea thought they were rich, but they were really poor (Revelation 3:17+). Laodicea was a poor rich church. Smyrna was a rich poor church. Better to be a rich poor church than a poor rich church. The contrast between material poverty and spiritual riches of the Christians in Smyrna reminds us that there is nothing inherently spiritual in being rich. Nevertheless, there is also nothing inherently spiritual in poverty.. Material riches are an obstacle to the Kingdom of God, an obstacle that some do not overcome (Mark 10:23–25). There is nothing wrong with having money; the trouble is that money so easily "has" us. Often, material riches are acquired and maintained at the expense of true spiritual riches. A story is told of the glory days of the Renaissance Papacy, when a man walked with the Pope and marveled at the splendors and riches of the Vatican. The Pope told him, "We no longer have to say what Peter told the lame man: 'Silver and gold have I none.' " His companion replied, "But neither can you say, 'rise up and walk.' "

Jesus gave a stern warning against fixing our hopes on temporal treasures in a parable about a rich man - (Context = Lk 12:16-19) "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:20-21+)

Paul gave a similar warning to Timothy commanding him to **Instruct** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) those who are **rich** in this present world not to be conceited or to **fix their hope** (ONE OF THE FEW PLACES "HOPE" IS USED IN THE WORLDLY SENSE) on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. [*Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share." (1 Ti 6:17-18).

Guzik - The Christians of Smyrna knew poverty because they were robbed and fired from jobs in persecution for the gospel. Early

Christians joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven (Hebrews 10:34). This kind of economic persecution was one important reason why Christians were poor in Smyrna. Even today, this is a common form of persecution against Christians.

Poverty (4432)(**ptocheia**) means abject poverty, state of being destitute. It speaks of extreme poverty, as in the life of a beggar. BDAG says it means a "state of being deficient in means of support." In 2 Co. 8:9 **ptocheia** describes Christ's **poverty** for us, so that we might become spiritually rich. In 2 Cor 8:2**ptocheia** describes the churches in Macedonia though in **deep poverty** overflowed in their generous giving for the saints at Jerusalem. Used only 3x - 2 Co. 8:2; 2 Co. 8:9; Rev. 2:9. There are 12 uses in the Septuagint where it is used chiefly for **affliction** (Ps 44:24, Ps 88:9) and occasionally for **misery** (Ps 107:10) - Deut. 8:9; 1 Chr. 22:14; Job 30:27; Job 36:21; Ps. 31:10; Ps. 44:24; Ps. 88:9; Ps. 107:10; Ps. 107:41; Isa. 48:10; Lam. 3:1; Lam. 3:19;

When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.
For wealth certainly makes itself wings
Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.
--- Proverbs 23:5

and (4) the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews (loudaios) and are not (cf Acts 13:45+) - Why would they blaspheme them? Most likely some were members of the synagogue began to believe the Gospel and understand that Jesus was their long expected Messiah. Recall that the early church began primarily with Jews and so for a period there was an association of non-believing and believing Jews in the Synagogues, but this soon changed into ethnic Jews persecuting believing Jews. "Although the Christian church had once been a part of the Jewish synagogue in many cities, when opposition grew from Jews who didn't accept Jesus as the Messiah, synagogues eventually rejected Jews who accepted the Messiah and ejected the Jewish Christians from their fellowship." (Swindoll)

Newell - Terrible words! Satan early entrenched himself against Christ and His gospel in Judaism,—“those who pretended to have the legitimate, hereditary claim to be God’s people.”

MacArthur - Unbelieving Jews commonly accused Christians of cannibalism (based on a misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper), immorality (based on a perversion of the holy kiss with which believers greeted each other; cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26), breaking up homes (when one spouse became a Christian and the other did not, it often caused conflict; cf. Luke 12:51–53), atheism (because, as already noted, Christians rejected the pagan pantheon of deities), and political disloyalty and rebellion (because Christians refused to offer the required sacrifices to the emperor). Hoping to destroy the Christian faith, some of Smyrna's wealthy, influential Jews reported these blasphemous, false allegations to the Romans.

Who are **Jews** who **are not** Jews? They were physical descendants of Abraham but not spiritual descendants. Paul helps us in Romans 2 explaining that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly (REFERRING TO PHYSICAL JEWS IN THE LINE OF ABRAHAM), nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." (Ro 2:28,29+; see also Circumcision of the Heart) I agree with **Vincent** "Not primarily direct blasphemy against God, but reviling at believers."

Paul added that "we (JEWS WHO WERE BORN AGAIN) are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh." (Php 3:3+)

Newell - Judaism is more acceptable to the flesh than faith in an unseen Lord; an earthly "religion" is more attractive to a carnal heart than a heavenly walk!

Blasphemy (slander)(988)(**blasphemia** from **blapto** = hinder, injure, hurt + **pheme** = report, rumor, fame from **phemi** = to speak; see study of verb form **blasphemeo**) refers to verbal abuse against someone which denotes the very worst type of slander. It is speech which seeks to wound someone's reputation by evil reports, evil speaking. Abusive speech against someone by telling lies or otherwise offending them. In Classical Greek **blasphemia/blasphemeo** represented the strongest expression of personal defamation. **Blasphemia** means literally **to speak to harm** and in general therefore means to bring into ill repute and so to slander.

Blasphemia - 18x in 17v (note concentration in Revelation) - Matt. 12:31; Matt. 15:19; Matt. 26:65; Mk. 3:28; Mk. 7:22; Mk. 14:64; Lk. 5:21; Jn. 10:33; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; 1 Tim. 6:4; Jude 1:9; Rev. 2:9; Rev. 13:1; Rev. 13:5; Rev. 13:6; Rev. 17:3

But are a synagogue of Satan - NLT says "their synagogue belongs to Satan." (Rev 2:9NLT) Jesus addressing a group of Jews who had "professed" to believe in Him (John 8:30) went on to show their belief was not genuine and in John 8:44 He declared "**You**

are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." **Satan** is the real enemy behind the attacks on the saints at Smyrna.

Satan (4567) (**satanas** transliterated from Hebrew **Satan** - see 07854 and Aramaic sātānā) literally means **Adversary**, the evil antagonist who offers opposition, hostility, resentment, etc and is an enemy who continually contends, opposes, and resists. In English dictionary an **adversary** is one who hates or opposes another person and tries to harm them or stop them from doing something because of hatred and malice. **Satan** is the **inveterate, implacable**, relentless, ruthless, remorseless, merciless, heartless, pitiless, cruel, hard, harsh, hardened, incorrigible, dedicated enemy of God and man. **Satan** is not a myth or a fable, but a created, fallen angel who is a real, supernatural evil being (Mt 16:23; 1 Th 2:18±). **Satan** is not divine but is subject to the divine Creator Jesus (John 1:3+, Col 1:16±). He was the tempter of Jesus and sifter of men like Peter (Mt 4:1+, Lk 4:2±, Mk 1:13±, Lk 22:31±).

Satanas in the **Revelation** - Rev. 2:9; Rev. 2:13; Rev. 2:24; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 12:9; Rev. 20:2; Rev. 20:7

Newell - Believers today need to be faithfully warned regarding their attitude to the Jews: (a) not to join at all in that Gentile envy and hate lying at the root of "anti-semitism"; and (b) not to give special place to Jews, even Jewish believers, as such; but (c) to glorify God for the "remnant according to the election of grace," among them, now being saved; and (d) to remember that the most of the nation is to be cut off as apostate before the Millennium sets in; (e) to believe that God's words in Romans 3:22, 23, and Ro 10:12 are true today: "There is no distinction ... for all have sinned"; and, "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all ... that call upon him." Jewish sinners, Irish sinners, American sinners, Hottentot sinners, Hindu sinners, English sinners, Scotch sinners: no difference at all! Just sinners, all!

Related Resources:

- [Why do most Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Are Jews saved because they are God's chosen people? Will Jews go to Heaven even if they do not trust in Jesus? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [I am Jewish, can I become a Christian?](#)
- [What is replacement theology / supersessionism \(Teaching that Church has Replaced Israel\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is spiritual Israel? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Will all Israel be saved in the end times? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Revelation 2:10 **'Do not fear** what you are about to suffer. **Behold**, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. **Be faithful** until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

- **Fear**: Mt 10:22
- **what you are about to suffer**: Da 3:16-18 Mt 10:28 Lu 12:4-7
- **the devil**: Rev 12:9-11 13:2,7,15-17 Lu 21:12 Joh 13:2,27 Eph 2:2 6:12 1Pe 5:8
- **you will be tested**: Rev 2:9
- **ten days**: Hab 2:3 1Pe 1:6,7
- **Be faithful until death**: Rev 12:11 Mt 10:22 Mt 24:13 Mk 8:35 13:13 Lu 21:16-19 Joh 12:25 Ac 20:24 Acts 21:13 2Ti 4:7,8
- **I will give you the crown of life**: Rev 3:11 Jas 1:12 1Pe 5:4



Crown of Life - One of 5 Crowns

DO NOT FEAR
BE FAITHFUL

Related Passages:

Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their

testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (see Lk 12:1+)

Matthew 10:22 "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured (How? see below) to the end who will be saved.

Matthew 24:13 "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (only possible because the Spirit enables the believer to endure -- yet he must still do his part! - see principle of [100/100](#))

1 Peter 1:6; 7+ In this (WHAT?) you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while (HOW LONG? cf 2 Cor 4:17+), if (SINCE IT IS) necessary (cf Acts 14:22+), you have been distressed by various (SEE 1 Pe 4:10+ "MANIFOLD" GRACE FOR VARIOUS) trials, 7 so that **the proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

James 1:12+ Blessed is a man who **perseveres** ([present tense](#) - only possible because the Spirit enables us -- yet we must still do our part! - see principle of [100/100](#)) under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the **crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love [present tense](#) - only possible because the Spirit enables us -- Php 2:13NLT+-- yet we must still do our part! - see principle of [100/100](#) cf Jn 14:15) Him.

Jesus gives 3 commands (if you include **behold** which is a command to "Pay attention") in this passage.

Do not fear what you are about to suffer - **Do not fear** is [present imperative with a negative](#) calling for them to cease being afraid (Jesus gave the same command to John in Rev 1:17+). Sometimes we think that Christians who endure persecution are almost super-human, and we don't appreciate the depths of fear they struggle with. Fear is the normal reaction to the threat of persecution or suffering. Here is the principle that when we suffer for His Name, we can be assured He will provide the grace to go through the suffering, whether it passes or whether we pass from this life to the next. His grace is sufficient in every one of these "crushing" circumstances (cf 2 Cor 12:9+). Notice that Jesus does not say what you **might** suffer but what you are **about to suffer**. **About to** is [mello](#) in [present tense](#) indicating that suffering was "coming", was "on its way" and thus was imminent or just around the corner so to speak! And so Jesus gave the saints at Smyrna a prophetic warning providing time for them to prepare their hearts for the persecution that was coming. The purifying fires of affliction caused the lamp of the testimony of the church in Smyrna to burn all the more brilliantly.

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

["Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!"](#)

The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessing on your head."
--William Cowper

Jesus addressing His disciples (Lk 12:1+)

"I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. 5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" (Lk 12:4-5+)

Suffer ([3958](#))(**pascho**) means essentially what happens to a person experience. It means to undergo something; to experience a sensation, to experience an impression from an outside source, to undergo an experience (usually difficult) and normally with the implication of physical or psychological suffering. **Pascho** is used in 1 Peter 5:10+ to encourage suffering saints, Peter writing "After you have suffered (pascho) for a little while (ONE'S SUFFERING MAY SEEM LONG BUT COMPARED TO ETERNITY IT IS ONLY FOR "A LITTLE WHILE"), the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

The church at Smyrna (nor we) did not have to fear death because Jesus conquered death (1 Cor 15:55, 56, 57) for them (and us) and with that victory also conquered the **fear of death**....

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might **free** ([apallasso](#) - liberate, release, set free from a controlling state) those who through **fear of death** were subject to slavery all their lives. (Hebrews 2:14, 15+)

Behold ([idou](#)) is an interjection which serves to(1) prompt or arouse the reader's attention (introducing something new or unusual), (2) to mark a strong emphasis ("Indeed!" Lk 13:16) and (3) to call the reader to pay close attention (very similar to #1) so that one will listen, remember or consider. As **Spurgeon** says "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!" And as an aside there are some **1218** uses of "**behold**" in the Old and New Testament, which should give us sufficient opportunities to practice using this word to help us in our study of Scripture.

Behold in the **Revelation** (There is a lot to **BEHOLD** in the Revelation!) - Rev. 1:7; Rev. 1:18; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 2:22; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 3:20; Rev. 4:1; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 6:2; Rev. 6:5; Rev. 6:8; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 9:12; Rev. 11:14; Rev. 12:3; Rev. 14:1; Rev. 14:14; Rev. 16:15; Rev. 19:11; Rev. 21:3; Rev. 21:5; Rev. 22:7; Rev. 22:12

The devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested- Note the repetition of **about to** (again [mello](#) in [present tense](#)) indicating that this diabolical action was imminent! Note the word "**some**" indicating not all would be imprisoned. The term **so that** identifies a **purpose clause** and should always stimulate and motivate us to seek to glean the purpose and what are the prerequisites of the purpose. God allowed the devil a little chain, just like He did with Job (Job 1:12, 2:6), but he was still on God's [omnipotent](#) chain! And God would use evil for good fulfilling Romans 8:28+ (cf Ge 50:20) for the saints at Smyrna. Here the purpose is clearly stated that **you will be tested**. Not *you might be* tested but **you will be tested**. This is one of those "promises" that you probably won't find in God's book of promises! The perpetrator again was the **devil**. The test was not to destroy but to purify the saints and their faith (cf James 1:2-4+).

THOUGHT - Do you think there is any relationship between **two** uses of the devil (Satan) in the poor church at Smyrna which was spiritually rich and **no** mention of the devil against the rich church at Laodicea which was spiritually pure? Just thinking!

"When God puts His own people into the furnace,
He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat.
He knows how long and how much."
-- Warren Wiersbe

Swindoll - Satan may be permitted to persecute the church, but as in the case of Job's suffering, God-appointed limits constrain what Satan can do.

Devil ([1228](#))([diabolos](#) from **diá** = through, between + **ballo** = to cast, throw) means a **false accuser, slanderer** (one who utters false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation), **backbiting** (malicious comment about one not present), one given to malicious gossip or a **calumniator** (one who utters maliciously false statements, charges, or imputations about, this term imputes malice to the speaker and falsity to the assertions). **Diabolos** is the noun form of the verb **diaballō** which describes not only those who bring a false charge against one, but also those who disseminate the truth concerning a man, and do so maliciously, insidiously and with hostility. Notice how the root words (**diá** = through + **bállō** = throw) picture what the devil does. He constantly throws between seeking to divide whether it be between a husband and wife, a child and parent, a church, etc. Resist his divisive, condemnatory accusations firm in your faith. **Wuest** has an interesting comment that the literal meaning of "to throw through" means "to riddle one with accusations." (cf Rev 12:9)

Diabolos - Matt. 4:1; Matt. 4:5; Matt. 4:8; Matt. 4:11; Matt. 13:39; Matt. 25:41; Lk. 4:2; Lk. 4:3; Lk. 4:6; Lk. 4:13; Lk. 8:12; Jn. 6:70; Jn. 8:44; Jn. 13:2; Acts 10:38; Acts 13:10; Eph. 4:27; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:7; 1 Tim. 3:fp11; 2 Tim. 2:26; 2 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 2:3; Heb. 2:14; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:8; 1 Jn. 3:10; Jude 1:9; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 12:9; Rev. 12:12; Rev. 20:2; Rev. 20:10

Note that the verb for **tested** is [peirazo \(see above\)](#) which is a morally neutral word. So the test can be for good (Heb 11:17) or for evil (Mt 4:1+). The purpose of the test depends on the intent of the one giving the test. When the scriptural context clearly indicates the testing is an enticement to evil, the word is most frequently translated tempt, which carries a negative connotation. In this passage it is translated as **tested**, because God allows the devil to test them and God's goal is their purification.

MacArthur - God's purpose in permitting that imprisonment was so that they would be tested. By successfully enduring that trial, they would prove the reality of their faith, be strengthened (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9-10)—and prove once again that Satan cannot destroy genuine saving faith.

Related Resources:

- Afflictions-Suffering-Quotes, Devotionals, Illustrations
- [Why does God test us? | GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org/Why_does_God_test_us/)

And you will have tribulation (see [thlipsis](#) above) **for ten days** - This is the second mention of **tribulation**. Smyrna is the "crushed" church (see [above](#)). But the question regarding the tribulation is how long? In other words is **10 days** literal or figurative? Is there anything in this context which would suggest is it symbolic? **Ten days** is a literal 10 days. It is as literal as 1000 years. Notice (1) it is relatively short duration (compared to eternity) and (2) it has an end (in contrast to the second death which has no end!) Temptations and trials are two sides of the same coin, for a single Greek word *peirasmos* conveys both ideas (cp Jas 1:2 with Ja 1:13) in short, all that goes to furnish a test of character. The trials may come from God or under His permissive will from Satan, or may be the result of our own wrong doing (aka "discipline" in Heb 12:5-11). The solicitations to do evil come from the world, the evil nature, or Satan. In a sermon titled "Faith Tested and Crowned," Alexander Maclaren distinguished between being tempted and being tried. He said that "the former word conveys the idea of appealing to the worst part of man, with the wish that he may yield and do the wrong. The latter means an appeal to the better part of man, with the desire that he should stand." "Temptation says, 'Do this pleasant thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is wrong.' Trial or proving says, 'Do this right and noble thing; do not be hindered by the fact that it is painful.'"

Guzik - Surely, the devil wanted to imprison them for a longer time, but God limited the tribulation to ten days. Being thrown into prison was severe persecution. In that day, prison was never used to rehabilitate someone, and rarely used to punish someone. Normally, you were thrown into prison as you awaited trial and execution.

Havner on tribulation - "This 'tribulation' does not mean the common trials to which all flesh is heir. Some dear souls think they are bearing their cross every time they have a headache. The tribulation mentioned here is trouble they would not have had if they had not been Christians." (Havner)

**Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us;
God tests us to bring out the best.**

Some say 10 days refers to 10 periods of persecution from Nero to Diocletian, but that is taking the text out of context, not to mention that one could arrive at less than or more than 10 depending on how one assessed the rule of different Roman emperors.

Adam Clarke leaves the literal rendering "in the dust" which makes subsequent accurate interpretation not just problematic but impossible. He muses "As the days in this book are what is commonly called prophetic days (**ED: WHERE DOES IT SAY THAT IN THE REVELATION?**), each answering to a year, the ten years of tribulation may (**ED: HOW ABOUT "MAY NOT"**) denote ten years of persecution; and this was precisely the duration of the persecution under Diocletian, during which all the Asiatic Churches were grievously afflicted."

THOUGHT - A T Robertson the renowned Greek scholar says "**It is unwise to seek a literal meaning for ten days.**" So are we surprised when Robertson goes on to discard a literal interpretation of 1000 years in Revelation 20:2[±]? Here is Robertson's comment on 1000 years in Rev 20:2 = "**Here we confront the same problem found in the 1260 day. In this book of symbols how long is a thousand years? All sorts of theories are proposed, none of which fully satisfy one.**" I beg to disagree, there is one interpretation that satisfies supremely and that is a literal interpretation which allows one to jettison "*all sorts of theories*." God is not trying to confuse or give theory but give truth, literal truth! Notice how Robertson alludes to the 1260 days (Rev 11:3[±], cf Rev 12:6[±]) as non-literal, despite the fact that this number fits perfectly with 42 months (Rev 11:2[±], Rev 13:5[±]) and with "time, times and half a time" (Rev 12:14[±], Daniel 7:25+)! Therefore, I submit that to jettison a literal interpretation of **10 days** (when there is nothing whatsoever in the context to support such an approach) sets one up for rejecting literal interpretation of the other critically important time phrases in the Revelation! Is it just a coincidence that the synonymous time periods (1260 days, 42 months, "time, times, half a time") just happen to be 3.5 years and Daniel's Seventieth Week is a Seven Year period? And is it a coincidence that Daniel 9:27+ describes the breaking of a covenant with Israel at the middle of the week (in context - a 7 year period), so that 3.5 years (1260 days, 42 months, "time, times and half a time") after making this firm covenant with Israel, it is broken? Is this just coincidence? I don't think so.

Matthew Poole has another ridiculous interpretation - "Others observe, that in ten days are two hundred and forty hours, which make up the number of years from 85, when the second persecution began, (under which John at this time was) to 325, when all the persecutions ceased."

Here is an important point to make if you truly want to accurately interpret and understand this last, great book of the Bible

You need to be especially careful who you consult for commentary because symbolic, allegorical interpretations are rampant and can be very confusing! One needs to be especially careful to avoid the older commentaries that are excellent in many other books of the Bible but which fall woefully short when they interpret eschatological passages. As a generalization (there are exceptions) anything written before 1900 is very likely to be symbolic and will not help you interpret Revelation accurately. Specially avoid works by Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, John Gill, Matthew Poole, John Trapp, etc. See the recommended resources.

Barclay -- "The expression **ten days** is not to be taken literally; it is the normal Greek expression for a short time."

THOUGHT - I would ask Barclay how can he draw such an unqualified, definitive, authoritative conclusion? He has no evidence in context to support his premise, which I think is absolutely false and wrong and misleading. Why do I say misleading? Because to the unwary reader who is not familiar with inductive Bible study, they begin to think all of the numbers in the Revelation are non-literal. This false assumption is like an interpretation sink hole, so to speak. The Revelation of Jesus which He wants His bond-servants to understand that they might be encouraged (to stand strong and steadfast) and motivated (to share Him) begins to become a "fuzzy" revelation and one that only the "experts" can understand and that even they themselves don't understand. [Au contraire](#), **10 days** is literal and Revelation is a literal record [albeit with frequent symbolism] and we can understand it. Just be careful reading the commentaries on Revelation and putting too much faith in their dogmatic statements. Let the Spirit of Truth and the Word of Truth be your ultimate Guide to the Truth.

Guzik - However, there is no compelling reason to believe it means anything other than ten days of severe persecution, with an emphasis on the idea that it is a limited time.

Be faithful until death - The verb **be** is in the [present imperative](#) (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) This is the only command to **be** faithful in the entire Bible! If one continues to be faithful until death (for the rest of their life), this is evidence that they are a genuine believer, a "possessor" not just a "professor" of Jesus. The [expression of time until](#) means something will continue to happen up to a point and then it will not happen. In context what Jesus calls for is continued faith until our last breath, for then our faith will become sight. At that moment and forever after, we will be in the presence of the One we have believed in, longed for and been faithful to. What we see now by faith (2 Cor 5:7+, cf 2 Cor 4:18+), we shall soon see by sight (1 Jn 3:2+). So in a sense "faith" is no longer necessary (compare "Hope" in Ro 8:24+). As Paul said in 1 Cor 13:13 "now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Havner - "The saints at Smyrna had not been given a pep-talk on 'How to Win Friends and Influence People.' They had no testimony on 'How Faith Made Me Mayor of Smyrna.' They were not promised deliverance from tribulation, poverty and reviling. In fact, the worst was yet to come."

