



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Revelation

## Chapter 2

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# Introduction

This chapter includes four messages from the Lord Jesus Christ to four churches

- To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, The Loveless Church 2:1-7
- To the Angel of the Church in Smyrna, The Persecuted Church 2:8-11
- To the Angel of the Church in Pergamos, The Compromising Church 2:12-17
- To the Angel of the Church in Thyatira, The Corrupt Church 2:18-29



# Introduction

- These churches really existed
- But as Bishop Victorianus, St. Augustine and others say, that these messages are pertinent to any church in every age and to the believers in general at any time and place
- These are spiritual messages to all the believers
- The Lord speaks to the churches through their angels, that is their bishops, pointing to the pastoral responsibility, obligating them to carry their people's weaknesses, and care for the development of their children
- At the same time He inspires the people to accept God's guidance and commandments through His bishops and priests





# Introduction

These Epistles or messages are marked by certain features common to them all

- They are all dictated by the Lord Himself
- The command to write to the Angel of the particular Church
- One of the great titles of our Lord taken for the most part from the Vision in chapter. 1
- An address to the Angel of the Church, always commencing with 'I know,' describing the circumstances of the Church, exhorting to repentance or to faithfulness, providing a solution, and ending with a prophetic announcement
- A promise to "*To him who overcomes*" generally accompanied with a call to earnest attention, '*He who has an ear*'



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

Who is the *“angel of the church of Ephesus”*?

- It was most probably Timothy, who presided over that Church before St. John took up his residence there, and who is supposed to have continued in that office till 97 A.D., and to have been martyred a short time before St. John's return from Patmos
- St. Paul had founded that church where he served for three years (Acts 20:23), and wrote letters to her
- However, it may seem difficult to believe that St. Timothy is the one who *“have left your first love”* 2:4 because:
- St. Luke described him saying, *“He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium”* (Acts 16:2)



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- St. Paul described him saying, *“my fellow worker”* (Romans 16:21)
- And he also says, *“who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord,”* (1 Corinthians 4:17)
- *“for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.”* (1 Corinthians 16:10)
- *“who will sincerely care for your state.”* (Philippians 2:20)
- *“Timothy, a true son in the faith”* (1 Timothy 1:2)
- *“man of God”* (1 Timothy 6:11)
- *“you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,”* (2 Timothy 3:10)





# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- Most of the scholars believe that *“you have left your first love”* 2:4 was probably said about the church of which he was a bishop and not about him personally
- As we see St. Paul asked him to, *“remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,”* (1 Timothy 1:3)
- *“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”* (1 Timothy 5:20)
- *“Some men’s sins are clearly evident,”* (1 Timothy 5:24)
- Which leads us to believe that the message was to the church and not to him



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- Ephesus was the principal city of Asia the Less, it lays in the western parts of it, upon the Ionian Sea; a city of great riches and trade, but much given to idolatry and superstition, famous for the temple of Diana
- St. Paul was there twice
- The titles by which Christ is described at the opening of the seven epistles are mainly drawn from Revelation 1
- The Lord identifies Himself appropriate to the needs of each church





# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- The message comes in this epistle from, "*He who holds the seven stars in His right hand,*"
- The Church at Ephesus needed to remember their Lord as such
- As this church suffers from her "*Lukewarmness of love,*" there was a tendency to fall into an emotionless faith, strong against heresy, but tolerant of conventionalism
- There was great need that they should take heed unto themselves 1 Timothy 4:16



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- It is more fitting to be reminded of Him whose hand can strengthen and uphold them, and “*who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands*”, to supply them with the oil of fresh love (Zechariah 4:2-3; Matthew 25:3-4)
- He is the supreme Bishop and Head, not only of those Churches, but of all the Churches or congregations of His people throughout the world
- In other words, it is He who protects them, cares for them and encompasses them that is why He declares to her that it is He who holds the seven stars (the bishops) in his right hand



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- He who particularly preserves, and guides, and upholds, not only the bishops of those seven Churches, but all the genuine servants of His Gospel, in all ages and places
- He who wanders continuously without ceasing in His church, working for the salvation of every soul
- Before He tells her about her weakness, God gives her confidence saying, "*I know your works...*" I do not forget the work of your love, and I do not ignore your labor in spreading the knowledge of Christ and doctrine of the gospel, and your patient taking up and bearing the cross





# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- He whose eyes are *"as a flame of fire"* (Revelation 1:14) has perfect knowledge of his servants, and this knowledge is the basis of the praise and blame
- *"and that you cannot bear those who are evil."* They cannot endure or tolerate evil; zeal for pure doctrine characterized the Ephesians Church
- That is, they had no sympathy with the doctrines of false teachers or their practices, they were utterly opposed to them
- They had in every way shown that they had no fellowship with them
- St. Paul had warned the Ephesians elders of the appearance of false teachers Acts 20:28-31



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- And it appears from St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy, that there were then false teachers very busy in that church
- *"And you have tested those who say they are apostles"* They tested them, possibly, by the word of God, according to the rules given in it, *"test the spirits, whether they are of God"* (1 John 4:1)
- *"and have found them liars;"* And found that they had no such immediate mission, no authority from Christ
- In the church at that time there were some that falsely pretended an immediate call or mission from Christ, to preach what they did, but this church would not endure them



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- In verse 3 God continues in His praise to the bishop of Ephesus
- And for Me have labored actively in spreading the truth of My gospel, as well as submissively in the furnace of trials and persecutions
- After this encouragement, He came back to reproach the church in a very gentle way without hurting her feelings saying, *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”*
- Sweetly, God supports the bruised reed and inflames the smoking flax (Matthew 12:20), and firmly and honestly He declares her weakness, in order to repent and come back to her full health





# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- *“you have left your first love”* This is the fault and weakness of this church
- The love of many in this church, both toward God and their brethren, probably was cooled because of the weight of service and problems, though not wholly quenched
- This is a disease one may not feel it
- However, this is a great evil before God, *“If a man would give for love All the wealth of his house, It would be utterly despised.”* (Song of Solomon 8:7)



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- In verse 5 the Lord provides the remedy, the solution, and the answer: Remember, Repent, and Act
- As St. Jerome says that we are all exposed to fall. And falling cannot be taken as a sign that we were not one day raised up, or baptized with the Spirit, as some pretend. Falling does not need re-baptism but it needs repentance and action.
- Have a deep and lively conviction of your fall, be humbled and truly sorry for it before God, earnestly desiring to be forgiven and renewed, and bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance in all respects
- “*do the first works*”— Outwardly and inwardly, otherwise you will never regain the first love



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- *“I will come to you quickly”* The coming, of course, refers to a special visitation, not to the second advent
- *“remove your lampstand from its place”* It should no longer continue to be a church
- He will take away His ordinances, remove His ministers, and send them a famine of the word
- The threatening here is that, if they did not repent, etc., He would unchurch them; they should no longer have a priest, no longer have the word and sacraments, and no longer have the presence of the Lord Jesus





# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- God moves from reprimand to kindness by showing the good deeds of the church saying, “*you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate*”
- He is pleased to see His bride hates what He hates, and loves what He loves, sharing His behavior, His feelings and His thoughts, and following the path of His steps
- Augustine, Irenaeus, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian, have spoken largely concerning the Nicolaitans
- They were, as is commonly supposed, a sect of the Gnostics, who taught the most impure doctrines, and followed the most impure practices



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- They are also supposed to have derived their origin from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons mentioned Acts 6:5
- The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives, that adultery and fornication were tolerable, that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; and mixed several pagan rites with the Christian ceremonies



# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- He who wants to listen to God's voice has to listen to the Holy Spirit who speaks to all churches, for what He says to this church is what He says to all
- And what does He say? Tertullian answers, that He always says, *“repent”*
- *“To him who overcomes”* A promise and a reward
- The Spirit is really issuing one basic command: Overcome
- Those who are conquerors in fighting the good fight of faith, against the world, the flesh, and the devil
- To him who continues steadfast in the faith





# The Church of Ephesus 2:1-7

- Those who faithfully confesses Jesus, and are not led away by the stumble of the wicked
- *“I will give to eat from the tree of life”* by which is meant Jesus Christ himself
- The tree of life and water of life go together, Revelation 22:1-2, both implying the living with God eternally
- Jesus Christ Himself is the Tree of Life and to partake of Him is to live eternally