Robertson on **Be faithful** - "Keep on becoming faithful" (present middle imperative of ginomai), "keep on proving faithful unto death" (Heb. 12:4) as the martyrs have done (Jesus most of all).

Faithful is a key word in Revelation 1-3 - Rev 1:5 (Rev 19:11), Rev 2:10, Rev 2:13, Rev 3:14. It is one of the 3 characteristics of those who return with Jesus when He judges the earth (Rev 17:14). Finally twice in the last two chapters of the Bible we are reminded that "these words are faithful and true" (Rev 21:5, Rev 22:6)! You can trust these words all the way to the end!!!

Faithful (4103) ([pistos](#) from [peitho](#) = to persuade - induce one by words to believe, have confidence) is something or someone who is worthy of faith or keeps promises and is applied to God, humans, His Word, etc **Pistos** means dependable (worthy of reliance or trust), trustworthy, steadfast, unswerving. **Webster** says that "**Faithful**" means firm in adherence to whatever one owes allegiance and implies unswerving adherence to a person or thing or to the oath or promise by which a tie was contracted."

Pistos in the Revelation - Rev. 1:5; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 2:13; Rev. 3:14; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:11; Rev. 21:5; Rev. 22:6

William Newell published his commentary on the Revelation in **1935** before World War 2 began and he wrote these "prophetic" words "It is our profound conviction that not only in Russia and Germany but in other countries there are terrible days of trial directly ahead for the Church of God (ED: THIS PROVED TRUE FOR GENUINE BELIEVERS LIKE [DIETRICH BONHOEFFER](#), AND MANY OTHERS). It is our proper portion—all the day (of grace) long are we to be killed, counted as sheep for slaughter. Therefore, remember the exhortation of Peter (who at the first, fled and denied, but later was crucified for his Lord): "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind," or "thought," "intent," "resolution" (1 Peter 4:1), that is, with the same "expectation," when necessary."

And I will give you the crown of life - NET = "I will give you the crown that is life itself." (Rev 2:10NET) Is this a literal crown?

While I personally think (opinion time) it could be literal, it seems that most commentators take it as a figurative crown, in this case signifying the "crown that is life." Who receives the crown? In context the one who remains faithful. John writes ""You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and **they will reign** upon the earth." (Rev 5:10+). We will reign with the King of kings, who wears a crown (diadema). Will we wear a crown ([stephanos](#))? We will have to wait for that great day to answer the question.

Revelation 20:4-6 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed (THIS STATEMENT IS A PARENTHETICAL COMMENT BY JOHN). This is the **first resurrection**. (SEE RESOURCES BELOW ON FIRST AND SECOND RESURRECTION) 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the **first resurrection**; over these **the second death has no power**, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Comment - Beloved believers will participate in the Kingdom and will reign with Christ for 1000 years. One could read Rev 20:5 and think that the rest of the dead who did not come to life until after the 1000 years are the ones in the first resurrection. The key is to let context guide the interpretation. What does Rev 20:6 say about the first resurrection? The second death has no power and they will reign for 1000 years. Those described in the first part of verse 5 are said to not come to life (or be resurrected) until AFTER the 1000 years. In other words the first resurrection even though it follows their description cannot apply to them but must apply to those in the following verse.

Revelation 1:6; 5:10 and He has made us to be a **kingdom**, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (5:10) "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and **they will reign upon the earth**."

Comment - Note **Matthew Henry's misleading** comment: "Here is an account of the reign of the saints, for the same space of time as Satan is bound. Those who suffer with Christ, shall reign with him in his spiritual and heavenly kingdom..." Henry clearly has spiritualized the 1000 years. **Wrong**...they will reign with Christ on earth for 1000 years."

THOUGHT - ALL true believers WILL ABSOLUTELY **remain faithful**, not because of their faith per se but because the faithfulness of God Who will not let go of them! In other words Their cry is "Once saved, always saved." However, the caveat is that the person is genuinely saved, and not just a professor of Christ! In this latter case to tell them "Once saved, always saved" is a grave mistake for they may never see their need to repent and believe! Paul underscores the assurance that genuine believers will remain faithful until death writing "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge (DOWN PAYMENT) of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." (Eph 1:13-14+). In other words the indwelling Spirit is God's guarantee of our final redemption (GLORIFICATION). See discussion of [Perseverance of the Saints](#).

Crown (4735)([stephanos](#) from **stepho** = to encircle, twine or wreath) was a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard. The **stephanos** was a familiar metaphor in the **athletic games at Smyrna** and elsewhere in which the prize was a garland. The **stephanos** was literally an adornment worn around the head as a crown of victory in the Greek athletic games, this reward being given to the runner who crossed the goal first, to the disc thrower with the longest toss, etc. Apart from recognition of athletes and winners of various kinds of competitions, in the Greco-Roman world, the awarding of a crown or wreath signified appreciation for exceptional contributions to the state or groups within it. The recipients were usually public officials or civic-minded persons serving at their own expense. **Stephanos** is the Greek word used to describe all 5 of the crowns believers will receive. The most dramatic use is the first one in Matthew = "And after twisting together a **crown** (**stephanos**) of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mt 27:29)

Stephanos in NT (most uses in Revelation) - Matt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2; Jn. 19:5; 1 Co. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1 Th. 2:19; 2 Ti. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 3:11; Rev. 4:4; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 6:2; Rev. 9:7; Rev. 12:1; Rev. 14:14

Note the striking contrast between temporal death and eternal life. The One Who Himself had died and come back to life is

imminently qualified to carry out this promise.

THE CROWNS FOR BELIEVERS

Crown of Exultation	1 Th 2:19+	For those who win others to Christ
Crown of Righteousness	2 Ti 4:8+	For those who have loved His appearing
Crown of Life	Jas 1:12+ Rev 2:10	For those who endure persecution unto death
Crown of Imperishability	1Cor 9:25+	For those who run the race of life in purity and self control
Crown of Glory	1Pe 5:4+	For those who lead the church with humility
<small>Insights on Revelation - Charles Swindoll What are the five heavenly crowns? GotQuestions.org</small>		

Related Resources:

- [Discussion of First & Second Resurrection](#)
- [What is the first resurrection? What is the second resurrection? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the verse about casting our crowns before the feet of Jesus? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What are the five heavenly crowns that believers can receive in Heaven? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the Judgment Seat of Christ / Bema Seat of Christ?](#)
- [How can we store up treasures in heaven?](#)
- [What is the purpose of there being rewards in heaven?](#)
- [What do I need to do to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant" when I arrive in heaven?](#)

THE FIRST AND SECOND RESURRECTIONS					
Order	Which	Timing	Who	Description	Scriptures
1	First	The Third Day	Jesus Christ	The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."	Mat. 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18; 1Cor. 15:20
2	First	Shortly after Christ's Resurrection.	A Few OT Saints	At the earthquake attending the crucifixion, graves were opened. Shortly after the resurrection of Christ, these saints were raised	Mat. 27:50-53
3	First	Before the Tribulation.	Church	The resurrection of Church-age believers at the Rapture .	John 14:3; 1Th. 4:13-18; 1Cor. 15:50-53
4	First	Middle of the Tribulation	Two Witnesses	God's two witnesses will be raised after being killed by The Beast .	Rev. 11:11-12▶
5	First	After Jacob's Trouble	OT Saints	Old Testament saints will be resurrected to enter the Millennial Kingdom. ⁵⁴	Dan. 12:1-2▶; Isa. 26:19; Eze. 37:13-14 ⁵⁵

6	First	Beginning of Millennial Kingdom .	Tribulation Martyrs	The Tribulation martyrs will be resurrected so that they can rule and reign with Christ.	Rev. 20:4-6▶
7	Second	End of Millennial Kingdom	Unbelieving Dead ⁵⁶	At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the final resurrection will consist of all of the unbelieving, wicked dead. They will be found guilty at the Great White Throne Judgment and cast into the Lake of Fire.	Rev. 20:11-15▶
Source: Tony Garland					

Revelation 2:11 'He who has an ear, **let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'**

- **He who has an ear:** Rev 2:7 13:9
- **the second death:** Rev 20:6,14 21:8

NOT HURT BY THE SECOND DEATH

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches - This is Jesus' command to hear not just with one's physical ears (in one ear and out the other), but with ears that grasp what is heard and believe it and obey it as the general direction of their life. These are genuine overcomers.

William Newell - The saints may have to bow their heads to those who execute the first death—who “kill the body”; but over these, we read, “the second death hath no authority” (Revelation 20:6⁺). No real believer is coming into judgment. (cf John 5:24). Believers' works will be examined (2 Cor 5:10+, Ro 14:10-12+, cf Rev 22:12⁺), but not as sin: that is gone forever, borne on the cross! (1 Pe 2:24+) Hebrews 9:28+: “so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation **without reference to sin**, to those who eagerly await Him.”

He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death- **Not** is a **double negative** (ou me), the strongest way one can express a negative in Greek. The Second Death is alluded to above. Rev 20:14-15 says "Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." So what is the Second Death? All those not written in the book of life (all non-believers in Jesus Christ) and (2) being thrown into the Lake of fire, which "burns with brimstone" (Rev 19:20). and which in Rev 20:10 indicates this will be a place of torment "day and night forever and ever"

MacArthur - Though persecuted believers may suffer the first (physical) death, they will never experience the second death (which is not annihilation but conscious, eternal damnation in hell; Rev. 20:14; 21:8). Not is the strongest negative the Greek language can express.

Overcomes is in the [present tense](#) which means as their general lifestyle they experience victory of the world, the flesh and the devil. This is not speaking of perfection (only Jesus qualifies for perfection) but of direction. In other words, if one says they believe in Jesus and yet their is not pursuit of holiness or righteousness, but instead continued immersion in deeds of wickedness, they are are not genuine believers, their names are not in the book of life and they are destined for a forever future in the Lake of fire, the Second Death.

Question - [What is the second death?](#)

Answer: The second death is mentioned on multiple occasions in the book of Revelation and is synonymous with the lake of fire. It is a “death” in that it is a separation from God, the Giver of life. It is called the “second” one because it follows physical death.

Revelation 21:8 explains the second death in the most detail: “The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Three other places in Revelation also mention the second death. The first is Revelation 2:11: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.” In this verse, Jesus promises that believers (“overcomers”; see 1 John 5:4) will not experience the lake of fire. The second death is exclusively for those who have rejected Christ. It is not a place believers in Christ should fear.

Revelation 20:6 speaks of the second death in relation to a future period called the Millennium: “Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” This verse notes three important facts. First, those who die for their faith in Jesus during the Tribulation will later be resurrected to enter the Millennium and live with Him. Second, these martyrs will escape the lake of fire or second death. Third, they will reign with Christ.

The second death is also mentioned in Revelation 20:14-15: “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” At the end of time, even death and the grave (Hades) will be thrown into the lake of fire. In addition, every person not included in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire. This condition will be final; the destination is permanent.

In summary, the second death is a reference to the lake of fire where those who are separated from God by their sin will dwell for eternity. This judgment was recorded in Scripture as a warning to unbelievers to seek the salvation that Jesus Christ provides. The coming judgment should also challenge believers to share their faith. There is a vast difference between the final destination of those who know Christ and those who do not. (Source:GotQuestions.org)

Participation in Births, Deaths, and Resurrections

Event	Unbeliever	Believer	Description
Born Again	No	Yes	The first birth is <i>physical</i> birth. The second birth is <i>spiritual</i> and occurs when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ Only believers are “born twice.”
1st Death	Yes	Yes	The first death occurs at the end of one’s physical life.
1st Resurrection	No	Yes	The first resurrection is a category and occurs in stages, beginning with the resurrection of Christ (1Cor. 15:20) and ending with the resurrection just prior to the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:5-6). Only believers participate in the first resurrection.
2nd Resurrection	Yes	No	The second resurrection occurs at the end of the Millennial Kingdom at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-13). Only unbelievers participate in the second resurrection. See Order of Resurrection .
2nd Death	Yes	No	The second death is after the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:14-15). As there is eternal life beyond this present life for the faithful, so there is eternal death beyond the death of the wicked The second death is commonly known as <i>hell</i> .

Source: [Tony Garland](#)

Related Resources:

- [What does it mean that hell is referred to as a lake of fire? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why do so many people have to experience terrible suffering before death?](#)
- [What is eternal death?](#)
- [How is physical death related to spiritual death?](#)
- [What is spiritual death?](#)
- [What happens after death?](#)

Revelation 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

NET Revelation 2:12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write the following: "This is the solemn pronouncement of the one who has the sharp double-edged sword:

NLT Revelation 2:12 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword:

ESV Revelation 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

NIV Revelation 2:12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

GNT Revelation 2:12 Κα τ ἄγγ λ τ ς ν Περγ μ κκλησ ας γρ ψον· Τ δε λ γει χων τ ν ομφα αν τ ν δ στομον τ ν ξε αν·

KJV Revelation 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

ASV Revelation 2:12 and to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:

CSB Revelation 2:12 "Write to the angel of the church in Pergamum: "The One who has the sharp, double-edged sword says:

NKJ Revelation 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,`These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

NRS Revelation 2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword:

YLT Revelation 2:12 'And to the messenger of the assembly in Pergamos write: These things saith he who is having the sharp two-edged sword:

NAB Revelation 2:12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum, write this: " 'The one with the sharp two-edged sword says this:

NJB Revelation 2:12 'Write to the angel of the church in Pergamum and say, "Here is the message of the one who has the sharp sword, double-edged:

GWN Revelation 2:12 "To the messenger of the church in Pergamum, write: The one who holds the sharp two-edged sword says:

BBE Revelation 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos say: These things says he who has the sharp two-edged sword:

- **the angel:** Rev 2:1 1:11
- **Who has:** Rev 2:16 Rev 1:16 Rev 19:15,21 Isa 11:4 Heb 4:12 Eph 6:17 2 Th 2:8

Pergamum
About 100 miles North of Ephesus
(CLICK TO ENLARGE)

PERGAMUM THE THRONE OF SATAN

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write- See "[JESUS' PATTERN TO ALL HIS CHURCHES](#)." **Pergamum** means citadel and also gives us our name for parchment (animal skins used for writing). The modern city of [Bergama](#) is the site of Pergamum

Of the three greatest cities in Roman Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum, Emperor Worship was the most influential in Pergamum. Every five years or so, the Pergamene games were held in honor of the imperial family. It was a circus of epic proportions.

John Walvoord entitles this section "The Letter to Pergamos: The Church in Compromise" and adds "Christ the judge of compromise."

Paul passed through this province, embarking at the port of Troas, on his first voyage to Europe but there is no record that he

planted a church at Pergamum

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:6-10+)

One of Pergamum's greatest claims to fame was being name Neokoros or Temple Warden of the "Emperor Cult" in Asia Minor because they had constructed a Temple for the worship of emperor Augustus and the goddess Roma in 19BC. This honor of Neokoros was found on inscriptions of buildings in the city as the one below which honors the director of the gym and its leaders and reads "the Council and the People of Pergamenes, the first to be award the title of Temple Warden (Neokoros)." **Swete** adds that "Inscriptions proclaim the dignity of the city as the first in Asia to erect a temple to Augustus; and as it was the first, so it continued to be **the chief Asian set of the emperor-cult.**" Thus one can begin to understand the intense pressure on the those who denied Caesar is Lord acclaiming only Jesus is Lord in the city that prided itself on being one of the leading if not the premier city for emperor worship.

Mills adds that "The major threat to Christians in Pergamum came from its role as a center of emperor worship in Asia, a function that went with it being the capital city. Caesar worship required each citizen, once a year, to offer a pinch of incense to Caesar on his altar and profess him as Lord. The citizen was then given a certificate valid for one year which allowed him to worship whatever god or gods he preferred with impunity."

Pergamum - Neokoros - "City Warden"
(CLICK TO ENLARGE)

Related Passages:

Revelation 1:17 - In His right hand He held seven stars, and **out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword**; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Revelation 19:15 **From His mouth comes a sharp sword**, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

Revelation 19:21 And the rest were killed with **the sword which came from the mouth** of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Ancient Rhomphaia
(CLICK TO ENLARGE)

The One Who has the sharp two-edged sword - Jesus introduces Himself in graphic terms! **MacArthur** points out that "It is the first negative introduction of Christ because the Pergamum church faced imminent judgment." Walvoord says this more literally reads "Christ is described as having the sword, the two-edged one, the sharp one."

William Barclay helps understand Jesus' self-designation as "**the One Who has the sharp two-edged sword**" -

Roman governors were divided into two classes—those who had the *ius gladii*, the **right of the sword**, and those who did not. Those who had the *right of the sword* had the power of life and death; on their word a person could be executed on the spot. In terms of worldly power, the proconsul, who had his headquarters at Pergamum, had the *ius gladii*, *the right of the sword*, and at any moment he might use it against any Christian; but the letter tells Christians not to forget that the last word is still with the risen Christ, who has the sharp two-edged sword. The power of Rome might be satanically powerful; but the power of the risen Lord is even greater."

Given this background on the *ius gladii*, and more importantly the two descriptions in Rev 19:15, 21 what is the significance of Jesus' **sharp two-edged sword**? Clearly Jesus' description that He has **sharp two-edged sword** refers to the Lord's authority and readiness to bring judgment which fits His warning in Rev 2:16! Note Jesus' sword is **SHARP** and NOT dull so it will not fail to "cut" what Jesus intends to "cut" (judge)!

Grant Osborne on the **sword** and *ius gladii* - It was the symbol of Roman authority and justice; the phrase for Roman might was *ius gladii*, "the law of the sword." By Christ's opening words, therefore, the city stands corrected: it is not the Roman governor but Christ who actually carries out just judgments. It is Jesus' authority as the true and final wielder of the sword that actually will bring

justice to the world. It is the exalted Christ, not a Roman official, who has ultimate power. The Pax Romana ("Roman peace") was a façade, because it was actually the Roman sword that ruled the land. Peace can only come through Jesus Christ.

Walvoord on the double edged sword - Its representation as a double-edged sword indicates on the one hand the sword as the Word of God which separates the ones who are the vessels of grace from condemnation with the world, and which by its promises and message of salvation cuts loose the chains of sin and condemnation which bind the helpless sinner. On the other hand, the same Word of God is the means of condemnation and rejection for those who refuse the message of grace. The Word of God is at once the instrument of salvation and the instrument of death. This twofold character is especially pertinent to the church at Pergamos, which needed to be reminded of the distinct position of those who are true Christians as opposed to those who reject the gospel.

Lehman Strauss on the **sword** - This sword is His Word, used sometimes as an analytical critic of the mind of man (Hebrews 4:12), and at other times as an instrument of war (Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 2:16; 19:15). Every believer knows that the Bible possesses swordlike qualities. It was this weapon that Christ used when He was tempted of Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). God's way to overcome satanic error and opposition is by the faithful setting forth of His Word. Nothing but His truth can defeat error, and we have this divinely inspired weapon of victory. Let us use it fearlessly. And when Christ comes to earth again He will use it to smite the nations and to deal with all the false teachers of Christendom.

- For more discussion on the **sword** including related Scriptures see the [following comments](#) on Rev 2:16.

Some have offered very fanciful interpretations regarding the two-edged sword, such as Augustine's imaginative interpretation of the two edged sword as both "the old and the new law."

Tony Garland helps us understand the meaning of the phrase "**out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword**" in Rev 1:16 - Is this a literal sword that John saw coming out of the glorified Christ's mouth?

The sword goes out of His mouth in agreement with all the creative acts of God which were spoken forth by the Word of God (Ge 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; 2Pe. 3:5). It is for this reason that Jesus is the Word (logos). The speaking forth of God's will can bring **creation** or **destruction**. Isaiah informs us that the mouth of the Messiah is "like (term of comparison) **a sharp sword**" (Isa. 49:2) and with His lips He will "**slay the wicked**" (Isa. 11:4+). The Word spoken through the prophets is a weapon in the hand of God (Hos. 6:5). It is the only offensive weapon of the Christian (Eph. 6:17+). Its power as a sword is seen in its ability to pierce "even to the division of soul and spirit" and discern "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12+). The Word of God has already slain His enemies because it sets forth their impending doom in words "**which cannot be broken**" (John 10:35). That which is prophecy today, will be accomplished history tomorrow. It is in this sense that Jesus slays His enemies with the sword of His mouth (2Th 2:8; Rev. 2:12, 16; Rev 19:15). The sword signifies **His judicial power** which will be in accordance with His Word (Mt. 25:31-32; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Ro 2:16; 14:10; 2Cor. 5:10; 2Ti. 4:1; 1Pe. 4:5; Rev. 20:12).

Note - The interpretation of the meaning of **the sword out of Christ's Mouth** is an excellent example of the need to [Compare Scripture with Scripture](#)

Grant Osborne on the **sword from His mouth** - The sword was the primary image of Roman might, called the ius gladii, "the law of the sword." The message is that Rome is not in control; Christ is. The Old Testament background is Isaiah 11:4 ("he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth") seen through Isaiah 49:2 ("he made my mouth like a sharpened sword"). The kind of sword here is the great sword, often used in cavalry charges like a scythe. Here it is the sword of judgment, which destroys the army of the beast in 19:15, 21. The note that it comes out of his mouth stresses the proclamation of judgment, and the sword itself the carrying out of that judgment. (Revelation: Verse by Verse)

As **Pastor Adrian Rogers** says "Now, don't the idea—some grotesque idea—that when you see Jesus, He's going to have a sword in His mouth. This is symbolism.".... John says, "There will be two words, and it'll be over. Jesus will look and say, 'Drop dead.'" He will slay them with a sword that goes out of His mouth (Revelation 19:21).... John says, "There will be two words, and it'll be over. Jesus will look and say, 'Drop dead.'" He will slay them with a sword that goes out of His mouth (Revelation 19:21).

Dr Howard Hendricks on the **sword out of His mouth** - **Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning is impossible or absurd.** This is where we need some sanctified common sense. God does not shroud Himself in unknowable mysticism. When He wants to tell us something, He tells us. He doesn't confound us with nonsense. However, He often uses symbolism to make His points. Yet He expects us to read them as symbols, not absurdities. Consider Revelation 1:16, where the Lord appears: "**Out of His mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword.**" What does this mean? Is it likely that our Lord would have a literal sword sticking

out of His mouth? Hardly. **The most likely explanation is a figurative one, so we need to search the text for what this picture represents** (see [following comments](#) on Rev 2:16.) (**Living by the Book**)

Says this - [See note](#) on this phrase "*tade legei*" repeated by Christ in all seven letters and is accurately paraphrased in the NET Bible as "This is the solemn pronouncement." (Rev 2:12NET).