# The Church in Smyrna 2:8-11

- *“the angel of the church in Smyrna”* It is said that he is the bishop Polycarp
- Smyrna, the modern Ismir, has always been considered one of the most beautiful cities in Asia
- Smyrna was the nearest city to Ephesus, and for that reason probably was addressed in the second place
- It is about forty-five miles northward of Ephesus
- The city enjoyed great natural advantages, including an excellent harbor
- It was the natural outlet for the trade of the rich valley of the Hermus and regions beyond



# The Church in Smyrna 2:8-11

- By writing to the suffering church of Smyrna, who was about to be severely persecuted, the Lord wanted to assure her that He is the First and the Last
- That nothing would happen to His creation without His permission, and does not allow but what is for its good
- As He reminds her that He "*was dead and is alive.*" If He had died for her sake how cannot she bear death for His sake?
- He accepted death to tread down death, giving life to whoever dies with Him





# The Church in Smyrna 2:8-11

- He is a Living Savior; and it is very appropriate to refer to that fact here from the nature of the promise which He was about to make to the church at Smyrna: *"He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."* (Revelation 2:11)
- *"I know your works, and tribulation"* As if He says "My eyes does not part from you"
- Though the term know does not necessarily signify approval, yet, both as to the church of Ephesus and Smyrna, the particular works mentioned assure us, that God approved their patient suffering affliction for His name
- Whenever pain increases, the Lord declares abundance of His care for us



# The Church in Smyrna 2:8-11

- It was not easy being a Christian in Smyrna
- *“Poverty”* The Smyrneans were in extreme poverty
- It was probably due to the confiscation of their possessions and belongings because of their non-legal status
- Christianity was not one of the 'legal' religions approved by the Roman authorities
- This lack of legal recognition made it easy for non Christians to take advantage of them
- *“but you are rich”* As Ebn-El-Assal says, “He knows his richness because of his wealth in virtues and his steadfastness in hardships”
- And St. Jerome says: “Who becomes poor with Jesus becomes rich”



# The Church in Smyrna 2:8-11

- They are "wealthy" in the most important sense as expressed in 2 Corinthians 6:10, *"as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."*
- *"Jews"* Those who claim to be children of Abraham, but in reality are children of the devil
- These are the Israelites who have rejected Christ and in doing so have rejected the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- Bishop Victorianus believes that richness here lies in the fact that there are some of the bishop's children who refuse "the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews"... So the bishop's richness is his children's orthodox faith and straight life
- Satan wants to steal this richness by means of groups of wicked Jews who are "the synagogue of Satan."





# The Church in Smyrna 2:8-11

- The Lord encourages them to accept the tribulation
- The message is: the suffering is not over...more is coming but don't be fearful; be faithful and keep your focus on God
- The church goes through tribulation "*ten days*," the ten Roman persecutions that history recorded to us
- The number 10 represents perfection of order and could be used as a symbol of the perfection they would achieve as they suffered this persecution...from crosses to crowns
- And how does He encourage them? "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*"
- Without the cross there will be no crown



# The Church in Smyrna 2:8-11

- For the crown of life, the believer accepts every pain and tribulation enduring death all the day to attain "*the eternal life*," where there is no death!
- This message may be addressed particularly to Polycarp, he had much to suffer; and was at last burnt alive at Smyrna, about 166 A.D.
- Those who are *faithful until death* shall escape the eternal damnation of soul and body in the day of judgment
- The Church at Smyrna does not receive any word of reproach from our Lord
- They receive only words of love and encouragement

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- *“the angel of the church in Pergamos”* It was said that he was Kerios mentioned by Eusebius
- He was strong in faith and ended his life in martyrdom
- The city of Pergamos lies north of Smyrna
- The Roman governor resided at Pergamos and ruled the entire Asian province
- It was a sophisticated city, a center of Greek culture and education
- It has been described as a city of temples
- Its library was second only to that of Alexandria



# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- *“He who has the sharp two-edged sword”* Appropriate to His address having a twofold bearing, a searching power so as to convict and convert some (Revelation 2:13,17), and to convict and condemn to punishment others (Revelation 2:14-16)
- It not only rebukes and exposes sin, but it slays the ungodly, pointing out and determining the punishment they shall endure
- As the church had left her door open to strangers, consequently, many stumble-blocks were found therein
- The Lord appears as a jealous Judge who separates with the sharp sword His people from the strangers, even if they call themselves Christians