Sword (4501)(**rhomphaia**) is strictly, a long [Thracian](#) javelin; later a large and broad sword. Liddell-Scott has "[scimitar](#)." Most are metaphorical descriptions of a **sword** as representative of the Word of God and/or "the Lord's judicial utterances." (Vine). The only literal use of **rhomphaia** is at Revelation 6:8 where the fourth horse and rider were given the authority and power to kill one-fourth of the earth's population with "**sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.**" Even here **sword** is most likely symbolic of war. In most of the NT uses **rhomphaia** represents the authority and power of the Word of God (Rev. 1:16; Rev. 2:12; Rev. 2:16; Rev. 19:15; Rev. 19:21). In Lk 2:35+ **rhomphaia** is figurative and describes anguish of Mary's soul as if pierced by a broad sword (Simeon predicting Jesus' crucifixion)!

Trench says **rhomphaia** "is properly the long and heavy broadsword...which the [Thracians](#) and other barbarous nations used; and as such to be distinguished from the [machaira](#) , the sacrificial knife, or short stabbing sword."

Rhomphaia - 7x in 7v - Lk. 2:35; Rev. 1:16; Rev. 2:12; Rev. 2:16; Rev. 6:8; Rev. 19:15; Rev. 19:21

Rhomphaia over 250 times in the Septuagint (lots of warfare in the OT!) - Gen. 3:24; Exod. 5:21; Exod. 32:27; Num. 22:23; Num. 31:8; Jos. 5:13; Jos. 6:21; Jos. 8:24; Jos. 24:12; Jdg. 1:8; Jdg. 1:25; Jdg. 4:15; Jdg. 4:16; Jdg. 7:14; Jdg. 7:20; Jdg. 7:22; Jdg. 8:10; Jdg. 8:20; Jdg. 9:54; Jdg. 18:27; Jdg. 19:29; Jdg. 20:2; Jdg. 20:15; Jdg. 20:17; Jdg. 20:25; Jdg. 20:35; Jdg. 20:37; Jdg. 20:46; Jdg. 20:48; Jdg. 21:10; 1 Sam. 2:33; 1 Sam. 13:19; 1 Sam. 13:22; 1 Sam. 14:20; 1 Sam. 15:8; 1 Sam. 15:33; 1 Sam. 17:39; 1 Sam. 17:45; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Sam. 17:51; 1 Sam. 21:8; 1 Sam. 21:9; 1 Sam. 22:10; 1 Sam. 22:13; 1 Sam. 22:19; 1 Sam. 25:13; 1 Sam. 31:4; 1 Sam. 31:5; 2 Sam. 1:12; 2 Sam. 1:22; 2 Sam. 2:26; 2 Sam. 3:29; 2 Sam. 12:9; 2 Sam. 12:10; 2 Sam. 23:8; 2 Sam. 24:9; 1 Ki. 1:51; 1 Ki. 2:8; 1 Ki. 2:32; 1 Ki. 2:35; 1 Ki. 19:1; 1 Ki. 19:10; 1 Ki. 19:14; 1 Ki. 19:17; 2 Ki. 3:23; 2 Ki. 3:26; 2 Ki. 6:22; 2 Ki. 8:12; 2 Ki. 10:25; 2 Ki. 11:15; 2 Ki. 11:20; 2 Ki. 19:7; 1 Chr. 10:4; 1 Chr. 10:5; 1 Chr. 11:11; 1 Chr. 11:20; 1 Chr. 21:12; 1 Chr. 21:16; 1 Chr. 21:27; 1 Chr. 21:30; 2 Chr. 20:9; 2 Chr. 21:4; 2 Chr. 32:21; 2 Chr. 36:17; Ezr. 9:7; Neh. 4:13; Neh. 4:18; Ps. 7:12; Ps. 9:6; Ps. 17:13; Ps. 22:20; Ps. 35:3; Ps. 37:14; Ps. 37:15; Ps. 44:3; Ps. 44:6; Ps. 45:3; Ps. 59:7; Ps. 63:10; Ps. 64:3; Ps. 76:3; Ps. 78:62; Ps. 78:64; Ps. 89:43; Ps. 144:10; Ps. 149:6; Cant. 3:8; Isa. 66:16; Jer. 5:17; Jer. 6:25; Jer. 38:2; Jer. 39:18; Jer. 42:16; Jer. 42:17; Jer. 42:22; Jer. 43:11; Jer. 44:12; Jer. 44:13; Jer. 44:18; Jer. 44:27; Jer. 44:28; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 4:9; Lam. 5:9; Ezek. 5:1; Ezek. 5:2; Ezek. 5:12; Ezek. 5:17; Ezek. 6:3; Ezek. 6:8; Ezek. 6:11; Ezek. 6:12; Ezek. 7:15; Ezek. 11:8; Ezek. 11:10; Ezek. 12:14; Ezek. 12:16; Ezek. 14:17; Ezek. 14:21; Ezek. 17:21; Ezek. 21:9; Ezek. 21:11; Ezek. 21:12; Ezek. 21:14; Ezek. 21:15; Ezek. 21:19; Ezek. 21:20; Ezek. 21:28; Ezek. 23:10; Ezek. 23:25; Ezek. 24:21; Ezek. 25:13; Ezek. 29:8; Ezek. 29:10; Ezek. 30:24; Ezek. 30:25; Ezek. 32:10; Ezek. 32:11; Ezek. 33:2; Ezek. 33:3; Ezek. 33:4; Ezek. 33:6; Dan. 11:33; Dan. 11:44; Hos. 1:7; Hos. 2:18; Hos. 7:16; Hos. 11:6; Hos. 13:16; Joel 3:10; Amos 1:11; Amos 4:10; Amos 7:9; Amos 7:11; Amos 7:17; Amos 9:1; Amos 9:4; Amos 9:10; Mic. 4:3; Mic. 5:6; Mic. 6:14; Nah. 2:13; Nah. 3:3; Nah. 3:15; Zeph. 2:12; Hag. 1:11; Hag. 2:22; Zech. 9:13; Zech. 13:7;

Pastor Michael Andrus introduces his message on this letter with some pithy comments - Freedom is one of the greatest words in the English language. It's also a great biblical term. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:13, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free." And one of my all-time favorite verses is this: "If the Son makes you free, you are free indeed." I really believe in Christian freedom, which I would define as the liberty to make my own doctrinal decisions and lifestyle choices under the boundaries of Scripture and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Outside those parameters I react strongly when other people try to tell me what to believe or how to behave, and I don't like to do that to them. Furthermore, I have been greatly blessed to be part of the Free Church for over 30 years now. That term got into our denominational name because our forefathers valued freedom in their churches. In Europe where they lived in the 1800's every country had a state church that owned the church buildings, paid the pastors' salaries and, of course, exercised a good bit of political control over the churches. And if it wasn't a government exercising that control, it was an ecclesiastical hierarchy—a bishop or a presbytery. The early Free Church founders valued the priesthood of the believer and local control over a church's affairs; that's why they called themselves "free." I believe in that strongly myself. I am proud to be Free Church. But is it possible to have too much of a good thing? Can you remember a time when you ate too much candy, had too much fun in the sun, or maybe even enjoyed too much freedom so that you got into serious trouble? I can think of several such experiences as I was growing up, but I think I will spare you the gory details. Freedom, when taken too far, can actually become another kind of slavery. Let's finish Paul's thought in Galatians 5:13, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not

use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature.” The church we are going to study about today in the third installment of our series on Letters from Jesus to Eight Churches, is the one located at Pergamum, the capital city of the province of Asia in the Roman empire. This was not the Free Church but “**The Too Free Church**,” because the believers there used their Christian liberty unwisely to the point of actually being threatened by Jesus with a sword. Frankly, there may be no greater danger for American Christianity today than what we read in this passage. ([Sermon](#))

BACKGROUND ON THE CITY OF PERGAMUM

Ancient Pergamum - A City on a Hill (Acropolis)

As magnificent as ancient Pergamum was, believers are like a far more beautiful city called out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9+) to be "the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." (Mt 5:14+)

Pergamum was the first city of Asia to openly support the Imperial cult with its worship of the Roman Emperor as the Most High God!

Pergamum (Pergamos) had a unique place in Asia. It was not on any of the great roads, as Ephesus and Smyrna were, but historically it was the greatest city in Asia. Strabo, the Greek geographer, called it an illustrious (epiphanēs) city, and Pliny, the Governor of Bithynia, called it 'by far the most famous city in Asia' (longe clarissimum Asiae). The reason was that, by the time John was writing, Pergamum had been a capital city for almost 400 years. Back in 282 BC, it was made the capital of the Seleucid kingdom, one of the sections into which the empire of Alexander the Great was broken up. It remained the capital until 133 BC. In that year, Attalus III died; and, before he died, he willed his dominions into the possession of Rome. Out of the dominions of Attalus, Rome formed the province of Asia, and Pergamum still remained its capital.

Its geographical position made Pergamum even more impressive. It was built on a tall conical hill which dominated the valley of the River Caicus, from the top of which the Mediterranean could be seen, fifteen miles away. The archaeologist Sir William Ramsay describes it thus: 'Beyond all other cities in Asia Minor, it gives the traveller the impression of a royal city, the home of authority; the rocky hill on which it stands is so huge, and dominates the broad plain of the Caicus so proudly and so boldly.' History and honour gathered around Pergamum. Let us then set down its outstanding characteristics.

On the steep slope to the west of the Temple of Athena in the Acropolis of Pergamum, there is a theater seating approximately 10,000. Rising on a steep slope, the Pergamon Theater is one of the most beautiful architectural works of the Hellenistic period.

(1) Pergamum could never achieve the commercial greatness of Ephesus or of Smyrna, but it was a centre of culture which surpassed both. It was [famous for its library](#), which contained no fewer than 200,000 parchment rolls. It was second only to the unique library of Alexandria.

It is interesting to note that the word [parchment](#) is derived from **Pergamum**. In the ancient world, parchment was hē pergamēnē charta, the Pergamene sheet; and there is a story about this name. For many centuries, rolls were written on [papyrus](#), a substance made of the pith of a very large bulrush which grows beside the Nile. The pith was extracted, cut into strips, pressed into sheets and smoothed. This process produced a substance not unlike brown paper, and this was universally used for writing. In the third century BC, a Pergamene king called Eumenēs was very anxious to make the library of the city supreme. In order to do so, he persuaded Aristophanes of Byzantium, the librarian at Alexandria, to agree to leave Alexandria and come to Pergamum. Ptolemy of Egypt, enraged at this seduction of his outstanding scholar, promptly imprisoned Aristophanes and by way of retaliation put an embargo on the export of papyrus to Pergamum. Faced with this situation, the scholars of Pergamum invented [parchment](#) or vellum, which is made of the skins of animals, smoothed and polished. In fact, parchment is a much superior substance on which to write; and, although it did not do so for many centuries, in the end it ousted papyrus altogether as a writing material.

(2) Pergamum was one of the great religious centres. In particular, it had two famous shrines. In the letter of the risen Christ, Pergamum is said to be the place where '**Satan's seat**' is. Obviously, this must refer to something which the Christian Church regarded as particularly evil. Some have found the reference explained in Pergamum's religious splendour.

(a) Pergamum regarded itself as the custodian of the Greek way of life and of Greek worship. About 240 BC, it had won a great victory against the savage invading Galatae, or Gauls. In memory of that victory, a great altar to Zeus was built in front of the Temple of Athene which stood 800 feet up on Pergamum's conical hill. Forty feet high, it stood on a projecting ledge of rock and looked exactly like a great throne on the hillside. All day, it smoked with the smoke of sacrifices offered to Zeus. Around its base was

carved one of the greatest achievements in the world of sculpture, the frieze which showed the Battle of the Giants, in which the gods of Greece were victorious over the giants of the barbarians. It has been suggested that this great altar was Satan's seat. But it is unlikely that a Christian writer would call that altar Satan's seat, for even by this time the old Greek gods were anachronisms and it would have been a waste of breath for Christians to attack them.

Asclepios

(b) Pergamum was particularly connected with the worship of [Asclepios](#), so much so that Asclepios was known as 'the Pergamene god'. When [Galen](#) was mentioning favourite oaths, he said that people commonly swore by Artemis of Ephesus, or Apollo of Delphi, or Asclepios of Pergamum. Asclepios was the god of healing, and his temples were the nearest thing to hospitals in the ancient world. **From all over the world, people flocked to Pergamum for relief from their sicknesses.** In his commentary, R. H. Charles has called Pergamum 'the Lourdes of the ancient world'. The task of healing was partly the work of the priests, partly the work of doctors—Galen, second only to Hippocrates in the medical history of the ancient world, was born in Pergamum—and partly the work of Asclepios himself. Was there anything in that worship to move the Christians to call the Temple of Asclepios Satan's seat? There may have been two things.

First, the most common and most famous title for Asclepios was **Asclepios Sōtēr, Asclepios the Saviour**. It might well be that the Christians felt a shudder of horror that the name Saviour should be given to anyone other than Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Henry Barclay Swete adds that "The fame of Pergamum rested chiefly on its religious preeminence A tetrad of local deities, **Zeus Soter, Athena Nicephoros, Dionysius Kathegemon** (SEE [RUINS AND ARTIST'S RENDERING](#)), **Asklepios Soter**, presided over the city; the temple of Athena almost crowned the acropolis, and beneath it, on the slope of the hill and visible from the agora, stood a great al fresco altar of the Pergamene Zeus. Still more celebrated was the Pergamene cult of Asklepios, to whose temple there was attached a school of medicine which attracted sufferers from all quarters. . . . **What Artemis was to Ephesus, such was Asklepios to Pergamum.** (The Apocalypse of St. John)

COMMENT - Note these two "false saviours" competed with the One True Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. **Soter** (from [sozo](#) = rescue from peril > from **saos** = safe; delivered) refers to the agent of salvation or deliverance, the one who rescues, delivers, saves and preserves. Anyone who saves or delivers can be called a deliverer or rescuer or a soter, in the case of the idol worshipers at Pergamum Swete says this name was applied to Zeus and to Asklepios.

Henry Morris - Aesculapius (whence our word 'scalpel') being worshiped, commonly under the sign of a coiled snake on a pole (note Numbers 21:8-9).

Second, the emblem of **Asclepios was the serpent**, which still appears on the cap badge of the Royal Army Medical Corps ([pix](#)).

See [Serpent on Coin on Right Side](#)

Many of the coins of Pergamum have Asclepios' serpent as part of their design. It might well be that Jews or Christians would regard a religion which took the serpent as its emblem as a satanic cult. Again, this explanation seems unlikely. As has been pointed out, the Christians would regard the place where people went to be healed—and often were—with sympathy rather than with indignation. The worship of Asclepios surely would not give adequate grounds for calling Pergamum Satan's seat. It seems, then, that we must look elsewhere for the explanation of this phrase.

(3) Pergamum was the administrative centre of Asia. That meant that it was the centre of Caesar-worship for the province. We have already described [Caesar-worship](#) and the dire dilemma in which it placed Christians (pp. 17–22).

It was organized with a provincial centre and an administration like that of a presbytery or diocese. The point here is that Pergamum was the centre of that worship for the province of Asia. Undoubtedly, that is why Pergamum was Satan's seat; it was the place where people were required on pain of death to take the name of Lord and give it to Caesar instead of to Christ; and to a Christian there could be nothing more satanic than that. ([William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Artist Depiction of Temple of Athena

Swindoll - Built only a couple miles inland from the ancient location of the historical city of Troy, Pergamum became one of the great cities of Asia Minor. By the first century AD, it was the official center of the imperial cult, having built its first great temple in 29 BC in honor of the goddess Roma and the emperor Augustus. Besides being a major center for the worship of the gods [Athena](#), [Dionysus](#),

and [Asklepios](#). Pergamum's acropolis was crowned by a forty-foot tall altar to Zeus, to which Christ may have referred when He spoke of "Satan's throne" in Revelation 2:13. Though Pergamum had once been known for its [immense library, which held nearly 200,000 volumes](#), in John's day the city became famous for its medicine. Galen, one of the founders of ancient medicine, had lived in Pergamum. The city also boasted a large gymnasium as well as a grand theater

Related Resources:

- Wikipedia - [Pergamon](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Pergamum](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Pergamum](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Pergamum](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Pergamus Pergamum](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Pergamum](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Pergamos; Pergamum](#)
- American Tract Society [Pergamos](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Pergamos](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Pergamos](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Pergamos](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Pergamos](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Pergamos](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Pergamos Pergamos](#)

Revelation 2:13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

NET Revelation 2:13 'I know where you live— where Satan's throne is. Yet you continue to cling to my name and you have not denied your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed in your city where Satan lives.

NLT Revelation 2:13 "I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan's city.

ESV Revelation 2:13 "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

NIV Revelation 2:13 I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives.

GNT Revelation 2:13 Ο ὄνα πο κατοικε ς, που θρ νο ς το Σαταν , κα κρατε ς τ νομ μου κα ο κ ρν σω τ ν π στιν μου κα ν τα ς μ ραι ς νπι ς μ ρτυ ς μου πιστ ς μου, ς πεκτ νθη παρ μ ν, που Σαταν ς κατοικε .

KJV Revelation 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

ASV Revelation 2:13 I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.

CSB Revelation 2:13 I know where you live-- where Satan's throne is! And you are holding on to My name and did not deny your faith in Me, even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness who was killed among you, where Satan lives.

NKJ Revelation 2:13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

NRS Revelation 2:13 "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my

name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives.

YLT Revelation 2:13 I have known thy works, and where thou dost dwell -- where the throne of the Adversary is -- and thou dost hold fast my name, and thou didst not deny my faith, even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful witness, who was put to death beside you, where the Adversary doth dwell.

NAB Revelation 2:13 "I know that you live where Satan's throne is, and yet you hold fast to my name and have not denied your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was martyred among you, where Satan lives.

NJB Revelation 2:13 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.

GWN Revelation 2:13 I know where you live. Satan's throne is there. You hold on to my name and have not denied your belief in me, even in the days of Antipas. He was my faithful witness who was killed in your presence, where Satan lives.

BBE Revelation 2:13 I have knowledge that your living-place is where Satan has his seat: and you are true to my name, and were not turned away from your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my true witness, who was put to death among you, where Satan has his place.

- **know:** Rev 2:2,9
- **Satan's:** Rev 2:9,10,24 3:9
- **you hold fast :** Rev 2:25 3:3,11 1Th 5:21 2Ti 1:13 Heb 3:6 10:23
- **My name:** Rev 3:8 Mt 24:9 Lu 21:17 Ac 9:14 Jas 2:7
- **did not deny:** Mt 10:33 1Ti 5:8 2Ti 2:12 Jude 1:3,4
- **was:** Ac 22:20

Throne of Zeus in Berlin

Throne of Zeus on Acropolis of Pergamum

CHRIST'S COMMENDATION FOR CLINGING TO HIM

I know - Speaks of Christ's omniscience. How did John describe Jesus' vision? "His eyes were like a flame of fire." (Rev 1:14) **Know** is the verb **eido** which is used in the introductions to each of the 7 churches (Rev 2:2, 2:9, 13, 19; Rev 3:1, 8, 15) "speaks of absolute, beyond the peradventure (chance) of a doubt knowledge, a knowledge that is self-evident...a positive knowledge...to know absolutely and finally...to know absolutely...a sure knowledge, a positive knowledge...an absolute acquaintance with something." (Wuest) The use of this verb (**eido**) indicates that Jesus is intimately acquainted with every aspect of this church. He has perfect knowledge of this church. Nothing is hidden from Him. Notice that **before He corrects, He commends**, which is a good pattern for all of us in authority! Someone has said this verb for **know** "emphasizes better the absolute clearness of mental vision which photographs all the facts of life as they pass"

The **NET** rendering is very good...

'I know where you live— where Satan's throne is. **Yet** you continue to cling to my name and you have not denied your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed in your city where Satan lives.

NET Note - "**Yet**" to indicate the contrast between their location and their faithful behavior.

Where you dwell - Jesus says I know the satanic, pagan environment where you have settled (see this unusual word of "dwell" below). Christ has them right where He wants them, for in such darkness the true Gospel light shines forth all the more brightly.

Strauss notes that Christ's desire is "that we remain in the world but not of the world (John 17:14-16; Romans 12:2; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). In no place did the Christians have a more difficult time than in Pergamos, the center of paganism in that day. In Smyrna it is a "synagogue of Satan" (Rev 2:9); in Pergamos it is the throne of Satan, his base of operations."

Swindoll on why use this unusual verb for **dwell** - Even though Pergamum was characterized as the seat of Satan's authority, the church didn't try to escape the extreme pressures. Instead, the congregation chose to endure the hardship of their environment. Let

me illustrate this with a modern analogy. While everybody else was moving to the suburbs, the Christians in Pergamum were committed to remaining in the inner city. They decided to stay put in the midst of the noise, the violence, the corruption, and the temptations, to shine as a light in the darkness of the city.

Dwell (reside, settle) ([2730](#))([katoikeo](#)) means literally to settle down (be at home, dwell) in a place so to take up permanent abode or residence. This is an unusual verb to use of believers for it generally denotes permanent habitation as opposed to sojourning or an occasional visit. Most of the uses of this verb in the Revelation refer so called "earth dwellers" those who are firmly fixed on earth and have no desire for God or Jesus and who are the ones that take the mark of the Beast (e.g., see Rev 13:8). So you can see why it is unusual to apply this verb to those who are believers in Pergamum. Notice the next use of [katoikeo](#) in the letter to the Church at Philadelphia - "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world (THE TRIBULATION - [Daniel's Seventieth Week](#)), **to test those who dwell (katoikeo) on the earth.**" **Katoikeo** is used in Rev. 2:13; Rev. 3:10; Rev. 6:10; Rev. 8:13; Rev. 11:10; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 13:12; Rev. 13:14; Rev. 17:2; Rev. 17:8.

Related Resource:

- [Tony Garland's explanation](#) of the unique group of people known as the "earth dwellers" in the Revelation.

Where Satan's throne is - What a reputation for a city! The home of Satan's throne! Woe! Note the [phrase below](#) "**where Satan dwells,**" which would support the interpretation that he was actually in "residence" in Pergamum. After all it was a center for the worship of Dionysus, Zeus, and other pagan gods and a major center of emperor worship. This raises the question [Is Satan / the devil omnipresent?](#) The short answer is **NO** (see Job 1:7 where Satan answers God's question where did he come from = "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.", cf "prowls around" in 1 Pe 5:8+) What would their Christian life be like - comfort or conflict? Was this an easy place to live? What does a throne depict? Do you sense an escalation in the spiritual battle in America in recent years? We do well to learn from our Lord's commendation of our fellow believers in Pergamum.

Grant Osborne writes "Pergamum is Satan's hometown, and Satan is the true source of the church's troubles."

Henry Morris has an interesting note - [Alexander Hislop, in his famous book Two Babylons](#), gave much documentation to show that Pergamos had inherited the religious mantle of ancient Babylon when Babylon fell in the days of Belshazzar. The priests, who had kept the secrets of the ancient mystery religion centered at Babylon ever since the days of Nimrod, were forced to migrate at that time, transferring what amounted to the headquarters of Satan's religious system away from Babylon north and west to Pergamos

J Vernon McGee - "Even where Satan's seat [throne] is" reveals that religion was big business in Pergamum and that Satan's headquarters were there. This ought to settle the question for those who think that Satan is in hell at the present time. He has never yet been in hell because hell hasn't opened up for business yet. Satan will not be in hell until much later, as we shall see in chapter 20. At the present, Satan is loose and is the prince of this world, controlling kingdoms and going up and down the earth as a roaring lion, hunting for whom he may devour (see 1 Pet. 5:8). But he does have headquarters, and Christ said they were in Pergamum at that time. Since those days, I think that he has moved his headquarters around to different places. I used to get the impression that he had moved them to Los Angeles, and he may have done so because that is another great religious center of every kind of cult and "ism" and schism.

Lehman Strauss points out that "**Satan's throne** is not in hell. This whole idea of Satan's headquarters being in hell is preposterous. Satan is "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). So said Christ Himself on at least three occasions. Paul and John taught likewise that Satan held leadership over this world system (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 4:3-4; 5:19). His rule extends to both the celestial and the terrestrial spheres. This religious city was an ideal place for Satan to establish his headquarters **inasmuch as his most effective work is accomplished through religious organizations and institutions.** While communism and atheism are avowed enemies of Jesus Christ, and therefore under Satan's control, Satan himself operates to his greatest advantage through his demons who pose as ministers of righteousness." (Bolding added)

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

A T Robertson - Satan not simply resided in Pergamum, but his "throne" or seat of power of king or judge (Matt. 19:28; Luke 1:32, 52). The symbol of Asklepios was the serpent as it is of Satan (Rev 12:9; Rev 20:2). There was, besides, a great throne altar to Zeus cut on the Acropolis rock, symbol of "rampant paganism" (Swete) and the new Caesar-worship with the recent martyrdom of

Antipas made Pergamum indeed a very throne of Satan.

Andrus - We like to name our cities: St Louis is The Gateway to the West; New York is The Big Apple; New Orleans, The Big Easy; Denver, The Mile High City. But for Jesus to call a place "the City of Satan" indicates the believers there must have faced tremendous opposition. ([Sermon](#))

And you hold fast My Name - Note that His **Name** is everything about Him, His attributes, His divinity, His sinlessness, His saving work for sinners. **Hold fast** is in the [present tense](#) indicating they are continuing to hold on! To Whose **Name** does this refer? Why would Jesus say that in this context? It would be easy to not hold fast Jesus' **Name** in a place where Satan is ruling. Holding fast Christ's Name speaks of the faithfulness of this church which is underscored by the next commendation that they did not deny Christ.

As **Strauss** points out "**Holding fast His name** is not the equivalent of carrying a card or wearing a medal to show that one belongs to some "holy name society." Rather, it is holding to the firm conviction that He is the Lord Jesus Christ—"Lord" [Master], "Jesus" [Mediator], "Christ" [Messiah]. His name suggests His honor, His glorious nature, His holy character, and His redeeming power."

Walvoord says **My Name** "seems to embody a personal loyalty and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ with all that this represented."

THOUGHT - "The faithfulness of the church at Pergamos is a challenge to Christians today to stand true when engulfed by the evil of this present world, the apostasy within the ranks of religion, and the temptation to compromise their stand for the truth." (Walvoord)

A T Robertson on holding fast Christ's **Name** - This church refused to say Kurios Kaisar ("CAESAR [IS] LORD") (Martyrd. Polyc. 8f.) and continued to say [Kurios Iēsous]. They stood true against the emperor-worship." As Paul wrote "no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:3).

Related Resource:

- [Jesus Name Above All Names](#) - on right side of this page you will find numerous articles regarding various Names of Christ.

Strauss observes that Christ praises "those, who were dwelling in the shadow of Satan's throne, for their faithfulness to His name. They might have saved themselves from persecution by merely whispering His name among themselves. Or they might have concluded that they must get along with Satan's crowd, and so, in order to maintain peaceful coexistence and satisfy the enemy, they wouldn't make a spectacle of themselves by identifying themselves publicly with Jesus Christ. But no, they maintained a love for, and loyalty to, Christ's name, and He appreciated their stand."

Swindoll - Even today, certain places are especially tough for Christians to live. Yet those who remain steadfast are "faithful witnesses." They refuse to deny Christ's name, even when Satan moves in next door or sets up shop across the street. Instead, they dig in and hold their ground, regardless of the personal cost. That's commendable faith!

THOUGHT - Have you ever denied His Name? Most of us have at least in [atacit](#) if not overt sense! We hear a group beginning to mock or denigrate the Great Name above all names and we begin to slink slowly and silently away (I will speak for myself at least - a few times for sure in 36 years!).

Hold fast (seize)([2902](#))([krateo](#)) has the basic meaning of to be strong or possess power and thus means to take hold of, grasp, hold fast. **Krateo** is used most often in the sense of "take hold of forcibly" as when Pharisees wanted to "take hold of" Jesus (Mt 21:46; Mark 12:12). In the present context **Krateō** means to "hold fast" with the idea of being loyal to a person, in this case Christ. The Pharisees were admonished for holding the traditions of the elders (Mark 7:3ff.), while Christians are encouraged to hold to the traditions of Christianity (2 Th 2:15) **Krateo** in Revelation - Rev. 2:13; Rev. 2:14; Rev. 2:15; Rev. 2:25; Rev. 3:11; Rev. 7:1; Rev. 20:2 Notice 5 uses (out of 48x in the NT) in the letters to the churches. **Krateo** is a key word in the letter to Pergamum. Do you see any relationship between the three uses of in this letter? If you are holding fast to the teaching of Christ, you are unlikely to hold fast to false teachings (in this case teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitans).

Heb 4:14+ Therefore, since we have a Great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens (cf Heb 6:19, 20+), Jesus the Son of God, **let us hold fast** ([krateo](#) in [present tense](#) - continually hold fast) our confession. (**NOTE:** What will help us today to "hold fast our confession" as did the saints at Pergamum? In context it behooves us to frequently be **recalling to mind** the truth that Jesus is our Great High Priest, that He has gone on before us into our eternal home and that He is seated at the right hand of the Throne of God, continually interceding for us! Ro 8:34+, Heb 7:25+).

Gotquestions observes that "The Pergamene believers lived in a difficult place, surrounded by pagan influences, yet they held fast to Christ's name and did not deny Him during difficult times."

And did not deny My faith - Not (ouk) is absolutely not. Why does Christ commend the church for not denying **My faith**? Given the major emphasis the city put on Emperor Worship and their worship of numerous so-called gods, the pressure must have been intense to deny Christ and His teachings. Now don't miss the historical context which helps accentuate their holding fast to Jesus and not denying His teachings, for one of their fellow-believers in Christ had given his life because of his faith. It stands to reason that there was the potential this could happen to any of the Christ proclaimers and "emperor as god" deniers! We are not there yet in America but other countries are (Africa, Middle East, China, etc). Hold on it's coming! Imagine the fearful thoughts that went through the minds of the believers at Pergamum and yet they did not renounce their faith! They buried their dead brother in Christ but did not bury their faith in the living Christ. (ponder Heb 6:12+).

What is the idea of "**My faith**?" Is it their personal faith in Christ (subjective)? Or is it the content of what is believed (objective), ultimately summed up in the Gospel? See faith used in a similar manner in Jude 1:3+. In sum faith here is not the ACT of believing but rather the CONTENT of what is believed. (cf Acts 6:7+) What fact makes it even more commendable that they did not deny the faith?

What was Jesus' promise with a warning to His disciples? "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." (Mt 10:32-33) Did any of His disciples deny Him? Judas denied Him and gained hell. Peter denied Him but repented and returned and became bold to proclaim Him when he was filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:1-3, 14+).

MY FAITHFUL MARTYR

Strauss - All we know about **Antipas** is that he was Christ's faithful martyr. And the Lord commends this assembly that even in the face of such persecution there were those who remained faithful. We shall meet Antipas, and a host of other martyrs, who, having been faithful unto death, will receive a crown of life. We shall witness their coronation when the Lord Jesus Christ shall say to them, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

If your Christian faith and mine were to be exposed to the supreme test, would we stand firm? Would we accept death rather than deny our Lord? Is the name of Jesus Christ more precious to us than life? No trial, however severe, justifies unfaithfulness. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among ("by your side" - ATR) **you, where Satan dwells** - What is the point of describing this martyr's death among the saints at Pergamum? This would make it every more striking that the believers in Pergamum even when faced with the prospect of martyrdom, did not flinch even though one of their number had been martyred! Even Peter denied Christ 3 times when face with the threat of punishment. The name **Antipas** from anti meaning against and pas meaning all indicates ""against all" which perhaps symbolizes the fact that he may have stood alone against the forces of evil and was faithful even unto death." (Walvoord). In context what might Antipas have been against? Also assuredly the false teaching/teachers Jesus goes on to describe.

Notice that Christ uses the almost the identical description of Antipas as He did to describe Himself as "the faithful and true Witness" in Rev 3:14+!(cf Rev 1:5+ = "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness")

Gotquestions on the tradition surrounding **Antipas** - Church tradition says that Antipas was a physician suspected of secretly propagating Christianity. The **Aesculapians** (members of the medical guild) accused Antipas of disloyalty to Caesar. Upon being condemned to death, Antipas was placed inside a copper bull, which was then heated over a fire until it was red-hot.

Robertson on **witness** - "Witness" as Jesus had said they should be ("you shall be My witnesses" - Acts 1:8+) and Stephen was (Acts 22:20) and others were (Rev. 17:6). The word later (by third century) took on the modern meaning of martyr.

Witness (3144)(**martus/martys**) basically describes one who remembers something and testifies concerning what they remember. Notice that martus has a two fold meaning of (1) describing one who has seen and/or experienced something or someone and (2) one who testifies to what he or she saw. The testimony could be in a legal setting (Mk 14:63; Acts 6:13; 7:58; Heb. 10:28) or in the general sense of recounting firsthand knowledge (Lk 11:48; 1Ti. 6:12; Heb 12:1; 1Pe 5:1).

Barclay comments that ""**Martus** is a most interesting and suggestive word. In classical Greek martus

never means a martyr in our sense of the term. It always means a witness. A martus was one who said: 'This is true, and I know it.' It is not until New Testament times that martus ever means martyr."

Killed (put to death)(615)(**apokteino** from **apó** = intensifies meaning + **kteíno** = slay) means to kill outright or to put to death in any manner. To kill someone results in a state of separation. Uses in Revelation - Rev. 2:13; Rev. 2:23; Rev. 6:8; Rev. 6:11; Rev. 9:5; Rev. 9:15; Rev. 9:18; Rev. 9:20; Rev. 11:5; Rev. 11:7; Rev. 11:13; Rev. 13:10; Rev. 13:15; Rev. 19:21

What does Jesus call **Antipas**? MY witness. MY faithful one. If he was "My witness" of whom did he testify? Jesus of course. And why is he referred to as MY faithful one? What is **pistos**? In this context it speaks of the loyalty of Antipas to Jesus, even willing to die for Jesus.

What had Jesus taught His disciples so that they might be better able to stand firm when persecution came? "Do not fear (present imperative with a negative see our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey) those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mt 10:28, see also Mt 10:22-24).

How sure is persecution to come to a believer? 2 Ti 3:12- "Indeed, all who desire (present tense = speaks of their lifestyle) to live godly in Christ Jesus (HOW? "IN" CHRIST) will be persecuted." This is a conditional promise in a sense -- what is the condition? what is the promise? There are not many believers standing in line to claim this promise! Similarly Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi "For to you it has been granted (charizomai - speaks of a gift of God's grace) for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,." (Php 1:29+, cf Acts 14:22+)

THOUGHT- If anyone proposes to introduce into his life a loyalty which surpasses all earthly loyalties, there are bound to be clashes. And that is precisely what Christianity demands that a man should do.

Dwight Edwards - The word for "desire" (thelo) in 2 Ti 3:12 can also be translated "wish" or "want". The thought seems to be that any believer with the slightest inkling to break ranks with the world and walk in line behind Christ will feel the heat of this world's rage. If we find that we seldom, if ever, are being persecuted for our faith, then certainly we must question whether we genuinely are "living godly in Christ Jesus."

John MacArthur: Self-centered Christians who serve the Lord halfheartedly seldom have to pay a price for their faith. They are of little threat to Satan's work because they are of little benefit to Christ's. (I would dare take this thought a step further and say could it be that one who never ever has had to suffer for his faith in Messiah may not be a genuine partaker of Christ? Why would the Spirit teach in so many places it is he that holds fast to the end who is a partaker of Christ [Heb 3:14]...who is His house [Heb 3:6]?)

Hast thou no scar?

No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?

I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,

I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star:

Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?

Yet, I was wounded by the archers, spent.

Leaned me against the tree to die, and rent

By ravening beasts that compassed me, I swooned:

Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?

Yes, as the master shall the servant be,

And pierced are the feet that follow Me;

But thine are whole. Can he have followed far

Who has no wound? No scar?

-- Amy Wilson Carmichael

ILLUSTRATION OF COUNTING THE COST - From the diary of John Wesley. . .

Sunday, A.M., May 5 Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore.

Sunday, P.M., May 5 Preached in St. John's. Deacons said "Get out and stay out."

Sunday, A.M., May 12 Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there, either.

Sunday, A.M., May 19 Preached in St. Somebody Else's. Deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.

Sunday, P.M., May 19 Preached on street. Kicked off street.

Sunday, A.M., May 26 Preached in meadow. Chased out of meadow as bull was turned loose during service.

Sunday, A.M., June 2 Preached out at the edge of town. Kicked off the highway.

Sunday, P.M., June 2 Afternoon, preached in a pasture. Ten thousand people came out to hear me.

Dwells is in [present tense \(active voice\)](#) - speaks of choice) which speaks of continual presence in Pergamum.

Revelation 2:14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

NET Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you: You have some people there who follow the teaching of Balaam, who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel so they would eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality.

NLT Revelation 2:14 "But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin.

ESV Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

NIV Revelation 2:14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.

GNT Revelation 2:14 ἄλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοὺ ἅτινες κρατοῦντες τὴν διδασκαλίαν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἔδασκεν τὸν Βαλὰκ βαλεῖν σκνδάλον ἐν πύλαις τῆς συναγωγῆς, ἵνα φάγωσιν ἑθελθυτάτα καὶ πορνέυσαι.

KJV Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

ASV Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

CSB Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to place a stumbling block in front of the Israelites: to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.

NKJ Revelation 2:14 "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

NRS Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication.

YLT Revelation 2:14 'But I have against thee a few things: That thou hast there those holding the teaching of Balaam, who did teach Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol-sacrifices, and to commit whoredom;

NAB Revelation 2:14 Yet I have a few things against you. You have some people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the Israelites: to eat food sacrificed to idols and to play the harlot.

NJB Revelation 2:14 "Nevertheless, I have one or two charges against you: some of you are followers of Balaam, who taught Balak to set a trap for the Israelites so that they committed adultery by eating food that

had been sacrificed to idols;

GWN Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against you: You have among you those who follow what Balaam taught Balak. Balak trapped the people of Israel by encouraging them to eat food sacrificed to idols and to sin sexually.

BBE Revelation 2:14 But I have some things against you, because you have with you those who keep the teaching of Balaam, by whose suggestion Balak made the children of Israel go out of the right way, taking food which was offered to false gods, and going after the desires of the flesh.

- **I have:** Rev 2:4,20
- **Balaam:** Nu 24:14 Nu 25:1-3 Nu 31:8,16 Jos 24:9 2Pe 2:15 Jude 1:11
- **a stumbling block:** Isa 57:14 Jer 6:21 Eze 3:20 44:12 Mt 18:7 Ro 9:32 11:9 Ro 14:13,21 1Co 1:23 8:9 1Pe 2:8
- **eat:** Rev 2:20 Ac 15:20,21,29 21:25 1Co 8:4-13 10:18-31
- **to commit:** Rev 21:8 22:15 1Co 6:13-18 7:2 Heb 13:4

Balaam on His Talking Donkey (Nu 22:21-41+)

CHRIST'S CONCERN RE COMPROMISE

While I am labeling this as "**concern**," the truth is that if the false teaching was not dealt with the concerns would bring Christ's condemnation and judgment!

Compromise describes something that combines qualities or elements of different things and is often associated with a weakening or reduction of fundamental principles or standards. In this case sound doctrine was being polluted by false teaching. So here we see Christ's rebuke of their compromise.

Swindoll - The church in Pergamum harbored Balaamites and Nicolaitans, compromising their otherwise positive reputation as faithful Christians.

But - Term of contrast. - Always pause and check the context to help understand the "change of direction." Their holding fast in a difficult environment did not excuse their acceptance of false teaching that Jesus now describes. Like the church at Ephesus that had many good things, the good things do not give liberty to allow license! Jesus is building a pure church, John describing the Bride of Christ " It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Rev 19:8, Eph 5:25-26+)

I have a few things against you - How many things against Ephesus? Just one ("you have left your first love." - Rev 2:4). How many things did Jesus have against Smyrna? None. Why? Persecution had purified that church and made them spiritually rich. The few things refers to the false teaching He describes and the implication is that the believers in the church at Pergamum knew about the false teaching, but had compromised their convictions.

Swete comments that "At Ephesus the attitude of the Church towards the Nicolaitans was matter for praise, but at Pergamum it invited censure (contrast $\chi\omega\ \kappa\alpha\tau\ \sigma\sigma$ with v. 6 $\tau\omicron\ \tau\omicron\ \chi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$). The Church which could resist Satan in the form of the Emperor-cult was not equally proof against an insidious heresy.

Strauss - It is ever and always sinful to countenance evil among an assembly of believers. It is not enough to be grieved, and even shocked; the guilty one must repent and forsake his evil way. And if there be no repentance, those who have the oversight can take no other course of action except to expel. Though not guilty themselves, they failed to censure those who were guilty. They tolerated them when they should have tried them. The present tendency to minimize sin in the church has reduced her spiritual tone to a subnormal status. Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 for a lesson in church discipline. Paul did not wink at that flagrant example of incest. The member of the church at Corinth who was guilty of immoral relations with his stepmother, and who would not repent, was purged out. Moral dereliction, moral delinquency in the church tends toward the corruption of the whole. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6). Those who have the oversight of the local assembly need to be concerned about the influence that the sins of one person will have upon the whole assembly. When we compromise with evil, we make the word "compromise" a most immoral word in the English language. So said John Morley, and I agree with him....I am merely making the point that discipline should be exercised in the local assembly whenever and wherever it is needed. There can be no peaceful coexistence between light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial. Our Lord taught the need for discipline in the Church of God (Matthew 18:15-17), therefore we must not be afraid to exercise it. In this the assembly at Pergamos had failed.

Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about church discipline? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

Because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam - Hold is [krateo](#) in the [present tense](#) indicating they are firmly, continually holding to (practicing) the **teaching of Balaam**. Note the irony of used to describe most who were holding on to Christ (Rev 2:13), but some were holding on to the counterfeit. What is the teaching of Balaam? Jesus immediately explains this teaching in the next phrase, so we do not have to guess.

Swindoll comments "Christ's reference to Balaam reaches back to events recorded in Numbers 22–25, in which that quintessential "prophet for pay" (ED: a "non-profit prophet") tried to lead Israel astray....Christ directed His rebuke toward the faithful believers in the church who failed to take action against the Balaamites."

Peter uses **Balaam** to characterize false teachers writing "forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15+, cf the only other mention of Balaam in the NT in Jude 1:11+. cf their "errors" in Jude 1:4, 7, 8, 10+)

Strauss - Error will not be suppressed by compromising with it. The false religious ideologies of Christendom can be overthrown only by the sword of the Spirit, the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. And if men will not repent, Christ's saving Word becomes their Judge (John 12:47-48). His holy sword becomes their executioner. Balaam himself was slain with the sword (Numbers 31:8; Joshua 13:22), and so will all those who reject Jesus Christ.

Who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel - Balaam was teaching [Balak](#) a king of [Moab](#). **Stumbling block** is a great word picture for what happened to the men of Israel. We see Balaam's "stumbling block" in Numbers 25:1-3 was seductive Moabite women. So what Balaam was not allowed to accomplish through **SORCERY** (God would not let him curse Israel as in Nu 25:11, 12) he accomplished through **SEDUCTION**...since Balaam could not **CURSE** them he sought to **CORRUPT** them!

While Israel remained at [Shittim](#) (LAST STOP BEFORE PROMISED LAND! Josh 2:1), the people (MEN) began to play the harlot ([Septuagint = ekporneuo](#)) with the daughters of Moab (ENTICED WITH THE MOABITE WOMEN). 2 For they (MOABITE WOMEN) invited the people to the **sacrifices of their gods**, and the people **ate** and **bowed down** to their gods. 3 So Israel joined themselves to [Baal of Peor](#) and the LORD was angry against Israel. (Numbers 25:1-3)

And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women? 16 "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD. 17"Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. 18"But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves. (Nu 31:15-18)

NET NOTE emphasizes how serious this stumbling block was to the Nation of Israel - What Israel experienced here was some of the debased ritual practices of the Canaanite people. (The evidence indicates that Moab was part of the very corrupt Canaanite world, a world that was given over to the fertility ritual of the times.) The act of prostrating themselves before the pagan deities was probably participation in a fertility ritual, nothing short of cultic prostitution. This was a blatant disregard of the covenant and the Law. If something were not done, the nation would have destroyed itself.

THOUGHT - Apparently the saints at Pergamum had not heeded Paul's admonition in Romans 16:17+ "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and **hindrances** (skandalon) contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them."

Teaching (instruction) ([1322](#)) [didache](#) from [didasko](#) = to give instruction in a formal or informal setting with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal; English = didactic = intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive) is a noun which describes the activity of teaching (instruction). **Teaching** or **doctrine** is that which communicates to another the knowledge of that which heretofore that person was ignorant or ill informed.

Stumbling block ([4625](#))([skandalon](#)) was originally the piece of wood that kept open a trap on which the bait was laid, and when touched caused the trap to close on its prey. Figuratively [skandalon](#) refers to the "trap" by which a person is drawn into error or sin.

Osborne - As Balaam showed the Moabites how to lead Israel into sin, so the false teachers were showing these Christians how to fall into sin.

To eat things sacrificed to idols - Things sacrificed to idols (eidolothutos) "refers to sacrificial meat, part of which was burned on the altar, part was eaten at a solemn meal in the temple, and part was sold in the market for home use." This teaching would encourage the fellow church members to integrate with the culture. As Beale says believers "were expected to pay their "dues" to trade guilds by attending annual dinners held in honor of the guilds' patron deities. Homage to the emperor as divine was included along with worship of such local deities." As Garland explains "The dietary restrictions imposed upon Gentiles by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:20, 15:29) were out of concern for retaining Gentile fellowship with Jewish believers. Paul allows such meat sacrificed to idols to be eaten (1Cor. 8:7; 10:18-33), but only when it does not cause offense to brothers. Here the issue was one of compromising the witness of the church within the pagan culture and partaking of pagan practices which were associated with such banquets. These dinners included the eating of meat sacrificed to idols as well as licentious behavior. "

These "Balaamites" were guilty of religious compromise which led as it usually does to moral compromise!