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- He is the Lord of the church who sends His word as a sharp sword, to separate what is right from what is wrong
- He cuts off what is from Satan, and this is always the effect of God's word
- *“where Satan's throne is”* Scholars give several possible interpretations to this reference to Satan's throne:
  1. The reference could be to Zeus' throne-like altar which was located high above the city
  2. Or it may be a reference to the prominence of Pergamos as the official cult center of emperor worship in Asia
  3. Or it may even refer to a community of false Jews' another synagogue of Satan

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- *“And you hold fast to My name”* Testifies that they confessed Jesus alone as Savior and Lord and did not waiver in the face of persecution even though this results in the martyrdom of a member of their community named Antipas
- But he asking them remember that they have "*Antipas the faithful martyr,*" who witnesses that it is possible for the believer to hold firm until death, for the sake of faith, whatever the conditions are
- The historian Andrea spoke to us about this martyr as a well known person to him; he was martyred by burning him to death
- He was offered to be saved but refused



# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- God knows the hard times this church goes through, since she is where the “*evil spirit*” dwells
- For this reason, Christ regards the church at Pergamos as faithful
- Satan, the deceiver, will cause believers to be thrown into prison and even killed
- “*where Satan dwells*” The repetition of this idea showed how intensely the mind was fixed on the thought, and how much alive the feelings were to the malice of Satan as exhibited at Pergamos

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- He reprimands firmly but gently, *“I have a few things against you.”*
- This group stumble the church, as Balaam did to his people in the past (Numbers 25:1-2, 31:16)
- Balaam taught Balak to put a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel; that is to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication
- Israel could not be cursed, but they might be made to bring a curse upon themselves by yielding to sin; so the counsel of Balaam was to tempt them through the women of Midian

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- *“Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD” (Numbers 31:16)*
- The sin of Israel in this case was not only fornication with pagan women but also eating the meat sacrificed to the false god which amounted to “adultery” on the part of Israel
- He reprimands them for eating what was offered to idols before he blames fornication, because, as the Fathers tells us, that greed precedes falling in adultery



# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- Balaam is the biblical prototype of the religious compromiser (Numbers 25:1-3, 31:16; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11)
- A similar temptation was endangering the Church in Pergamos
- The Christians at Pergamos were being "seduced" by a 1<sup>st</sup> century Balaam to compromise their Christian doctrine to fit in with secular Roman culture
- As for the doctrines of Nicolaites, it has been already discussed
- It appears that there were some in the Church at Pergamos who held eating things offered to idols in honor of those idols

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- They associated with idolaters in the heathen temples, and partook with them in their religious festivals
- When He reprimands the church for the teachings of the Nicolaites, it is enough to tell her that the people are holding to what He hates
- God reprimands the bishop because of the few who deviate, and as St. Augustine says, “We, as bishops, are blamed because of the crimes of the wicked and not for our crimes, even if some of them do not know us”

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- The bishop is obliged to repent quickly because of the sins and deviation of the minority, as they are his children and he is responsible for them before God
- The whole body of the Church represented by him, is demanded to repent: because not only are the Nicolaitans guilty of the sins their doctrine involved, but the whole Church (and more especially its Bishop, if we suppose him to be intended) is more or less guilty, for having extended to them the toleration which the Church of Ephesus was praised for refusing
- Repent is a key word here
- "*I will come ... quickly*" Failure to repent will bring judgment



# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- Once again there is the repeated pattern of chapter one with the reference to 1:16 *"the sword of my mouth"* but with an allusion to the drawn sword with which the angel of the Lord confronted Balaam on his way to curse Israel
- The spiritual Balaamites of St. John's day are to be smitten with the Lord's spiritual sword, the word or "rod of His mouth."
- As for the reward for overcoming these stumbling blocks, it is the eating of the hidden manna!
- How wonderful it is that God offers us His holy Body and Blood, the heavenly manna (John 6:45-51), to take it as a guarantee

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- “*the hidden manna*” is a symbol of the love of God and an indication that we are His new nation; His body and blood
- The allusion is to the pot of manna which had been laid up in the ark and was hidden no one can see it
- Then after the destruction of the Temple the pot of manna disappeared
- This manna was hidden, but Christ promises to give it to him that is conqueror
- Manna came from heaven, and it is heavenly food

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- When the warrior passes from the fight into the city, the food which came down from heaven will be given to him in fullness
- It is a beautiful thought that as soon as the man, weary with conflict, enters the land of peace, there is a table spread for him; not, as before, in the presence of his enemies,' but in the presence of the companions of his repose
- God gives us enjoyment while we are on earth, by giving us the heavenly food of the victors
- Then there is the promise of the blessing to those who persevere and are victorious



# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- St. John wanted to bring out the spiritual truth that the fountains of Christian life are hidden (Colossians 3:3), the world does not know us
- In eternity, those who refused to indulge the fleshly appetite are promised gratifications far higher, and hidden from the gaze of sense
- Jesus is the manna
- "*White*" and "*new*," are keywords in the Book of Revelation
- White is "the color of heaven," where white robes, white clouds, white horses, and white thrones abound (Revelation 1:14, 3:4-5,18, 4:4, 6:2,11, 7:9,13, 14:14, 19:11,14, 20:11)

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- And "new" is almost as frequent as "white" in the book which tells of a new heaven and a new earth, in which is the new Jerusalem; where the inhabitants have a new name, and sing a new song, and where all things are made new (Revelation 3:12, 5:9, 14:3, 21:1-2,5)
- “*white stone*”, as St. Jerome says, a jewel that shines by night as daylight
- By this he points to the Incarnate Word
- This is our reward and we do not accept any substitute for it
- Ebn-El-Assal believes that the pebble or the white stone indicates the kingdom on which it is written, in a new spiritual language known only by the children of the kingdom.

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- The *white stone* is a sign and witness of forgiveness and remission of sins
- A sign of righteousness and true holiness
- A sign of purity uncorrupted after the sin nature is destroyed
- The victor would be assured from the Redeemer, who distributes rewards, that his welfare would be secure
- Some people believe that it is white pebbles used by Roman and Greek judges to announce the innocence of the accused
- Some others thought that it is one of the precious stones placed on the chest of the high priest (Exodus 28; Leviticus 8)



# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- The giving of new names is not uncommon in the Holy Bible: for example, Abraham, Israel, Boanerges, Peter
- The name written on this stone would be designed as a token or pledge
- The new name expresses the step which had been taken into a higher, truer life, and the change of heart and the elevation of character consequent upon it
- As for the new name, no one knows it but the one who receives it, because the internal heavenly *joy "is not shared by a stranger"* (Proverbs 14:10), and is understood only by those who live in it and taste it
- It refers to the very special relationship everyone has with Christ

# The Church in Pergamos 2:12-17



- To the true Christian - the victor over sin - there is given some pledge of the divine favor which has to him all the effect of assurance, and which others do not perceive or understand
- Therefore, the hidden manna, the white pebbles and the new name are revelations of the winners delight in the Lord Jesus, our secret bread, our wealth and our happiness in whom rests our heart
- Bishop Victorianus believes that the hidden manna is the eternity, the white pebble is the adoption to God, and the new name written on the pebble is "Christian."

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- "*And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write.*" He is St. Irenaeus, St. Polycarp's disciple, and he is the second one who interpreted the book
- He was warm in spirit; and Jezebel, as we shall see, has offended him
- Thyatira (modern Akhisar, Turkey) was located just 35 miles southeast of Pergamos and the chief city of Macedonia
- Lydia, the seller of purple cloth who was converted by St. Paul, was from this city (see Acts 16:14-15)



# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- The first word of Christ to this church is the proclamation that He alone is the **Son of God!**
- It is interesting that this is the only place in the book of Revelation where this specific title of Christ is used
- It suits, as does the whole description of the Lord, the message which reflects the language of sovereignty and righteous sternness and firmness
- The *“eyes like flame”* will search the mind and the hearts (Revelation 2:23); the *“feet like fine brass”* will tread down the enemies, demolish firmly every evil, and smooth the path before them, who will have power over the nations

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- Also in the description of the Lord as “*who has eyes like a flame of fire*” the meaning that the pastor might discern every detail concerning his children's life
- St. John Chrysostom says, “The bishop has to be cautious. He has to have a thousand eyes, fast to see, his insight should not be dark... He has to be very vigilant, warm in Spirit, inflamed, as if he was inhaling fire. He has to be on his guard for all and caring for everyone.”
- As for firmness, St. John Climacus says: “He who pastors the sheep does not have to be neither a lion nor an ewe.”