"Immoral behavior often goes hand in hand with false religion."

-- Michael Andrus

Michael Andrus asks "Does this mean that in the Church at Pergamum there was a group who proudly called themselves Balaamites? I doubt it. But there were apparently those in Pergamum who were doing the same thing Balaam did 1500 years earlier in Moses' day, namely, "He taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality." Whenever believers consider themselves sufficiently secure to toy with false worship, they are playing with fire. The reason is that immoral behavior often goes hand in hand with false religion, especially idol worship. I feel fairly confident that Balaam didn't suggest to the Midianite women that they invite the Israelite men over for an orgy. That would have been too obvious, and the men of Israel would never have fallen for it. Instead he suggested that the women invite the men to come and worship with them. "After all, we are all really worshiping the same God. You come and visit my temple this week, and I'll go to yours next." Unfortunately, as soon as the men entered the pagan temple they were toast, for they were easily enticed by the sexual perversion commonly practiced there. Those of you who have served in the military know that success against a well-armed foe is more likely when using a sneak attack rather than a frontal assault. The church at Pergamum had overcome a full frontal assault by Satan in his capital city to the point of even being willing to die for their faith. But their love of liberty tripped them up, leaving them vulnerable to a Satanic sneak attack. They so valued their freedom and were so proud of their tolerance, that they allowed subtle heresies and moral compromise to creep in and create cracks in their armor. **They pushed the envelope of liberty over the edge to license.** We must never cross the line between being a friend to worldly people, which we should do, and becoming a friend to the world, which we must avoid. There is a great difference between a church that reaches out to unbelievers and tries to expose them to the Gospel, and a church that welcomes ungodly people into membership and leadership. There's a great difference between a church that shows love to gay people and couples living together without benefit of marriage, and one that ordains such people to ministry." ([Sermon](#))

Guzik - Sexual immorality marked the whole culture of the ancient Roman Empire. It was simply taken for granted, and the person who lived by Biblical standards of purity was considered strange. To paraphrase the Roman statesman Cicero, cited in Barclay: "If there is anyone who thinks that young men should not be allowed the love of many women, he is extremely severe. I am not able to deny the principle he stands on. But he contradicts, not only with the freedom our age allows, but also with the customs and allowances of our ancestors. When indeed was this not done? When did anyone find fault with it? When was such permission denied? When was it that what is now allowed was not allowed?" To keep from sexual immorality in that culture, you really had to swim against the current....Satan couldn't accomplish much by persecution, because many did hold fast, like Antipas. So Satan tried to accomplish his goals by using deception. The strategy was first violence, then alliance. A difficult environment never justifies compromise. It is easy for a church in such difficulty to justify this compromise in the name of "we need all the help we can get"—but no church needs that kind of help.

And to commit acts of immorality ([porneuo](#)) - Mark it down that where you find idolatry, you will usually find immorality. And what was the "fruit" of Israel's idolatry and immorality when they stumbled over Balaam's trap? -- Paul records it in First Corinthians (a church that had a bit of a problem with idolatry and immorality!)..

Now these things happened (STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT) as **examples** for us, so that (TERM OF PURPOSE) we would not crave evil things as they also craved. 7 **Do not be** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." 8 Nor let us **act immorally** ([porneuo](#)), as some of them did, and 23,000 fell in one day....Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) **that he does not fall.**(1 Cor 10:6-8, 11, 12)

COMMENT - Here Paul says "23,000 fell in one day" and Moses records "those who died by the plague were 24,000." So is this another "error" in the Bible? Of course not. The next day or so another 1000 were killed!

THOUGHT - What does idolatry do to God? Ezekiel 6:9+ answers "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, **how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts** which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which **played the harlot** ([Septuagint = porneuo](#)) after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations.

Commit immorality ([4203](#))([porneuo](#) from **pornos** = literally the purchasable one, the one you buy, the harlot, the prostitute) means to prostitute one's body to the lust of another, to give oneself to unlawful sexual intercourse. To commit fornication. Used as a Hebraic sense as a figure of speech to describe one who worships idols rather than the living God. Porneuo is used in the Septuagint to describe Israel who was pictured as God's wife (Jer 31:32, Isa 54:5) and yet who was unfaithful and like a wife who became a prostitute, figuratively committed acts of immorality against God. See 1 Cor 6:18 and 1 Cor 10:8

Related Resources:

- **See In Depth Commentary on Numbers -**
 - Numbers 22 Commentary
 - Numbers 23 Commentary
 - Numbers 24 Commentary
 - Numbers 31:8,16 Commentary
- [Who was Balak in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Did Balaam's donkey really talk to him? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the significance of Shittim in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who were the Moabites? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Idolatry and Immorality - the relationship and the antidote.](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Immorality](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Immorality](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Immorality](#)
- [What is sexual immorality?](#)

Question - [Who was Balaam in the Bible?](#)

Answer: Balaam was a wicked prophet in the Bible and is noteworthy because, although he was a wicked prophet, he was not a false prophet. That is, Balaam did hear from God, and God did give him some true prophecies to speak. However, Balaam's heart was not right with God, and eventually he showed his true colors by betraying Israel and leading them astray.

In Numbers 22—24, we find the story about Balaam and the king of Moab, a man called Balak. King Balak wanted to weaken the children of Israel, who on their way to Canaan had moved in on his territory. Balak sent to Balaam, who lived in Mesopotamia along the Euphrates River (Numbers 22:5), and asked him to curse Israel in exchange for a reward. Balaam was apparently willing to do this but said he needed God's permission (verse 8). Balaam, of course, had no power, in himself, to curse Israel, but, if God were willing to curse Israel, Balaam would be rewarded through Balak. God told Balaam, "You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed" (verse 12). King Balak then sent "other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first" (verse 16), promising a handsome reward. This time God said, "Go with them, but do only what I tell you" (verse 20).

The next morning, Balaam saddled his donkey and left for Moab (Numbers 22:21). God sent an angel to oppose Balaam on the way. The donkey Balaam was riding could see the angel, but Balaam could not, and when the donkey three times moved to avoid the angel, Balaam was angry and beat the animal. "Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth" (verse 28), and it rebuked the prophet for the beatings. "Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn" (verse 31). The angel told Balaam that he certainly would have killed Balaam had not the donkey spared his life. Ironically, a dumb beast had more wisdom than God's prophet. The angel then repeated to Balaam the instruction that he was only to speak what God told him to speak concerning the Hebrews (verses 33–35).

In Moab, King Balak took the prophet Balaam up to a high place called Bamoth Baal and told him to curse the Israelites (Numbers 22:41). Balaam first offered fourteen sacrifices on seven altars and met with the Lord (Numbers 23:1–5). He then declared the message God gave him: a blessing on Israel: "How can I curse / those whom God has not cursed? / How can I denounce / those

whom the Lord has not denounced?” (verse 8).

King Balak was upset that Balaam had pronounced a blessing on Israel rather than a curse, but he had him try again, this time from the top of Pisgah (Numbers 23:14). Balaam sacrificed another fourteen animals and met with the Lord. When he faced Israel, Balaam again spoke a blessing: “I have received a command to bless; / he has blessed, and I cannot change it” (verse 20).

King Balak told Balaam that, if he was going to keep blessing Israel, it was better for him to just shut up (Numbers 23:25). But the king decided to try one more time, taking Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland (verse 28). Again, Balaam offered fourteen animals on seven newly built altars (verse 29). Then “the Spirit of God came on him and he spoke his message” (Numbers 24:2–3). The third message was not what the Moabite king wanted to hear: “How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, / your dwelling places, Israel!” (verse 5).

Balaam’s three prophecies of blessing on Israel infuriated the king of Moab, who told the prophet to go back home with no reward: “Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the Lord has kept you from being rewarded” (Numbers 24:11). Before he left, Balaam reminded the king that he had said from the very beginning he could only say what God told him to say. Then he gave the king four more prophecies, gratis. In the fourth prophecy, Balaam foretold of the Messiah: “A star will come out of Jacob; / a scepter will rise out of Israel. / He will crush the foreheads of Moab, / the skulls of all the people of Sheth” (verse 17). Balaam’s seven prophecies were seven blessings on God’s people; it was God’s enemies who were cursed.

However, later on Balaam figured out a way to get his reward from Balak. Balaam advised the Moabites on how to entice the people of Israel with prostitutes and idolatry. He could not curse Israel directly, so he came up with a plan for Israel to bring a curse upon themselves. Balak followed Balaam’s advice, and Israel fell into sin, worshiping Baal of Peor and committing fornication with Midianite women. For this God plagued them, and 24,000 men died (Numbers 25:1–9; Deuteronomy 23:3–6).

Balaam’s name and story became infamous, and he is referred to several times in the New Testament. Peter compares false teachers to Balaam, “who loved the wages of wickedness” (2 Peter 2:15). Jude echoes this sentiment, associating Balaam with the selling of one’s soul for financial gain (Jude 1:11). Finally, Jesus speaks of Balaam when He warns the church in Pergamum of their sin: “There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality” (Revelation 2:14). Satan’s tactics haven’t changed all that much. If he cannot curse God’s people directly, he will try the back-door approach, and idolatry and sexual immorality are his go-to temptations. (Source: GotQuestions.org)

Question - [What is the doctrine of Balaam?](#)

Answer: In Revelation 2:14, the church of Pergamum is scolded for tolerating the “teaching of Balaam,” or the “doctrine of Balaam.” Balaam’s name is also invoked in 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 1:11, both in warnings about the conduct and message of false teachers. All of these are references to the Old Testament character of Balaam, who tried unsuccessfully to prophesy against the people of Israel (Numbers 22). He eventually advised King Balak of Moab, the enemy of Israel, to pursue a campaign of seduction against them (Numbers 31:8). The doctrine of Balaam is not only a serious problem, but a devious one. When the frontal assault failed, Balaam took a back-door approach.

Balaam, a prophet from Mesopotamia, was willing to use his God-given talents for illicit purposes. Even though he knew Balak was God’s enemy, he tried to sell his prophetic gifts to help him. When that didn’t work, Balaam counseled Balak on the most effective way to weaken Israel. This was through seduction, using Moabite and Midianite women to tempt the Israelites into sexual relationships and into pagan rituals. The Israelites who participated brought God’s judgment upon themselves (Numbers 25:1–9).

According to 2 Peter 2:15, Balaam’s “way” is a choice to promote falsehood for financial reasons. According to Jude 1:11, Balaam’s “error” was his willingness to accommodate pagan beliefs out of greed. Jude 1:4 also refers to the sin of those “who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality.” One trait of false teachers in the church is that they attempt to turn Christian liberty into a “freedom” to be promiscuous (see Romans 14:1–5).

Putting these ideas together gives a clear view of the doctrine of Balaam. It is the attitude that one can be fully cooperative with the world and still serve God. The doctrine of Balaam teaches compromise, wanting Christians to forget they are called to be separate and holy (Leviticus 20:26; 1 Peter 1:2); the doctrine of Balaam makes believers indistinguishable from the unbelieving world (Matthew 5:13). The doctrine of Balaam is a belief that “a little sin” doesn’t hurt (Galatians 5:9), especially if there’s some financial or personal benefit involved (1 Timothy 6:5). A person following the doctrine of Balaam is willing to compromise his beliefs for the sake of economics. He acts to enable sinful behaviors for personal gain or even participate in them (Romans 1:32).

In practical terms, the teaching or doctrine of Balaam is the view that Christians can—or even should—compromise their convictions for the sake of popularity, money, sexual gratification, or personal gain. It’s the attitude that treats sin as “no big deal.” Christians

can't—and shouldn't—totally shun the presence of sinners or unbelievers (Luke 7:34; 1 Corinthians 5:9–13), but we are obligated to stand up for truth (Ephesians 4:25), righteousness (Proverbs 23:20; Romans 14:22), and goodness (2 Peter 1:5, Matthew 5:16), whether it's what others want to hear or not (John 4:16–18; 8:11; Acts 24:24–25). (Source: GotQuestions.org)

Revelation 2:15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

NET Revelation 2:15 In the same way, there are also some among you who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

NLT Revelation 2:15 In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching.

ESV Revelation 2:15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

NIV Revelation 2:15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

GNT Revelation 2:15 ο τωσ χειρσ κα σ κρατο ντασ τ ν διδαχ ν [τ ν] Νικολαϊτ ν μο ωσ.

KJV Revelation 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

ASV Revelation 2:15 So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.

CSB Revelation 2:15 In the same way, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

NKJ Revelation 2:15 "Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

NRS Revelation 2:15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

YLT Revelation 2:15 so hast thou, even thou, those holding the teaching of the Nicolaitans -- which thing I hate.

NAB Revelation 2:15 Likewise, you also have some people who hold to the teaching of (the) Nicolaitans.

NJB Revelation 2:15 and among you too there are some also who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

GWN Revelation 2:15 You also have some who follow what the Nicolaitans teach.

BBE Revelation 2:15 And you have those who keep the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

- **the teaching:** Rev 2:6

Related Passage:

'Rev 2:6+ - Yet this you do have, that **you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

TOLERATING THE NICOLAITANS

So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching (see [didache](#)) **of the Nicolaitans** - **Hold** is [krateo](#) in the [present tense](#) again presenting the contrast between holding fast to the truth of Christ and holding fast to the counterfeit. The church at Ephesus **hated the Nicolaitans** as did Jesus but the church at Pergamum **tolerated** them and **compromised** with them. So what is the **teaching** of the Nicolaitans? Here is where attention to the context (and comparison with other Scripture Rev 2:6) can be very helpful in interpretation. Notice the phrase **in the same way** which indicates Jesus is comparing the teaching of this group with the **teaching of Balaam**. This supports the interpretation that the **Nicolaitans** held to similar scandalous teachings regarding idolatry and immorality. The Scripture tells us nothing else about them and secular writings likewise do not mention this particular group. This paucity of information suggests that it would be fruitless and futile to spend too much time trying to explain who they were.

A T Robertson on **in the same way** - The use of [homoios](#) (likewise) here shows that they followed Balaam in not obeying the decision of the Conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15:20, 29+) about idolatry and fornication, with the result that they encouraged a return to pagan laxity of morals

As **Swindoll** says "While Ephesus understood how to love the sinner and reject the sin, Pergamum chose to love the sinner and accept the sin! They compromised doctrine and morality for the sake of peace and unity in the church. They took Christian love and grace to an extreme."

Garland points out that "The problem for the church at Pergamum was not that Nicolaitans existed in the city, but that they were

within the church. We are to separate from those who call themselves believers, but deny Christ by their actions (1Cor. 5:11)."

Spiros Zodhiates gives us an excellent word on the **Nicolaitans** writing "Since Nicolaos means victor of the people and Balaam means devourer of the people, the two in symbolic unity signify religious seducers of the people. It is more probable that the Nicolaitans were identical with those who held the doctrine of Balaam, mentioned in Rev. 2:14 (cf. 2 Pet. 2:15), so that likely the Nicolaitans practiced fornication and the eating of things sacrificed to idols while outwardly professing Christianity." (Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament)

Henry Morris - The meaning of **Balaam** (Hebrew meaning "not of the people") is similar to that of the **Nicolaitanes** (Greek meaning "conquering the people").

Revelation 2:16 'Therefore **repent**; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

NET Revelation 2:16 Therefore, repent! If not, I will come against you quickly and make war against those people with the sword of my mouth.

NLT Revelation 2:16 Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

ESV Revelation 2:16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

NIV Revelation 2:16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

GNT Revelation 2:16 μεταν ησον ο ν· ε δ μ , ρχομα σοι ταχ κα πολεμ σω μετ α τ ν ν τ ομφα το στ ματ ς μου.

KJV Revelation 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

ASV Revelation 2:16 Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

CSB Revelation 2:16 Therefore repent! Otherwise, I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

NKJ Revelation 2:16 `Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

NRS Revelation 2:16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

YLT Revelation 2:16 'Reform! and if not, I come to thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

NAB Revelation 2:16 Therefore, repent. Otherwise, I will come to you quickly and wage war against them with the sword of my mouth.

NJB Revelation 2:16 So repent, or I shall soon come to you and attack these people with the sword out of my mouth.

GWN Revelation 2:16 So return to me and change the way you think and act, or I will come to you quickly and wage war against them with the sword from my mouth.

BBE Revelation 2:16 See, then, that you have a change of heart; or I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

- **Therefore repent:** Rev 2:5,21,22 3:19 16:9 Ac 17:30,31
- **else I am coming to you quickly:** Rev 2:5
- **will make war against them** Rev 2:12 1:16 Rev 19:15,21 Isa 11:4 49:2 Eph 6:17 2Th 2:8

RADICAL SPIRITUAL "SURGERY"

Therefore - Term of conclusion. Based on the facts, Jesus comes to the conclusion that this church needed to repent. R L Thomas adds that **THEREFORE** "shows repentance to be the logical outcome of the Lord's hatred of the grave evils in their midst. The church allowed some to continue in its fellowship who held to the teaching of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitans (**ED**: TOLERATED, COMPROMISED). They had not purged themselves of such as had the church in Ephesus (cf. Rev 2:6). They were guilty of unjustified tolerance." (Revelation - Exegetical Commentary)

THOUGHT - If there are false teachings in your church and you compromise (because they are popular, wealthy, etc), you had better "**LOOK OUT**" because Christ the "Warrior" is coming with a sharp sword in His mouth! I know of a conservative, evangelical church that tolerated some very unusual teaching regarding prayer (Was it truly "false?" Probably. At the very least it was not Biblical!) The church was warned by some members in the body who had spiritual discernment. What happened? The church chose the "Pergamum path" and it was not long after that there was a major exodus of godly believers from that body! It was not a classic split because the believers did not leave and found a new church, but simply went to other established churches. The leadership's compromise had serious consequences! So if someone in your church who is Biblically mature (and not a regular rabble rouser) comes to you with concerns about someone's teaching, whether in home fellowships, Sunday School class, etc, then you had better convene the elders and gather the facts and if the teaching is false, you need to remove that teacher from your body immediately because it is like a cancer which will spread and corrupt many in the body! And you will be held responsible if you fail to take Spirit led, prayed over, Biblically backed action!

Repent (see above on [metanoeo](#) in [aorist imperative](#) = calling for urgent response!) - Jesus uses [metanoeo](#) which calls for them to immediately change their mind with respect to sin (which is what the teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitans was!) Who is Christ calling to **repent**? He is addressing the believers at Pergamum and calling on them to repent of their compromise with the false teachings!

Or else I am coming to you quickly - **Quickly** speaks of His coming as [imminent](#) (about to occur at any time). This is not primarily a reference to the **Second Coming**. Who is **to you**? That is the church at Pergamum. What is the picture? Swift. Decisive. (Recall it is not a dull sword but a **sharp** sword - Rev 2:12!) The verb I am coming (so-called "futuristic present") signifies He is already on His way and His arrival is [imminent](#).

William Newell notes "This "**coming**," like that of Rev 2:5, is not our Lord's second advent, but His entering personally and that quickly, upon their affairs judicially: affairs which otherwise would continue unchanged under the ever-present, although grieved and vexed, Spirit."

Guzik - Judgment will begin at the house of God

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17+).

And I will make war against them - Notice He switches from **to you** to **them**, speaking of the false teachers. The **sword** of His **mouth** was the words from His mouth and with these words Christ would remove the "spiritual cancer" from Pergamum. The **NET** translation seems to favor this interpretation reading "If not, I will come against you quickly and make war against **those people** with the sword of my mouth." The NET Note says "Greek "**with them**"; the referent (**those people** who follow the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans) has been specified in the translation for clarity." **Newell** agrees that "The targets of Christ's sword would be chiefly those practicing these evils,—"against them."

John MacArthur has another interpretation shared by other commentators - The change in pronouns from **you** to **them** reflects an underlying Hebrew idiom commonly found in the Septuagint; both pronouns refer to the entire church.

R L Thomas supports MacArthur's interpretation - Yet the plain truth is that the church is called on to **repent** of its leniency earlier in v. 16. Being tolerant of the Nicolaitans makes the church as guilty as those who hold false doctrine. Failure to repent of this uncleanness in her midst must evoke the punishing sword of Christ upon the whole church (Beckwith). The change from a singular to a plural pronoun and from second to third person is a Hebraism that is common in the LXX. The two pronouns refer to the same group. (Revelation - An Exegetical Commentary).

Make war (4170)([polemeo](#) from [polemos](#) = war) literally means to make or wage war (Rev 12:7; 13:4; 17:14) Figuratively **polemeo** means to be in opposition to, be hostile invoking military imagery which depicts the hostile attitude of opponents in a literal war. And so it means to be treated in a hostile manner and then to quarrel or wrangle with someone. Note most uses are in Revelation. **Polemeo** - 7x in 6v - make war (1),

quarrel (1), wage war (2), waged (1), wages war (1), waging (1).Jas. 4:2; Rev. 2:16; Rev. 12:7; Rev. 13:4; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:11

Newell has an interesting comment that "**War ... with the sword of my mouth,**" brings to mind at once the angel of the Lord standing with his sword drawn against the mad prophet, Balaam, in Israel's days!" (cf Nu 22:22, 23+).

Make war...with the sword of My mouth - Jesus will take hostile action. Exactly what this action entails is not absolutely certain. Did he kill some? We simply cannot state with certainty. What we can be certain of is that this action of Christ in some way extirpated the false teaching/teachers. Below are some other Scriptures which help us understand the **sword** from Jesus' **mouth** as figurative and not literal.

Tony Garland on **the sword of My mouth** - The significance in Christ's title can be seen in the doctrinal errors of the Balaamites (Rev. 2:14) and Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:15) which are being promoted by some in the church at Pergamum. These doctrinal errors are judged by the teachings found in the Word of God. (**ED: GARLAND MAKES A GREAT POINT - LIES WOULD BE CUT OUT AND CORRECTED SO TO SPEAK BY THE WORD OF TRUTH, THE SWORD OF THE WORD.**)

In a Messianic prophecy Isaiah describes the Messiah coming (this is the **Second Coming**)

with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the **rod of His mouth** (Lxx = "*to logo tou stomatos autou*" = "**the Word of His mouth**") , And with the breath (Lxx = pneuma - also translated Spirit) of His lips He will slay the wicked." (Isaiah 11:4+)

Isaiah again describes the **Messiah** in similar terms...

He (God the Father) has made My (Messiah's) mouth **like a sharp sword**, in the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; and He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver. (Isaiah 49:2)

Paul records a parallel description of Messiah's striking of the Antichrist...