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- It is beautiful to notice that Jesus Christ, in this letter, says all He can of praise before He utters a word of blame
- In verse 19 He presents the great merits of the church and her virtues and He reveals that He does not forget her works, her love to God and each other especially to the poor and distressed, her service, her faith, her patience and perseverance under afflictions and persecutions and her constant growth, they not only retained what they had received at first, but grew in grace, and in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ



# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- *“and as for your works”* The continued labor of love, and thorough obedience
- The amazing thing is that He puts her works, love and service before faith, because God does not accept the theoretical and dry faith
- And He does not distinguish faith from works and vice versa

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- Again, the Lord as usual, reveals the weakness in verse 20
- In spite of all the good works of the church at Thyatira, this church suffers from a great defect
- The elders were allowing false doctrine to have a place in the teaching of the church
- Jesus again calls this heresy by a symbolic name as He had before in the letter to Pergamos (Balak and Balaam)
- This time the heresy is identified with Jezebel

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



## Who is this Jezebel?

- a) It is said that she is the bishop's wife, as it appears in the Greek and Syrian texts, "*the looseness of your wife Jezebel.*" For she followed Jezebel's track (I Chronicles 18:21), pretending to be a servant, while she was spreading the *Nicolaite thoughts*
- b) She is a pagan, who pretended to be a Christian, and she displayed zeal in worshipping, which made the bishop entrust her with some services in the church, so she was corrupting and misleading



# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- c) She is a rich Christian lady who used her wealth and her influence in misleading
- d) Epiphanius thinks that she is an indication of the ladies, the followers of the heretic Valentinus and their names are Prescella, Maximiella and Cantilla

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- e) She is an indication of a group of heretics and a symbol of evil and was called Jezebel because
1. As Jezebel corrupted Ahab's rule, those corrupted the pastoral work by spreading the strange thoughts
  2. She is an atheist and a pagan in her inner thoughts pushing others towards evil
  3. She is a killer of the prophets and she hated them
  4. She was spreading the spirit of fornication, corrupting the simple people's minds and pushing them into spiritual fornication

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- The remedy concerning Jezebel and her lovers: “*And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent*“ (v 21)
- This woman had been given time (and probably instruction in her errors) to repent "of her fornication" and she had refused
- In the literal sense it would appear that Jezebel had actually encouraged God's people to commit physical fornication in connection with the pagan religious rites of the trade association
- On the other hand, the word "fornication" has a long biblical tradition as a symbol of rebellion against God (Ezekiel 16 & 23)



# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- St John will also describe the Great Harlot of Babylon' with reference to the biblical story of Jezebel, the harlot queen' in Revelation 17:5,16 and 19:2, and he will identify her with apostate Judaism
- According to the Mosaical law, the punishment of idolatrous seducers was not to be delayed at all, but God sometimes showed mercy; and now much more under the Christian privilege, though that mercy is often abused, and thus produces the contrary effect, as in the case of this Jezebel, Ecclesiastes 8:11

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- In spite of her evil deeds inside the church corrupting many people's mind, probably prolonging her life, so that in her old age she may realize the truth, but she insisted on evil doing
- For this reason God is disciplining her with illness saying:  
*"Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed"*
- Another kind of bed than she has sinned in and by, not a bed of ease and pleasure, but of pain and torment
- Nor shall the seduced escape, they shall also be cast into pains and torments of conscience, or afflictions more physical, either from the more immediate hand of God, or the hands of men

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- So in Isaiah, the bed is made a symbol of tribulation, and anguish of body and mind, Isaiah 28:20; Job 33:19
- But the end of the verse holds out hope: "*unless they repent of their deeds*" holds out the prospect of mercy
- This is a theme throughout the book of Revelation
- The book is full of divine judgments but always there is the prospect of divine deliverance for those who repent



# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- "*And I will kill her children*" Refers to her followers
- It is not for her sake and her children; but for the rest so that they may not corrupt with her
- And shall all the churches near Thyatira know, that I am a God who do not only take notice of overt, scandalous acts, but of the secret thoughts, intentions, counsels, and designs of men's hearts, Psalm 7:10; Jeremiah 11:20, 17:10

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- And that I am a just God, who will deal with all according to their works
- And this is the pledge that they receive on the judgment day, as the apostle says, *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds”* (Romans 2:4-6)

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- "*But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira.*" "And" before "*the rest*" is not as a conjunction but is to specify, as if he was saying, "I say to you the rest" who are in Thyatira who have not this doctrine or did not follow Jezebel, those who have kept themselves from being led astray by these delusions
- "*the depths of Satan*" The deep arts of deceit practiced in his kingdom, to bring in all sorts of corruption, by teaching men to account things that are wicked and offensive; "*as they say*"
- Those seducers call their doctrine deep things, great mysteries revealed to them; as there are the deep things of God, 1 Corinthians 2:10, so these seducers would pretend their doctrines also were deep things: Christ calls them the devil's mysteries, deep things of Satan



# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- The rest, God talks to them, "*I will put on you no other burden*"
- "*But hold fast what you have till I come*" As Bishop Victorianus says, God does not give them other laws and duties as a harder burden. It will be enough that they hold fast to what they have until God comes. Thus He declares to them His love; He does not want to increase this burden, as He urges them to persist until the end
- Jesus does not place any other requirements on these faithful
- They are to continue practicing the essentials of faith by remaining faithful to their orthodox doctrine and standards until Christ comes with tribulation to judge the heretics who are illegally controlling the community

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- The bishop's opposition to Jezebel and her followers could cause disturbance, and trouble in the church, and someone may think that the bishop's position is shaken
- But the Lord affirms the contrary saying, "*And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations*"
- This passage is a reference to God the Father's promise to the Son in Psalm 2:8-9
- "*he who overcomes*" They are promised a share in the messianic reign of Jesus Christ in the world to come

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- No matter how much faithful Christians suffer now; Christ will be victorious and He will conquer all who oppose Him! Psalm 2:1-6
- God has given His Son *"all authority in heaven and on earth"* and Christ the King is with His Church until the end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20) and the gates of Hades cannot prevail against His Church (Matthew 16:18)



# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- And as he opposes Jezebel's deeds unto the end without fatigue or fear, he enjoys the Lord Jesus Himself according to the promise of the Lord, "*And I will give him the morning star*"
- As Bishop Victorianus says, "He had promised the morning star who dissipates the night and declares the light or the beginning of the day"
- Christ is about to give these victorious overcomers a further token of triumph: the Morning Star
- They will enjoy the Lord Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16)

# The Church in Thyatira 2:18-29



- The ultimate reward of each Christian is to be with His Lord in perfect communion
- All the promises and the rewards are to have Christ in eternity
- Jesus ends the letter with the same message that closes the other letters: with the reminder that God the Holy Spirit is speaking to the churches



# Discussion

- Do we still need to test everything that we hear and read as to its faithfulness to Gods Word? How do we go about this testing and evaluation?
- What are some examples of people in our own day who, like the Nicolaitans, use Christian freedom as an excuse to claim that they can be immoral and yet truly Christian? Who are they?
- A great deal is involved in being steadfast in the faith or persevering, depending on the challenge. But in verse 7 a great blessing is promised to those who persevere. Read I Corinthians 9:24-10:13 and list some things we need to do if we are to persevere in faithfulness.





# Discussion

- The First Apostolic Council, convened in Jerusalem, sent out a letter which outlined the God-pleasing answers to several practical matters troubling the early church. This letter is recorded for us in Acts 15:22-29. Which one of these verses in Acts speaks directly to the problems in Pergamos and how does it address the problem?
- The Christians at Pergamos were not careful about the influences of non-Christian society in their lives. Yet this is part of overcoming in v. 17. What are some of the non-Christian (*anti-Christian*) influences in your life and in what ways can you overcome these influences?



# Discussion

- What does the “synagogue of Satan” mean? What do you learn about Satan’s involvement from this passage?
- What does the “hidden manna” and the “white stone” mean?
- To the world the toleration of differing ideas is a virtue. What does God say of tolerating ideas which are different from His?
- How is the vision of Christ in chapter 1 used to encourage the churches in this chapter?