And then that lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed (the first 3.5 years he is not fully revealed, but at the midpoint of the last 7 years when the [Great Tribulation](#) begins, his sinister Satan empowered character will be fully revealed) whom **the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth** and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming (2 Th 2:8)

The **sword** is surely the Word. Compare

And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the **word of God**. (Ephesians 6:17+)

For the **word of God** is living and active and **sharper than any two-edged sword**, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12+)

COMMENT by Garland on "From His mouth comes a sharp sword" in Rev 19:15 - If Jesus literally and physically slays His enemies at His Second Coming (Rev 19:21), **how is it that the sword is figurative—coming out of His mouth?** It represents the **sword of the Spirit, the word of God:** that which God has set forth as His spoken will (Eph 6:17). Those who are slain meet their doom because they are judged by God's righteous word (Heb 4:12). They have consistently violated its precepts and standards and their destruction has been prophesied. In many ways, the action of their slaying is the unavoidable result of what God has said. This is why Jesus slays His enemies with His lips: "He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked" (Isa. 11:4). His mouth is like a sharp sword (Isa. 49:2). Hence, when Antichrist is destroyed, he is consumed "with the breath of [the Lord's] mouth" (2Th 2:8). The ultimate reason they are slain is found in God's testimony—the law written in stone found in the ark of the covenant (Rev 11:19; Rev 15:5). **The written law is His word, thus the weapon is said to come forth from His mouth.** ([A Testimony of Jesus Christ - Revelation 19:15](#))

Sword (4501) (see above for [rhomphaia](#) In summary, the **sword** is not literal (which would be an absurd picture of a literal sword coming out of Jesus' mouth), but figurative. What John specifically saw is Rev 1:16 that he describes as "a sharp two-edged sword," is difficult to state with certainty, but it is certain this was a metaphor, as it is interspersed with 7 uses of "like" which are all comparisons. It would be hard to imagine that even though "as" or "like" is not preceding "sword," that this would not also be a term of comparison, much like Jesus' description of Himself "I am the door." (John 10:9). Clearly Jesus is not a door. And similarly Jesus

mouth does not have a sword coming out!

Swindoll - Like a cancerous tumor that penetrates and spreads through healthy flesh, compromise allows the sinews of falsehood to invade the truth, ultimately destroying it. Only a sharp scalpel in the hands of a precise surgeon can remove the cancer without killing the patient. Likewise, Christ, the Great Physician, is qualified not only to diagnose, but also to successfully treat the insidious disease of compromise.

Revelation 2:17 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

NET Revelation 2:17 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give him some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on that stone will be written a new name that no one can understand except the one who receives it.'

NLT Revelation 2:17 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.

ESV Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

NIV Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

GNT Revelation 2:17 χων ος κουστω τ τ πνεμα λγει τα ς κκλησ αι ς. τ νικ ντι δ σω ατ το μ ννα το κεκρυμ νου κα δ σω ατ ψ φον λευκ ν, κα π τ ν ψ φον νομα και ν γεγραμμ νον ο δε ς ο δεν ε μ λαμβ νων.

KJV Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

ASV Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

CSB Revelation 2:17 "Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. I will give the victor some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name is inscribed that no one knows except the one who receives it.

NKJ Revelation 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

NRS Revelation 2:17 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

YLT Revelation 2:17 He who is having an ear -- let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies: To him who is overcoming, I will give to him to eat from the hidden manna, and will give to him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, that no one knew except him who is receiving it.

NAB Revelation 2:17 " "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I shall give some of the hidden manna; I shall also give a white amulet upon which is inscribed a new name, which no one knows except the one who receives it."

NJB Revelation 2:17 Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches: 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."

GWN Revelation 2:17 Let the person who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. I will give some of the hidden manna to everyone who wins the victory. I will also give each person a white stone with a new name written on it, a name that is known only to the person who receives it.

BBE Revelation 2:17 He who has ears, let him give ear to what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give of the secret manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name, of which no one has knowledge but he to whom it is given.

- **He who has an ear:** Rev 2:7,11 3:6,13,22
- **I will give some of the hidden manna:** Ps 25:14 36:8 Pr 3:32 14:10 Isa 65:13 Mt 13:11 Joh 4:32 Joh 6:48-58 Col 3:3
- **a new:** Rev 3:12 Rev 19:12,13 Isa 56:4 Isa 65:15
- **but he who receives it.:** 1Co 2:14

Route of Letters to 7 Churches
Click to Enlarge

PROMISES TO THE OVERCOMER

He who has an ear, let him hear ([aorist imperative](#) = calls for urgent response!) - Mt 11:15 13:9 Mk 4:9, 23 7:16 Lu 8:8 14:35. Everyone has ears and if they are not physically deaf, then they can hear, but here Jesus is referring to the ability to hear and understand spiritual truth. And so Paul wrote that "a natural (unregenerate, not born again) man does not accept (RECEIVE OR WELCOME) the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (1 Cor 2:14+)

R L Thomas quoting Barnes writes this is "A mode of address often employed by the Lord, this is designed to arrest the attention of the listeners and to denote that what has been said is of special importance."

What the Spirit says to the churches - While the letter to Pergamum in Rev 2:12-16 is specifically directed to this local body, the declaration by the Spirit is directed to ALL 7 churches (and all churches of all time).

To him who overcomes - Remember those who overcome ([nikao](#)) are not "super saints" but genuine believers (see 1 John 5:4-5+ and [preceding notes](#)). Only believers can "receive" and "understand" this truth. It is worthy noting that the verb [nikao](#) is in the present tense indicating that this is their lifestyle, their habitual practice (thus Lenski translates it "To the one conquering."). **Thomas** adds that the "thought is not that of victory finally achieved at the end of life (WHICH OF COURSE IS THE CONSUMMATION), which would have been an aorist participle. It is rather the picture of **a believer who from the beginning of his faith in Christ to the end of life stands victorious** because he **keeps on overcoming whatever the enemy has to offer.**" (Bolding added).

Keeps on overcoming (over the the [world](#), the [flesh](#) [sin] the [devil](#)) speaks not of perfection but of direction (Heavenward).

To him I will give some of the hidden manna - **Manna** recalls God's provision of food to Israel in the wilderness for 40 years (See Ex 16:31-35+). While we cannot be absolutely certain of the meaning of hidden manna in this passage, if we [Compare Scripture with Scripture](#) we see the following words by Jesus...

"I am the bread of life. "Your fathers ate the **manna** in the wilderness, and they died. "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; **if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever**; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." (John 6:48-51)

Hidden manna would be another way of saying that He would give them eternal life (**if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever**). (See [note below](#)) While the manna in the wilderness sustained Israel for 40 years, but they still died, but Christ gives a "better manna" (cf "better covenant," "better mediator," etc). Everything Christ gives is better!

Garland has an intriguing comment that "The **manna** is set in direct contrast to the **things sacrificed to idols**. The church was **eating earthly pagan food**, but **the overcomer is promised heavenly food** from above."

Bishop Trench on "hidden" feels "There can, I think, be no doubt that allusion is here to the manna which at God's express command Moses caused to be laid up before the Lord in the Sanctuary (Ex. 16:32-34; cf. Heb. 9:4). This manna, as being thus laid up in the Holy Place, obtained the name of 'hidden.' "

Swindoll says "They would receive divine food ("hidden manna"), special favor ("white stone"), and a new character ("new name"). The "hidden manna" could refer to Christ Himself, the spiritual nourishment for believers, both now and for eternity. In John 6:48–51 Christ symbolically likened Himself to the "bread from heaven," the manna that came down from heaven and nourished the ancient Israelites during their wilderness wanderings."

Walvoord adds a reasonable consideration that **hidden manna** refers "to the benefits of fellowship with Christ and the spiritual strength that is afforded by that experience."

J Vernon McGee - The believer needs to feed on Christ—this is a must for spiritual growth. And, actually, Christ is hidden from view; He is not known or understood in our day. My, how folk misrepresent Him and abuse Him!

And I will give him a white stone and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it- The interpretation of this verse is difficult (see [Gotquestions comment below](#)).

NET Note - On the interpretation of the stone, L&N 2.27 states, "A number of different suggestions have been made as to the reference of ψ φος in this context. Some scholars believe that the white ψ φος indicates a vote of acquittal in court. Others contend that it is simply a magical amulet; still others, a token of Roman hospitality; and finally, some have suggested that it may represent a ticket to the gladiatorial games, that is to say, to martyrdom. The context, however, suggests clearly that this is something to be prized and a type of reward for those who have 'won the victory.' "

Donald Grey Barnhouse suggests a possible meaning of this secretname -- "I am called Doctor by those who know me least, Pastor by some who know me more closely. My given name is used by close friends. My children call me Father or Daddy. A mother has called me Son, while in the most intimate of all human 9 relationships (marriage), there is a place for endearing names which refinement will not permit to be bandied about in public. Not even in letters will these names be used. The actual presence of the loved one is demanded for the use of the names which even the children of the family do not know."

Andrus follows up Barnhouse's explanation noting that "This is the kind of intimacy promised to the overcoming believer by the Lord Jesus Christ. The bridegroom will whisper to His bride a tender name that shall not be known to anyone else, even to the angels. When I was a boy we used to sing a song based on this verse, "There's a new name written down in glory, and it's mine, oh yes it's mine."

Swindoll suggests that "The reference to the "white stone" inscribed with a new name is less certain. It may symbolize special access to God because of their new identity in Christ, perhaps alluding to a white stone "ticket" used for admission into the theatre at Pergamum. Or it may refer to believers' verdict of "not guilty" because of their relationship with Christ, their substitute and advocate. In the ancient world either black or white stones were sometimes cast to indicate a decree of guilt or innocence. Regardless of how the Christians in Pergamum understood these symbols, we can understand the big picture: if you remain faithful and take a stand for truth and morality, the result will be great reward from Christ upon His return."

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different.

Your name is safe in their mouth."

You—and your name—are safe with God.

-- Dave Roper

APPLICATION OF TRUTH IN LETTER TO PERGAMUM - Michael Andrus

Conclusion: Friends, are you guarding your freedom in Christ? Are you guarding it in the sense of not letting legalists steal it from you? But just as importantly, are you guarding it in the sense of not using it as an excuse for indulging yourself, nor making unholy alliances with a pagan world? "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17,18) The Apostle Paul warns us (2 Cor. 2:11 and Eph. 6:11) to be aware of Satan's schemes. He is shrewd and powerful, but not very creative. He uses the same tactics over and over. He used the old Balaam trick on ancient Israel and then 1500 years later repeated it in Pergamum. And he will use it again today if we let him, especially if we, like Balaam, look good on the outside but on the inside are living a double life. If a church doesn't deal with heresy and immorality in its midst, Christ will. And it won't be a pretty sight. In fact it may be downright ugly. Jesus has the power of the sword and will use it to keep His bride, His Church, pure for the coming wedding feast in heaven. The "Too Free Church" will be cut down by His mighty sword for permitting the erosion of its moral fiber and integrity. God is calling us instead to be overcomers who are known by our moral integrity and who are looking forward to receiving our invitation to heaven's wedding feast with our new name engraved on it. ([Sermon](#))

- **PS** - If you want more discussion of Balaam, Pastor Andrus spends the first 5 pages giving background on Balaam (including a discussion of the talking donkey) in his [Sermon](#).

Question: [What is the hidden manna mentioned in Revelation 2:17?](#)

Answer: In part of the Lord's message to the church of Pergamum, we read, "Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna" (Revelation 2:17). The book of Revelation is an example of [apocalyptic literature](#), which features symbolism and sometimes bizarre imagery in its presentation of prophecy. The "hidden manna" mentioned in the letter to Pergamum is one example of such symbolism.

Quite simply, the hidden manna is a symbolic picture of Jesus Christ. As the [manna](#) of the Exodus sustained and strengthened the Israelites for the forty years of desert wanderings, so Jesus strengthens and sustains us spiritually as we walk through this life on our way to heaven. Jesus is the "manna" from heaven—the spiritual sustenance we need—and it is promised to us.

Jesus Himself made the connection between the manna of Moses' day and His own provision of salvation: "I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever" (John 6:48–51, 58). The manna that sustained the Israelites was a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ; the manna mentioned in Revelation 2:17 is another, symbolic reference to Christ.

As a symbol, the hidden manna of Revelation 2:17 is not to be taken literally; in other words, Jesus is not speaking of something we literally eat. Rather, the [Bread of Life](#) is something we "ingest" in another, non-physical way. We receive the benefits of salvation by faith (John 1:12).

The manna is "hidden" in that it is given exclusively to believers in Christ. Only believers will reap the benefits of salvation. The unbelieving world that rejects Christ will never know the joy and satisfaction of faith in Him.

The recipient of the hidden manna is specified in Revelation 2:17 as "the one who is victorious." The overcomer is one who endures in his faith, despite trials and hardships. [Overcomers](#) are followers of Christ who successfully resist the power and temptation of this world. An overcomer holds fast to faith in Christ until the end. He demonstrates complete dependence upon the Lord Jesus through thick and thin. First John 5:4–5 encourages us that all who are born again will overcome this world: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

As we seek to remain faithful to Jesus, living in light of His death, burial, and resurrection for forgiveness of sins, and resisting the temptations of the world, we are promised goodness. The hidden manna from heaven will be ours. Even if the world cannot understand how, we will be strengthened. We will be sustained. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

[Why is God going to give us a white stone with a new name?](#)

Answer: In the Bible, there is only one reference to God giving us a white stone with a new name: "To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it" (Revelation 2:17).

The meaning of the white stone is a mystery to Bible scholars. However, several interpretations have been offered:

- In ancient Greece, jury members would cast **awhite stone** to signify an acquittal, whereas a black stone proclaimed the defendant guilty. The weakness of this interpretation is that the stones cast in the courts **did not have names inscribed on them.**
- A small object called a "tessera," made of wood, stone, clay or bone, conveyed special privileges to its owner. The ancient Romans used tesserae as tokens of admittance to events in the arena. However, tesserae did not have to be white, and the durability of the materials used is questionable.
- A white stone was often used as an amulet or charm. However, this custom was associated with sorcery, so it would be odd if the Bible used it as a symbol of salvation.
- Another interpretation has to do with the building material used during the time John wrote Revelation. Important buildings were commonly made of white marble, including the temple of Asclepius in Pergamum (the city of the church Jesus is addressing in Revelation 2:17). In front of the temple were white marble pillars engraved with the names of people supposedly healed by the god. One problem with this interpretation is that the Greek word used in this verse, *psophon* properly means "pebble," not "stone."
- **One of the better-accepted explanations of the white stone has to do with the high priest's**

breastplate, which contained twelve stones. Each of these stones had the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on it (Exodus 28:21). As he ministered in the temple, the high priest bore the names of God's people into God's presence. In the same way, the "white stone" with the believer's name written on it could be a reference to our standing in God's presence.

• **Another widely held explanation suggests that the white stone may be a translucent precious stone such as a diamond.** The word translated "white" in Revelation 2:17 is leukos and can also mean "brilliant, bright." This interpretation holds that on the stone is written the name of Christ, not the name of the believer. Revelation mentions that the name of Christ is written on the foreheads of the saints (Revelation 3:12; Revelation 14:1, and Revelation 14:20).

The best theory regarding the meaning of the white stone probably has to do with the ancient Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victors of athletic games. The winner of a contest was awarded a white stone with his name inscribed on it. This served as his "ticket" to a special awards banquet. According to this view, Jesus promises the overcomers entrance to the eternal victory celebration in heaven. The "new name" most likely refers to the Holy Spirit's work of conforming believers to the holiness of Christ (see Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:10). (Source: GotQuestions.org)

A White Stone

I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it. —Revelation 2:17

Today's Scripture: Revelation 2:12-17

Our Lord's message to the church at Pergamum has a curious reference to "a new name" written on "a white stone" (Revelation 2:17). What could this mean?

There are two plausible explanations. In an ancient court of law, when defendants were condemned, they received a black stone with their name on it. If they were acquitted, they received a white stone. Similarly, those who have trusted Jesus Christ for salvation will receive an acquittal from the judgment of God. What a relief it is to know that our sins are forgiven!

Another explanation comes from the ancient olympic games. When athletes won, they were awarded a white stone, which was a token of honor.

Together, these illustrations show us the wonderful balance of the Christian life. We are saved by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yet obedient Christians often struggle as they seek to serve the One who saved them. One explanation of the white stone is a picture of unearned acquittal. The other shows that we will be rewarded for acts of good works (1 Corinthians 3:13-14).

Trusting Christ for salvation gives us a new identity. It's like receiving a new name written on a white stone, which shows that we are forgiven—completely By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We're saved by grace through faith alone,
Good works can have no part;
But God rewards each loving deed
That's done with all our heart.
—D. De Haan

Jesus removes our sin and rewards our service.

YOUR NAME IS SAFE

I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it. —Revelation 2:17

There's an old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." It isn't true. Words can hurt us most of all.

In my case the hurtful words were "skinny bones", a name given to me during my school years. I chuckle now when I think of it—no one would call me "skinny bones" these days. But back then the name wounded me. It became the way I thought of myself.

My father and mother, however, had the grace and wisdom to have given me another name, David—a name that means 'beloved' in

Hebrew. Despite the taunts I received on the playground, I knew I was loved at home.

Perhaps you were one of those children who people called names: “Dummy”, “Idiot”, “Fatso” or some other cruel tag. Perhaps people still call you names or use your given name with contempt. I believe that God will one day give you a new name, a term of endearment known only by your heavenly Father and you (Rev. 2:17). His voice will convey tenderness, love and acceptance. Your name is dear to Him.

As a little child once put it, “When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. Your name is safe in their mouth.” You—and your name—are safe with God. David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

YOUR NAME IS IMPORTANT TO GOD.

Application of Pergamum - Swindoll - Overcoming a Culture of Compromise

Our culture demands equal rights for “alternative lifestyles,” redefines and rejects traditional values, winks at sin, and glorifies rebellion; thus, Christ’s attitude toward compromise should cause us to sit up and take notice. We must constantly remember four practical principles regarding worldly compromise as we consider our own attitudes, not only toward the evil that surrounds us, but also the evil that penetrates the church.

First, compromise never occurs quickly. Ships accidentally drift off course—but it’s usually not because someone suddenly pulls the wheel to starboard or port. Most often, invisible waves, currents, and winds gradually move the ship in the wrong direction. Before the ship’s crew knows it, the jagged rocks of the shoreline are ripping holes in its hull. Hebrews 2:1 presents a clear cure for the subtle drift: “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.” The need for shoring up the fundamentals has never been greater. We need to shed ourselves of the “been there, done that” attitude when it comes to the simple truth of Scripture and the Christian faith. Like ancient sailors fixed on the northern star, we must keep our eyes on the unchanging norms of the Christian faith.

Second, compromise always lowers the original standard. Compromise often begins when we try to replace God’s perfect standard of truth with our own manmade rules and regulations. Throughout history we’ve seen churches and denominations compromise on issues ranging from the inspiration of God’s Word to the deity of Christ for the sake of keeping their members or gaining larger numbers. Such compromises are never worth it! Hebrews 10:23 teaches just the opposite: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Likewise, Jude, the brother of Jesus, exhorts believers to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). Commit yourself neither to adding your own “truths” nor to subtracting from God’s truth. Maintain the one standard of truth and godliness.

Third, compromise is seldom offensive. People who compromise regularly tend to be great politicians and excellent people-pleasers. While wise compromise over “gray” issues can prevent unnecessary offense and conflict (see 1 Cor. 10:32), worldly compromise on the truth offends the God who saved us (2 Tim. 2:12–13). Too often I see Christians walk on eggshells when they’re around sensitive believers, or they bend over backward to avoid offending others with the Christian faith. Yes, we should share the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), but we should still share the truth. John 15:19 should clear up the matter for us: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.” Don’t expect to be loved by the general public when you refuse to compromise.

Finally, compromise is often the first step toward total disobedience. David’s sins of adultery and murder did not happen because of one weak moment. Much earlier, he had begun to compromise his responsibilities as a king (2 Sam. 11:1), compromise what he allowed himself to see (11:2), and compromise how he used his servants (11:3–4). These small steps, which in themselves didn’t appear important, led to a total collapse of his integrity. What small areas of compromises are you currently involved in? White lies on your taxes? Slight exaggerations on your résumé? Secret peeks at Internet pornography? Just a little harmless gossip now and then? Review these four principles of compromise, then ask yourself: What is keeping me today from heeding Christ’s warning and turning from compromise?

Revelation 2:18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

- **to the angel of the church in Thyatira** Rev 2:1 Rev 1:11
- **Son of God** Ps 2:7 Mt 3:17 Mt 4:3-6 Mt 17:5 Mt 27:54 Lu 1:35 Jn 1:14,49 Jn 3:16,18,35,36 Jn 5:25 Jn 10:36 Ac 8:37 Ro 1:4 Ro 8:32

- **who:** Rev 1:14,15

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira**write** - See "[JESUS' PATTERN TO ALL HIS CHURCHES.](#)"

Swindoll calls this letter "THE SMALL TOWN WITH A BIG PROBLEM." He adds "Thyatira was originally founded as a shrine to the sun god Tyrimnus, whose description generally echoed that of Christ in Revelation 2:18."

Related Passage:

Daniel 10:6 His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

Comment - There is similarity between this person and Christ in Rev 1:12-16 and so some thin this was indeed Christ. Walvoord explains that "Although there is room for debate even among conservative scholars, **the evidence seems more in favor of considering this a theophany.** In this case, the man of Da 10:5–6 is to be distinguished from the angel of Da 10:10–14 as well as Michael mentioned in Da 10:13. Although mighty angels are frequently difficult to distinguish from God Himself, as in other visions such as those in Ezekiel and Revelation, the similarity between the man described in Da 10:5–6 and the glorified Christ in Revelation 1:13–15 has led conservative expositors such as Young and Keil to consider the man a genuine theophany or an appearance of Christ as the Angel of Jehovah." (Bolding added)

The Son of God - Son of God is found only here in Revelation (although the unique relationship between the Father and the Son is stressed in Rev 1:6; 2:27; 3:5; etc.),. What is the meaning? In the most basic terms, this identifies the Speaker as Jesus and that He is deity! Recall that the Caesars were often referred to as "[Son of God.](#)"

Son of God - Matt. 4:3; Matt. 4:6; Matt. 8:29; Matt. 26:63; Matt. 27:40; Matt. 27:43; Matt. 27:54; Mk. 1:1; Mk. 3:11; Mk. 15:39; Lk. 1:35; Lk. 3:38; Lk. 4:3; Lk. 4:9; Lk. 4:41; Lk. 22:70; Jn. 1:34; Jn. 1:49; Jn. 3:18; Jn. 5:25; Jn. 10:36; Jn. 11:4; Jn. 11:27; Jn. 19:7; Jn. 20:31; Acts 8:37; Acts 9:20; Rom. 1:4; 2 Co. 1:19; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:13; Heb. 4:14; Heb. 6:6; Heb. 7:3; Heb. 10:29; 1 Jn. 3:8; 1 Jn. 4:15; 1 Jn. 5:5; 1 Jn. 5:10; 1 Jn. 5:12; 1 Jn. 5:13; 1 Jn. 5:20; Rev. 2:18

Who has eyes like a flame of fire- "eyes like a raging fire" (Osborne) - The **eyes like a flame of fire** speak of His penetrating gaze and fire is often associated with judgment. We see a parallel phrase in Rev 2:23 "**I am He who searches the minds and hearts.**"

MacArthur- A church may feel satisfied with itself, have a good reputation in the community, or even with other churches. But the penetrating eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ see it as it really is.

Rev 19:12 His eyes **are a flame of fire**, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. –

CLEARLY HE IS RETURNING TO JUDGE THE WORLD. NOTE – here not **like** but "**eyes are a flame of fire**" – **POINT** = This is **metaphor**. It is absurd to imagine Jesus' eyes burning with fire. It is metaphor similar to Jesus referring to Himself as the DOOR in John 10:9. So just as Jesus is not a literal door, His eyes are not a literal fire We have to use our sanctified imagination!

Guzik on Son of God - Jesus first described Himself with a title that emphasized His deity. In Jewish thought, to be the son of a thing meant you had the nature of that thing. The sons of the sorceress (Isaiah 57:3) had the nature of the sorceress. The sons of thunder (Mark 3:17) had a nature like thunder. So the Son of God has the divine nature, the nature of God.

Grant Osborne on Son of God - the reason most likely lies in the centrality of Apollo, son of Zeus, in Thyatira. It is Jesus, not Apollo, who is the true Son of God (this also accounts for the quotation of Ps. 2:9 in Rev. 2:27). A frequent title in the Gospel of John (Jn 1:34; 3:18; 5:25; etc.), it connotes majesty and divinity and is an important message to this weak church to center on the true "Son of God."

And His feet are like burnished bronze- "feet like polished bronze" This phrase is not found elsewhere in Scripture and is difficult to interpret definitively. For that reason we must be careful when suggesting our own thoughts or reading men's interpretations. The Greek word burnished bronze (chalkoibanon) refers to a high quality, fine brass or bronze. **Louw-Nida** says "the emphasis is upon the lustrous appearance of the metal. A satisfactory equivalent may be 'bright bronze' or 'shining metal.'" We see a somewhat similar description in Ezekiel 1:4, 7, 27; Ezek 8:2 but the word **chalkoibanon** is not used in the Greek Septuagint.

Osborne on burnished bronze - the "polished bronze," which refers to one of the major guilds of the town.

Barclay surmises (but it is only a supposition) that "The bronze feet must stand for the immovable power of the risen Christ. A message which begins like that will certainly be no soothing tranquilizer."

Merrill Tenney suggest that "The character of Christ that is emphasized in His dealing with the church of Thyatira is penetrative judgment. His eyes like a flame of fire can see through the flaws of the church; the feet like burnished bronze are ready to trample her sins underfoot."

Says this - [See note](#) on this phrase "*tade legei*" repeated by Christ in all seven letters and is paraphrased in the **NET Bible** as "This is the solemn pronouncement." (Rev 2:18NET).

Robert Thomas on Thyatira - Seleucus I, founder of the Seleucid dynasty, whose realm extended from the Hermus Valley to the Himalayas, founded this city by importing large numbers of people to settle there after he gained control of the military garrison that was already there. He was not responsible for the origination of the military garrison, however. The northwestern boundary of the Seleucid domain was limited only by the strength of the neighboring ruler Lysimachus, whose territory included parts of Thrace, Mysia, and the coastlands as far south as Ephesus. Seleucus apparently controlled the Hermus Valley, and Lysimachus the Caicus Valley. Between 300 and 282 B.C. Lysimachus established a colony of Macedonian soldiers at Thyatira between the two valleys to protect Pergamum and the Caicus Valley from Seleucid conquest. In 282 Philetaerus revolted against Lysimachus and founded the Pergamenian kingdom. At first Seleucus encouraged Philetaerus in order to weaken Lysimachus's hand in dealing with the revolt, but soon the common bond of enmity was dissolved with the death of the enemy. Thyatira then became a useful garrison to discourage attacks by the Pergamenians on the north, and later served the same purpose against attacks by the Seleucid kings from the south. In this sense, the two cities of Thyatira and Pergamum became very close. If Pergamum controlled the city, it was safe from the Seleucids. If not, its strength was severely weakened. The status of Thyatira was the best measure of the power of Pergamum (Ramsay).

About 190 B.C. control of Thyatira was assumed by Rome, which made it a part of the province of Asia. Roman peace did not bring immediate prosperity to the city, but eventually, after greed for the wealth of the province had brought oppression and extortion, prosperity in the area resulted in a favorable situation for trade in the city. An important road ran from Pergamum to Thyatira, then to Sardis and through Philadelphia to Laodicea. This location produced a healthy commerce and a multiplication of related craftsmen's guilds for which the city was famous (Ramsay; Charles).

Since the first century A.D., the city has been destroyed and rebuilt a number of times as a result of centuries of fighting between Muslims and Christians. The nature of its situation exposed it to necessary destruction by every conqueror, and required complete restoration after every siege. It was right in the way of an invasion and had to be captured before the invader could move on. It guarded a rich region and had to be defended to the last, causing the conqueror to accomplish a complete devastation. Yet because of natural conditions it could never be a very strong fortress, so successful resistance was nearly impossible. After conquest, however, the new power had to refortify the city if he wanted to hold his ground. Such has been the history of Thyatira.

The period of Thyatiran prosperity had just begun in the last decade of the first century A.D. Vivid memories of her military origin remained even though fortifications had disintegrated or been dismantled. As a communications center, the city had become a commercial city with multiplied trade guilds outnumbering those in every other city. Guilds for wool workers, linen workers, manufacturers of outer garments, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths were known. Membership in a guild was compulsory if one wanted to hold a position. Dyeing and manufacturing of woolen goods appears to have been a foremost industry of the city. Lydia, "a seller of purple" (Acts 16:14), appears to have been an agent of a Thyatiran establishment who lived in Philippi.

The population of the city was predominantly Gentile, a fact reflected in the absence of any reference to a Jewish element in the message. Most were of Macedonian descent, but a great deal of mixture of nationalities had resulted from the varied military and commercial history (Beckwith). Apollo was the chief deity here, and emperor worship was not a major factor.⁵ Pagan worship was associated with trade guilds in that each guild had its guardian god. Guild members were expected to attend the guild festivals and to eat food, part of which had been offered to the tutelary deity and which was acknowledged as being on the table as a gift from the god. At the end of the feast grossly immoral activities would commence. To exit at the time of such activity would lay a person open to ridicule and other kinds of persecution, a situation well reflected in the message to the church in this city. The moral issue of whether Christians were justified in participation in such common meals with their associated activities was a major one for this church (Charles). Besides this pagan influence, Thyatira also had its temples to Apollo, Artemis, and Tyrinnaos, and a shrine to Sambathe, an oriental Sibyl connected with the area (Charles).

Barclay - THE longest of the seven letters is written to the least important of the seven cities. Nonetheless, the problem which faced Thyatira and the danger which threatened it were those which were universally involved in the position of the Christians in Asia.

Thyatira lay in the long valley connecting the valleys of the Hermus and the Caicus rivers through which the railway runs today; and it was its geographical position which gave it its importance.

(1) Thyatira lay on the road which connected Pergamum with Sardis and went on to Philadelphia and to Laodicea, linking up with both Smyrna and Byzantium. That was the road by which the imperial mail travelled; and it was crowded with the commerce of Asia and the east. Therefore, first and foremost, Thyatira was a great commercial town.

(2) Strategically, the importance of Thyatira was that it was the gateway to Pergamum, the capital of the province. The first we hear of Thyatira is that it is an armed garrison, protected by a company of Macedonian troops, placed there as an outpost to defend Pergamum. The difficulty was that Thyatira was not capable of any prolonged defence. It lay in an open valley. There was no height that could be fortified; and all that Thyatira could ever hope to do was to fight a delaying action until Pergamum could prepare to meet the invaders.

(3) Thyatira had no special religious significance. It was not a centre either of Caesar-worship or of Greek worship. Its local hero god was called Tyrimnus, and he appears on its coins on horseback armed with battle-axe and club. The only notable thing about Thyatira from the religious point of view was that it possessed a fortune-telling shrine, presided over by a female oracle called the Sambathē. Certainly, no threat of persecution hung over the Thyatiran church.

(4) What, then, was the problem in Thyatira? We know less about Thyatira than about any other of the seven cities and are, therefore, seriously handicapped in trying to reconstruct the situation. The one thing we do know is that it was a great commercial centre, especially of the dyeing industry and of the trade in woollen goods. It was from Thyatira that Lydia, the seller of purple, came (Acts 16:14). From inscriptions discovered, we learn that it had an extraordinary number of trade guilds. These were associations for mutual profit and pleasure of people employed in certain trades. There were guilds of workers in wool, leather, linen and bronze, makers of outer garments, dyers, potters, bakers and slave-dealers.

Here, we think, was the problem of the church in Thyatira. To refuse to join one of these guilds would mean to give up all prospect of commercial existence. Why should a Christian not join one of these guilds? They held common meals. These would very often be held in a temple; and, even if not, they would begin and end with a formal sacrifice to the gods, and the meat eaten would be meat which had already been offered to idols. Further, it often happened that these communal meals were occasions of drunken revelry and slack morality. Was it possible for a Christian to be part of such occasions?

Here was the problem at Thyatira: the threat came from inside the church. There was a strong movement, led by the woman referred to as Jezebel, which pleaded for compromise with the world's standards in the interests of business and commercial prosperity, maintaining, no doubt, that the Holy Spirit could preserve them from any harm. The answer of the risen Christ is uncompromising. Christians must have nothing to do with such things.

Revelation 2:19 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.'

- **know:** Rev 2:2,9,13
- **love:** 1Co 13:1-8 Col 3:14 1Th 3:6 2Th 1:3 1Ti 1:5 1Pe 4:8 2Pe 1:7
- **perseverance:** Rev 2:3
- **your deeds of late:** Rev 2:4 Job 17:9 Ps 92:14 Pr 4:18 Joh 15:2 2Pe 3:18

I know - Of course He did because He had **eyes like a flame of fire**.

Your deeds, and your love and faith - Notice this church surpassed Ephesus in that Christ commends them for their love.

Guzik - Thyatira was a model church. They had four great essential qualities. They had love, both for the Lord and for one another. They knew service, and had faith and patience worth mentioning.

And service

And perseverance

Perseverance (5281) (**hupomone** from **hupo** = under + **meno** = stay, remain, abide) literally means abiding under. The root idea of **hupomone** is to remain under some discipline, subjecting one's self to something

which demands the submission of one's will to something against which one naturally would rebel. And so **hupomone** does not describe a grim resignation or a passive "grin and bear" attitude but a triumphant facing of difficult circumstances knowing that even out of evil God guarantees good. It is courageous gallantry which accepts suffering and hardship and turns them into grace and glory. For believers, it is a steadfastness, especially as God enables us to "remain under" (or endure) whatever challenges, trials, tests, afflictions, etc, He providentially allows in our life.

THOUGHT - How are you doing beloved? If you are like me (and most saints), you are experiencing manifold trials! Are you bearing up under them, leaning hard on the strengthening of the Spirit (the only way we can supernaturally remain under the "load.")?

Barclay - these great qualities go in pairs. Service is the outcome of love, and patient endurance the product of loyalty.

and that your deeds of late are greater than at first- They were growing in love, service, faith, and patience. The point is that these believers were not stagnant in their spirituality but were growing in Christ-likeness. They had heeded Peter's admonition to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18).

Revelation 2:20 'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

NET Revelation 2:20 But I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and by her teaching deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

NLT Revelation 2:20 "But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman-- that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet-- to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols.

ESV Revelation 2:20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

NIV Revelation 2:20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

GNT Revelation 2:20 ἄλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοὶ τινὰ φερεῖν τὴν γυναῖκα ἐξ βεελ, ἡ γουσα αὐτὴν προφητὴν καὶ διδσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς μορσοδολοῦς πορνεῖσαι καὶ φαγεῖν ἐδωλωμένα.

KJV Revelation 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

ASV Revelation 2:20 But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

CSB Revelation 2:20 But I have this against you: You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives My slaves to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

NKJ Revelation 2:20 "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

NRS Revelation 2:20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

YLT Revelation 2:20 'But I have against thee a few things: That thou dost suffer the woman Jezebel, who is calling herself a prophetess, to teach, and to lead astray, my servants to commit whoredom, and idol-sacrifices to eat;

- **I have:** Rev 2:4,14
- **woman:** 1Ki 16:31 17:4,13 19:1,2 21:7-15,23-25 2Ki 9:7,30-37
- **leads...astray:** Rev 2:14 Ex 34:15 Nu 25:1,2 Ac 15:20,29 1Co 8:10-12 10:18-21,28

JESUS CHANGES DIRECTION!

But - Term of contrast. Jesus "changes direction" from commendation to condemnation.

I have this against you - NLT = "I have this complaint against you." KJV is not accurate "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee." (Rev 2:20KJV) It does not say a **few things** but **this** (thing) referring to the Jezebel problem.

That you tolerate the woman Jezebel - You "make no effort to deal with the woman Jezebel." (Barclay) The main problem with this church is tolerance. They put up with **Jezebel**. The implication is that they knew there was false teaching, but they chose to look the other way. That is always dangerous for any church. It can be tempting to become tolerant if the false teacher is influential and popular (a scenario I have seen in real life on more than one occasion). Jezebel is probably not her actual name. How many mothers name their daughter Jezebel? It would be like naming your son Hitler!

THOUGHT - A church that has fervent deeds and energy as in Rev 2:19 is not always a sound church.

Tolerate is [aphiemi](#) in the present tense (continually) and active voice (volitional choice, conscious decision)! BDAG says in this context the verb *aphiemi* means "to convey a sense of distancing through an allowable margin of freedom, leave it to someone to do something -- let, let go, allow, tolerate" (cf similar sense in Mt 15:14; Mk 5:19; Mk 11:6; Mk 14:6; Lk 13:8; Ac 5:38)

Swindoll - On January 11, 1999, the cover of Christianity Today asked the following question: "Are you tolerant? (Should you be?)" Over the last several decades, tolerationism has become one of the greatest "virtues" of our increasingly secular society. Now, I'm not talking about old-fashioned tolerance, a principle on which all good societies are built. Old tolerance meant that even though you outright disagreed and disapproved of somebody's beliefs, values, and lifestyle, you stuck to your own point of view and accepted the rights of others to believe and live as they chose. In other words, you didn't revive the Dark Ages—grabbing your pitchforks and rioting against people with different opinions. As long as they were acting within the confines of the law, their views—as strange as they may have been—were tolerated.

MacArthur - The problem was not external persecution, but internal compromise; not vicious wolves from outside the flock, but perverse people from within (cf. Acts 20:29–30).

John Walvoord - Her dominant position may have been derived from the fact that Lydia, another woman, had brought them the message in the first place. This woman, Jezebel, is not a true messenger of divine truth. Though she claimed the right and office of a prophetess, she had urged the Christians in Thyatira to continue their pagan worship of idols which characterized the unbelievers in the city. They were therefore not only permitted to participate in the idolatrous feasts by eating things sacrificed to idols but they were also instructed to take part in the immorality which characterized the worship of idols. In promoting these wrongs, the woman prophetess, whose real name was probably not Jezebel, was fulfilling the role of the historic Jezebel in the Old Testament. According to I Kings, Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, the king of Israel, and she was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. She was one of the most evil characters of the Old Testament, who attempted to combine the worship of Israel with the worship of the idol Baal. She did what she could to stamp out all true worship of the Lord and influenced her weak husband to the extent that it is recorded in I Kings 16:33, "And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." Jezebel herself had a most unenviable record of evil. She was responsible for the killing of Naboth and possession of his vineyard for her husband (1 Kings 21:1–16). She had also killed practically all the prophets of the Lord and did what she could to kill the Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:2). So evil was Jezebel's character that she is singled out by Elijah for a special prophecy that she would come to a sudden end and that her body would be eaten by dogs—a prophecy fulfilled in 2 Kings 9:33–35. She is therefore the epitome of subtle corruption and a symbol of immorality and idolatry.

BDAG on Jezebel - Jezebel, Ahab's queen, who favored the cult of the Phoenician Baal in Israel and persecuted the prophets of Yahweh (3 Km 16- 4 Km 9), and who was also addicted to whoredom and magic (4 Km 9:22). Hence the name was applied to a woman who endangered orthodox teaching within the Christian community at Thyatira

NET NOTE - **Jezebel** was the name of King Ahab's idolatrous and wicked queen in 1 Ki 16:31; 18:1–5; 19:1–3; 21:5–24. It is probable that the individual named here was analogous to her prototype in idolatry and immoral behavior, since those are the items singled out for mention.

who calls herself a prophetess - Self-proclaimed prophets should always be suspect!

Jesus warned that these false prophets will especially characterize the last days declaring "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many." (Matthew 24:11+) Notice their false prophecy has the same effect as Jezebel's did and that is to **mislead many!**

and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray - "her misleading teaching" Note that teaching is the means by which she leads astray. It is by promoting false doctrines. Notice that she continually (**teaches** is in the [present tense](#)) promotes false doctrine which is critically important because doctrine affects (or should affect) the hearer's behavior. In this case it led to bad behavior. Notice she leads away bondservants who belong to Jesus ("My").

Leads...astray (4105)([planao](#) from **plane** which describes "a wandering" English word "planet") means literally made to wander and so to go (active sense) or be led (passive sense as of sheep in Mt 18:12-13) astray. The [present tense](#) indicates the sad truth that believers are continually being led astray from the truth.

Mark 9:42+ "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble ([skandalizo](#)), it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

Guzik has an interesting thought writing "Because of the strong trade guilds in Thyatira, the sexual immorality and the eating of things sacrificed to idols was probably connected with the mandatory social occasions of the guilds. Perhaps a Christian was invited to the monthly meeting of the goldsmith's guild, and the meeting was held at the temple of Apollo. "Jezebel" would allow or encourage the man to go—perhaps even using a "prophetic" word—and when the man went, he fell into immorality and idolatry.. The draw to the guilds and their meetings was powerful. "*No merchant or trader could hope to prosper or make money unless he was a member of his trade guild.*" (Barclay) Nonetheless, Christians were expected to stand in the face of this kind of pressure. One ancient Christian named Tertullian wrote about Christians who made their living in trades connected to pagan idolatry. A painter might find work in pagan temples or a sculptor might be hired to make a statue of a pagan god. They would justify this by saying, "*This is my living, and I must live*" Tertullian replied, *Vivere ergo habes?* "Must you live?"

so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols

So what is the antidote to counteract **toleration** of false teachers in a church? We need to assess them by the criteria of Jesus...

Beware ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "**You will know them by their fruits** (WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? IN THYATIRA IT IS THE ACTS OF THE BONDSERVANTS!) Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the **bad tree bears bad fruit**. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (IN THYATIRA HE GIVES A CHANCE TO REPENT) 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. (Mt 7:15-20+)

Revelation 2:21 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.

- **time:** Rev 9:20,21 Jer 8:4-6 Ro 2:4,5 9:22 1Pe 3:20 2Pe 3:9,15

MERCIFUL WONDERFUL SAVIOR

I gave her time to repent - He did not have to do this. This is mercy, not giving her what she deserved immediately. Jesus is long-suffering even to the most vile and despicable of sinners. There is only one sin He cannot forgive and that is the rejection of His Spirit's wooing of a person to repent and believe the Gospel.

THOUGHT - While God gives sinners time to repent it is not an unlimited time. Benjamin Franklin (who himself did not believe in Jesus) was correct when he said do not put off until tomorrow what you can do today. I would add what you **MUST** do today. Why? Because you do not know if you will be granted tomorrow by God! And so Paul writes "God says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." **Behold**, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," **behold**, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION." (2 Cor 6:2). In the OT the LORD said "the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever." (Ge 6:3) And God was true to His word, for He sent a global flood to destroy all but 8 souls on the ark. God gives time to repent, but we don't know when our time is up if continue to reject, put it off, delay or procrastinate!

And she does not want to repent of her immorality - She rejected the work of the Holy Spirit in her heart, calling her to

repentance (cf Ro 2:4+). She loved sin more than the Savior and she would get her just rewards in eternity. John writes that "everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (John 3:20+)

Revelation 2:22 'Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.'

NET Revelation 2:22 Look! I am throwing her onto a bed of violent illness, and those who commit adultery with her into terrible suffering, unless they repent of her deeds.

NLT Revelation 2:22 "Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds.

ESV Revelation 2:22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,

NIV Revelation 2:22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.

GNT Revelation 2:22 δο β λλω α τ ν ε ς κ λ ν η ν κ α τ ο ς μ ο ι χ ε ο ν τ α ς μ ε τ α τ ς ε ς θ λ ψ ι ν μ ε γ λ η ν, ν μ μ ε τ α ν ο σ ω σ ι ν κ τ ν ρ γ ω ν α τ ς,

KJV Revelation 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

ASV Revelation 2:22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works.

CSB Revelation 2:22 Look! I will throw her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her practices.

NKJ Revelation 2:22 "Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

NRS Revelation 2:22 Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings;

YLT Revelation 2:22 lo, I will cast her into a couch, and those committing adultery with her into great tribulation -- if they may not repent of their works,

- and them: Rev 17:2 18:3,9 19:18-21 Eze 16:37-41 23:29,45-48
- except: Jer 36:3 Eze 18:30-32 33:11 Zep 3:7 Lu 13:3,5 2Co 12:21 2Ti 2:25,26

Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness - "Of sickness" is added by NAS translators. **I will throw** is in the present tense, the prophetic future, as if Christ were already in the process of carrying out this judgment, so sure is this judgment to be executed!

Swete points out "In this case there is a sharp contrast between the luxurious couch where the sin was committed and the bed of pain."

Guzik - It is as if Jesus said, "You love an unclean bed. Here, I will give you one, and cast you into a sickbed."

What happened to the "prototype" Jezebel? It was so horrible you may not want to read it!

2 Kings 9:30-37 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out the window. 31 As Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it well, Zimri, your master's murderer?" 32 Then he lifted up his face to the window and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two or three officials looked down at him. 33 He said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot. 34 When he came in, he ate and drank; and he said, "See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter." 35 They went to bury her, but they found nothing more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. 36 Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; 37 and the corpse of Jezebel will be as dung on the face of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say,

"This is Jezebel."

and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation - " I am going to cast her paramours into great affliction" (Barclay) So what does great tribulation mean? Just what it says great, pressing circumstances of affliction will come on these believers – Hebrews 12:4-11 talks about the Lord's hand of discipline and in Hebrews 12:6 it says "He scourges every son He receives" and this word means severe distress almost like when one is scourged removing one's skin! And there is also the possibility that God might take the believer's life – 1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. The **great tribulation** is not the last days "[Great Tribulation](#)" which will begin when Mt 24:15+ occurs, the actual time period called "great tribulation" in Mt 24:21+.

Paul writes of sin in believers in the Lord's Supper - For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep., (1 Cor 11:29-30).

Walvoord makes an interesting comment on the the phrase commit adultery writing that "Those in Thyatira who had sinned in this way had not only violated the **moral** law of God but had sinned against their covenant relationship with the Lord which bound them to inward purity as well as outward piety."

Certainly in the Old Testament Israel is repeatedly accused of "spiritual adultery" for whoring around with false gods (idolatry) manifesting overt unfaithfulness to her "Husband" Jehovah (see Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 31:32+), Who had cut the covenant with her in Exodus 24:6-8+.

MacArthur has an interesting point - The Bible teaches that true Christians can fall into sexual immorality (cf. 1 Cor. 6:15–20) and idolatry (cf. 1 Cor. 10:21). But to lead other Christians into false doctrine or immoral living is a very serious sin, one meriting the most severe punishment. In Matthew 18:6–10, Jesus graphically described the serious consequences for those who lead other believers into sin "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven." The "little ones who believe" in Christ are not physical children, but spiritual children—believers. It is so serious to lead another believer into sin that the Lord said death by drowning was a better option. The imagery of maiming oneself is language depicting the need for drastic action in dealing with sin.

Unless they repent of her deeds - Who is **they**? The **bondservants** (believers mentioned above).

Revelation 2:23 'And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.'

NET Revelation 2:23 Furthermore, I will strike her followers with a deadly disease, and then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts. I will repay each one of you what your deeds deserve.

NLT Revelation 2:23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.

ESV Revelation 2:23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

NIV Revelation 2:23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

GNT Revelation 2:23 κα τ τ κνα ατ ς ποκτεν ν θαν τ . κα γν σονται π σαι α κκλησ αι τι γ ε μι ραυν ν νεφρο ς κα καρδ ας, κα δ σω μ ν κ στ κατ τ ργα μ ν.

KJV Revelation 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

ASV Revelation 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.

CSB Revelation 2:23 I will kill her children with the plague. Then all the churches will know that I am the One who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

NKJ Revelation 2:23 "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

NRS Revelation 2:23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

YLT Revelation 2:23 and her children I will kill in death, and know shall all the assemblies that I am he who is searching reins and hearts; and I will give to you -- to each -- according to your works.

- **with pestilence:** Rev 6:8
- **and all:** Rev 2:7,11 De 13:11 17:13 19:20 21:21 Zep 1:11
- **I am He:** 1Sa 16:7 1Ch 28:9 29:17 2Ch 6:30 Ps 7:9 44:21 Jer 11:20 17:10 Jer 20:12 Joh 2:24,25 21:17 Ac 1:24 Ro 8:27 Heb 4:13
- **and I will:** Rev 20:12 Ps 62:12 Isa 3:10,11 Mt 16:27 Ro 2:5-11 14:12 2Co 5:10 Ga 6:5 1Pe 1:17

And I will kill her children with pestilence - NET = "with a deadly disease" ESV = "I will strike her children dead"

and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts - "I am he who searches the inmost desires and thoughts of a man's being" (Barclay). Christ's judgment is so striking that it sends "shock waves" to all the other churches (presumably the 7 churches but possibly others). What's the message? Yes Jesus is Savior, but He is Judge if His truth is perverted in a manner like Jezebel. And not only that, but the point is that His "searchlight" is focused on all of His churches, so this judgment should serve as a clear warning to those who are contemplating or are involved with the Jezebel-like false teaching!

THOUGHT - When heinous sin is committed by leadership, it is imperative that it not be swept under the rug so to speak! And this is especially true if Jesus exercises this severe judgment on the leader. The reality of the fact that Christ still judges this Jezebel-like sin should serve to put the fear of the Lord in the hearts of the congregants! I know of a situation where this truth of significant immoral failure was kept from the congregation, and it was not shocking when other leaders in that congregation fell into the sin of immorality. Painful at it is pastor, the flock needs to hear the truth that they might be more inclined to obey the truth of God's Word and His call for a holy and pure Bride!

Minds is **nephros** (Eng - nephrology) which literally means kidneys (see uses in Leviticus below) and figuratively speaks of the innermost being of an individual, the source of thoughts, purposes, feelings.

Nephros - 31x in 26v in the Septuagint - Exod. 29:13; Exod. 29:22; Lev. 3:4; Lev. 3:10; Lev. 3:15; Lev. 4:9; Lev. 7:4; Lev. 8:16; Lev. 8:25; Lev. 9:10; Lev. 9:19; Deut. 32:14; Job 16:13; Ps. 7:9; Ps. 16:7; Ps. 26:2; Ps. 73:21; Ps. 139:13; Jer. 11:20; Jer. 12:2; Jer. 17:10; Jer. 20:12; Lam. 3:13

and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds

Walvoord - There can be no hiding from Christ of any iniquity whether overt or covert act. These solemn words addressed to the church at Thyatira are applicable to anyone who dares to corrupt the purity of the truth of God and spoil the worship of the Lord with idolatrous and heathen practices.

Revelation 2:24 'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them--I place no other burden on you.

NET Revelation 2:24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, all who do not hold to this teaching (who have not learned the so-called "deep secrets of Satan"), to you I say: I do not put any additional burden on you.

NLT Revelation 2:24 "But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them-- depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you

ESV Revelation 2:24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.

NIV Revelation 2:24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):

GNT Revelation 2:24 μ ν δ λ γω το ς λοιπο ς το ς ν Θυατε ροις, σοι ο κ χουσιν τ ν διδαχ ν τα την, ο τινε ς ο κ γνωσαν τ βαθ α το Σαταν ς λ γουσιν· ο β λλω φ μ ς λλο β ρο ς,

KJV Revelation 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

ASV Revelation 2:24 But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden.

CSB Revelation 2:24 I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who haven't known the deep things of Satan-- as they say-- I do not put any other burden on you.

NKJ Revelation 2:24 "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

NRS Revelation 2:24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call 'the deep things of Satan,' to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden;

YLT Revelation 2:24 'And to you I say, and to the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, and who did not know the depths of the Adversary, as they say; I will not put upon you other burden;

- the depths: Rev 12:9 13:14 2Co 2:11 11:3,13-15 Eph 6:11,12 2Th 2:9-12
- I will: Ac 15:28

EXHORTATION TO THE GODLY REMNANT

But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira- "Here for the first time in the messages to the seven churches a group is singled out within a local church as being the continuing true testimony of the Lord." (Walvoord)

who do not hold this teaching,

Who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them- Is there some truth to deeper lies of Satan? This passage would seem to validate that premise. The warning however is AVOID THEM like the plague for they will take you deep into spiritual darkness! Notice this is what **they call them**, not what God calls them. The **deep things of Satan** will take their practitioners into the deep, dark, bottomless pit where Satan will also be cast.

Guzik - In the days of the New Testament, many non-Christian religions (such as the Ophites and various Gnostic groups) said they knew the "deep things of Satan." The ancient Christian writer Tertullian said if you asked a Gnostic about their cosmic mysteries, they furrowed their brow and said, "It is deep." It may be deep—but deep into a dangerous pit. How could Christians ever fall for the depths of Satan? Perhaps the deceptive reasoning went this way: "To effectively confront Satan, you must enter his strongholds, and learn his depths in order to conquer him." People use similar reasoning in misguided spiritual warfare today.

Walvoord on deep things of Satan - Here reference is made to the satanic system often seen in great detail in false cults which compete with the true Christian faith. Just as there are the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10) which are taught by the Spirit, so there are the deep things of Satan which result from his work.

I place no other burden on you

Revelation 2:25 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.'

NET Revelation 2:25 However, hold on to what you have until I come.

NLT Revelation 2:25 except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come.

ESV Revelation 2:25 Only hold fast what you have until I come.

NIV Revelation 2:25 Only hold on to what you have until I come.

GNT Revelation 2:25 πλ ν χετε κρατ σατε χρι[ς] ο ν ξω.

KJV Revelation 2:25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

ASV Revelation 2:25 Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come.

CSB Revelation 2:25 But hold on to what you have until I come.

NKJ Revelation 2:25 "But hold fast what you have till I come.

NRS Revelation 2:25 only hold fast to what you have until I come.

YLT Revelation 2:25 but that which ye have -- hold ye, till I may come;

- **what you have:** Rev 3:3,11 Ac 11:28 Ro 12:9 1Th 5:21 Heb 3:6 4:14 10:23
- **until I come:** Rev 1:7 22:7,20 Joh 14:3 21:22,23 1Co 4:5 11:26 2Pe 3:10

Nevertheless what you have hold fast until I come

Walvoord - It is remarkable that here first in the seven churches there is reference to the coming of Christ for His church as the hope of those who are engulfed by an apostate system.

Revelation 2:26 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS;

NET Revelation 2:26 And to the one who conquers and who continues in my deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations--

NLT Revelation 2:26 To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, To them I will give authority over all the nations.

ESV Revelation 2:26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,

NIV Revelation 2:26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--

GNT Revelation 2:26 καὶ νικῶν καὶ τηρῶν χριτλους τργα μου, ὁσω ατ ξουσα π τ ν θν ν

KJV Revelation 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

ASV Revelation 2:26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations:

CSB Revelation 2:26 The one who is victorious and keeps My works to the end: I will give him authority over the nations--

NKJ Revelation 2:26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations--

NRS Revelation 2:26 To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end, I will give authority over the nations;

YLT Revelation 2:26 and he who is overcoming, and who is keeping unto the end my works, I will give to him authority over the nations,

- he: Rev 2:7,11,17 3:5,12,21 21:7 Ro 8:37 1Jn 5:5
- keepeth: Mt 24:13 Lu 8:13-15 Joh 6:29 8:31,32 Ro 2:7 1Th 3:5 Heb 10:38,39 Jas 2:20 1Jn 2:19 3:23
- to him will I give: Rev 3:21 20:4 22:5 Ps 49:14 Da 7:18,22,27 Mt 19:28 Lu 22:29,30 1Co 6:3,4

He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end,

TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS

Walvoord - He promises that those who keep His works unto the end will be given a responsible position of judgment over the nations. Closely following the prediction of a second coming is this first reference in Revelation to the millennial reign of Christ (cf., however, 1:6-7). The overcoming Christians are promised places of authority. They will share the rule of Christ over the nations of the world.

Revelation 2:27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father;

NET Revelation 2:27 he will rule them with an iron rod and like clay jars he will break them to pieces, 28 just as I have received the right to rule from my Father— and I will give him the morning star.

NLT Revelation 2:27 They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. 28 They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!

ESV Revelation 2:27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.

NIV Revelation 2:27 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'-- just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star.

GNT Revelation 2:27 κα ποιμανε α το ς ν βδ σιδηρ ς τ σκε η τ κεραμικ συντρ βεται, 28 ς κ γ ε ληφα παρ το πατρ ς μου, κα δ σω α τ τ ν στ ρ α τ ν πρωϊν ν.

KJV Revelation 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.

ASV Revelation 2:27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: 28 and I will give him the morning star.

CSB Revelation 2:27 and he will shepherd them with an iron scepter; he will shatter them like pottery-- just as I have received this from My Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star.

NKJ Revelation 2:27 `He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels '-- as I also have received from My Father; 28 "and I will give him the morning star.

NRS Revelation 2:27 to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered-- 28 even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star.

YLT Revelation 2:27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron -- as the vessels of the potter they shall be broken -- as I also have received from my Father; 28 and I will give to him the morning star.

- he shall: Rev 12:5 19:15 Ps 2:8,9 49:14 149:5-9 Da 7:22
- even: Mt 11:27 Lu 22:29 Joh 17:24

AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES,

Walvoord - The word for “rule” (Gr., poimanei) means literally “to shepherd.” Their rule will not be simply that of executing judgment, but also that of administering mercy and direction to those who are the sheep as contrasted to the goats (Matt. 25:31–46). The power to rule in this way was given to Christ by His heavenly Father (John 5:22).

as I also have received authority from My Father

Revelation 2:28 and I will give him the morning star.

NET Revelation 2:28 just as I have received the right to rule from my Father— and I will give him the morning star.

NLT Revelation 2:28 They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!

ESV Revelation 2:27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.

NIV Revelation 2:27 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'-- just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star.

GNT Revelation 2:28 ς κ γ ε ληφα παρ το πατρ ς μου, κα δ σω α τ τ ν στ ρ α τ ν πρωϊν ν.

KJV Revelation 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.

ASV Revelation 2:27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: 28 and I will give him the morning star.

CSB Revelation 2:27 and he will shepherd them with an iron scepter; he will shatter them like pottery-- just as I have received this from My Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star.

NKJ Revelation 2:27 `He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels '-- as I also have received from My Father; 28 "and I will give him the morning star.

NRS Revelation 2:28 even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star.

YLT Revelation 2:27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron -- as the vessels of the potter they shall be broken -- as I also have received from my Father; 28 and I will give to him the morning star.

- Rev 22:16 Lu 1:78,79 2Pe 1:19

Related Passage:

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright **morning star**."

and I will give him the morning star - If we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture this reference clearly describes Christ Himself. This is surprising for Walvoord notes "various explanations of this expression have been given."

Revelation 2:29 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

NET Revelation 2:29 The one who has an ear had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

NLT Revelation 2:29 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

ESV Revelation 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

NIV Revelation 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

GNT Revelation 2:29 χων ο ς κουσ τω τ τ πνε μα λ γει τα ς κκλησ αις.

KJV Revelation 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

ASV Revelation 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

CSB Revelation 2:29 "Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

NKJ Revelation 2:29 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

NRS Revelation 2:29 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

YLT Revelation 2:29 He who is having an ear -- let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies.

- Rev 2:7

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches- Notice that in contrast to Rev 2:7, 11, 17, this exhortation follows the promises to the overcomers.

The First and the Last A B Simpson

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:13).

As we think of the friends of life, how few there are that were linked with our earliest associations and memories! There was a period when every friendship began, and many of those we love the best we only knew for the first time a little while ago. But here a Friend addresses us who was before all other friends, who loved us long before we knew the love of brother, or even mother; long before we were even conscious of our own existence. "The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love'" (Jeremiah 31:3a). Jesus is indeed the First. And then, how many of those that were the first in our life are not the last? The very mother, on whose sweet face our eyes gazed before they recognized any earthly countenance, has long since passed from our view. Only a few of the friends of youth remain, and how many of the fondest attachments of life have been like rivers that run into the desert and are lost amid the sands. But here we have One who will be there at the close, who will remain when all others have passed away, for Jesus is the Last. Amid the passing years and the passing forms of loved ones and the changing scenes of life, how sweet it is to know that Jesus is the First and the Last! Let us gather up by the help of the Holy Ghost some of the precious lessons of this wonderful name that covers all the present and the future.

The First

His preexistence

1. This expresses the eternal preexistence of Christ. We find Him constantly declaring this in His own addresses in the Gospel of John. "He was before me" (John 1:30b) is the witness of John to Him. "I came from the Father and entered the world" (John 16:28a) is His own testimony. "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58b). Even in the Old Testament we have some sublime pictures of the eternal Christ. "He will be called... Everlasting Father (or the Father of Eternity)" (9:6b) is Isaiah's picture. "Whose origins are from of old,/ from ancient times" (5:2) is Micah's picture.

Proverbs 8:22-31 is Solomon's inspired picture of the eternal Logos, His ancient love to the world and the men that He was coming in the fullness of the ages to redeem.

His preeminence

2. **This expresses His preeminence.** This also is most clearly taught by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures and claimed by Christ Himself. "That in everything he might have the supremacy [preeminence, KJV]" (Colossians 1:18b) is the Father's purpose regarding His dear Son, for His is the preeminence of deity. He is higher than all men, higher than all angels, very God of very God, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, the King of kings and Lord of lords. There is no doubt that this is what He claimed Himself, and for this claim His life was threatened again and again by the Jews, and taken at last in His final judgment and crucifixion. "He must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God" (John 19:7b) was their charge.

The hands into which we commit our souls are divine and infinite hands. The ransom which has been paid for our sin is of the infinite value of deity. The grace that is sufficient for our full salvation is the grace of the infinite God. The kinship to which He has raised us is nothing less than to be partakers of the divine nature and sons and heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Let us not fear to bring forth every diadem and crown Him Lord of all.

The work of creation and providence

3. **This expresses His relation to the work of creation and providence.** This thought is expressed by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Colossians in these strong and significant words: "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (1:16-17).

This expresses Christ's relation to the natural creation and to the affairs of providence. It was through His hand that the material universe was framed, and it is by His constant superintendence that the whole machinery of providence is carried on. By Him all things consist or, literally, "hang together." He is the cohesive force that holds the whole universe in order and harmony. All power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. Like the Roman centurion, all beings and forces are at the service of His will, and He can say to this one, "Go," and he goes, or to this one, "Come," and he comes, and to all things, "Do this," and they do it.

To Him we ascribe all the sublime descriptions that Jehovah gives us in the Old Testament of His sovereign power and glory. Every robe of majesty and might will fit the Son of God as perfectly as the Father, for it is He that does according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stop His hand from working, or say, "What are you doing?" In the midst of the throne ever sits the enthroned Lamb, while all angels and all creation sing in adoring reverence and love,

saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." (Revelation 5:12-13)

This is our Christ: the first and the last.

His relation to the Bible

4. This expresses also His relation to the Bible. Christ is first in these sacred pages. The one object of the Holy Scriptures is to reveal the person and portrait of Jesus. This is the key to its interpretation; this is the glory of its pages—Jesus in the story of creation, already planning the new creation; Jesus supreme above the ruins of the fall; Jesus in the ark, the rainbow and the dove; Jesus in the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, the ladder of Jacob and the story of Joseph; Jesus in the Paschal lamb, the desert manna, the smitten rock, the smoking sacrifice, the fragrant incense, the suffering scapegoat, the enrobed priest, the golden candlestick, the sacred ark, the sprinkled mercy seat, the hovering cherubim, the awful Shekinah, the glorious tabernacle and all its ministries and furniture; Jesus in the land of promise, in the temple of Solomon, in the story of Joshua, the Psalm of David, the throne of Solomon, the visions of Isaiah and the panorama of ancient prophecy as it unfolds toward the advent, the manger, the cross and the throne; Jesus in the apostles; Jesus in the apocalypse.

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. The face of Jesus can be traced like water lines in fine paper back of every page, for He is the Alpha and the Omega: the first and the last of this Holy Book.

His relation to redemption

5. This expresses the relation of Jesus Christ to redemption. He is the first in the plan of salvation. Long ago He was heard exclaiming, "I have come... I desire to do your will, O my God" (Psalm 40:7-8a). It has all been accomplished through Him, and His glory is all to return to Him, and He is forevermore to stand as the center and head of God's grandest work—the restoration of a ruined race, the salvation of sinful men. Christ is not only first in redemption: He is all. This winepress He hath trodden alone; none can share with Him this glory. His was all the cost; His alone the honor shall ever be. No name is so sublime in heaven as the Lamb, no song so loud as that which celebrates His redeeming love, and therefore all who receive this great redemption must give Jesus the supreme glory, or they cannot share it.

Relation to individual salvation

6. This expresses His relation to our individual salvation, for every soul must acknowledge Jesus as the first. "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16a), He tells us. The first desire to come to Him came from Him. The very hunger that longed for Him was His grace beginning to enter our hearts. He has loved us with an everlasting love and, therefore, with loving-kindness has He drawn us. Not only has He pardon for us when we repent, but He is exalted to give repentance to Israel and the remission of their sins. Not only will He fulfill our earnest prayers, but He makes intercession within us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Not only will He meet us in blessing if we will come to Him, but He will even take our will and work in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. His arms reach down to us at the lowest depth. His grace is beforehand in all its manifestations. Christ will take us at the very alphabet of Christian life and from the very beginning will count us His disciples and then will set us free. Let us fully learn this precious truth, and always take Him for the very thing we need the most and the first and even the very thing for which we ourselves are responsible and yet insufficient. He will not only do His glorious part, but He will enable us to do ours.

Relation to our Christian life and work

7. This expresses the relation of Christ to our Christian life and work. This is the true aim of a consecrated life—to make Jesus first. Let us give Him the first place in our heart, in our thoughts, in our aims and motives, in our plans, in our affections, friendships, occupations, our business, our pleasures, our families and our whole existence. Let us always come to Him first for help. Let us bring to Him the very first beginnings of temptation. Let us catch the lions and the dragons while they are young, and so shall we trample them under foot. And we will never see any old lions if we do so without fail, for they will all be disposed of before they have time to grow formidable. Let us take to Him the merest thing that needs help, whether it be for soul or body, for secular business or sacred experiences. Jesus first—let this ever be our simple watchword, and life's tangles will all be unraveled, will not have time to grow serious, and so the touchstone that will settle every question of perplexity and duty will be Jesus first. Will I do this? Will I please this person or Him? Will it be something else, or will it be Jesus first? Oh, how this will consecrate, elevate and glorify our life and enthrone Him and us with Him in a kingdom of constant peace and victory! We must bring the crowns and lay them at His feet and write on everything: "From now on, Jesus first."

The Last

The eternal existence of Jesus

1. This implies the eternal existence of Jesus. He is, as He Himself expressed it, alive for evermore; or, as the old prophet put it still more sublimely, the Father of Eternity. It is glorious to have one that covers all the future and has in His hand the scroll of every destiny and the control of every future event. The Lamb in the midst of the throne holds the sealed book of all our destinies, and forevermore can fix every event of our existence. No matter what is coming, Jesus is coming with it. Though it be trial, temptation or death, He will be there. The heavens and the earth will pass away, but He will remain. The friends we have known will disappear, but He will abide. We will change, but He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The things we commit to Him are committed against that day. The interests that He is guarding are safe forever. Beyond the smiling and the weeping, beyond the parting and the meeting, He stands in eternity with our title and our crown safe in His keeping. How often have we felt that the present sorrow or even death were nothing if it were all safe beyond, if it would be safe at last! Blessed be His name! He is the last, and His mighty

works reach beyond all present vicissitudes and guard our treasures and trusts forevermore. The things He gives us will stand. The things that are linked with Him are eternal.

There is One amid all changes
Who standeth ever fast;
One who covers all the future,
The present and the past;
Jesus is the Rock of Ages,
The first and the last.
Jesus is the first;
Jesus is the last;
Trust to Him thy future,
Give Him all thy past;
Jesus is the Rock of Ages,
The first and the last.

Finish His work

2. Christ will finish His work in us and carry to consummation all that He begins. Therefore, He is called "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2b). "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me" (Psalm 138:8a). "My sheep listen to my voice," He says, "and they shall never perish, no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27, 29). He takes us forever, and He will not leave us until He has done all that He has spoken of to us. He never leads His flock out to desert them in the hour of need. He never leads us out into the difficult enterprise without promising to stand by us and crown our work with success. He says of every true enterprise begun in His name and at His bidding, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you" (Zechariah 4:9).

The end and substance

3. Christ is not only the finisher of our life and work, but Christ Himself is the end and substance of all things. When we are done with things and people and see Him as He is, we shall find that His heart is the fountain of all love, His smile the substance of all joy, His life the life of all life, Himself the first and the last of everything, and we will have nothing that is not part of Him and linked with Him. Every face we see will simply reflect His beauty. Every joy we feel will be but a radiant from His heart. Every glory we wear will be but a reflection of His holiness. Every throb of our immortal life will be but a pulsation of His being, and Christ shall be all, and in all, and we will have reached the last line of the old chorus, "Everything in Jesus, and Jesus in everything." So let us step out writing over every day and hour and moment, "Jesus first," and we will find surely that Jesus is "the last." ([The Names of Jesus - A B Simpson](#) online)