

THE REVELATION

The Things that Are – Part 2

LOOK UP! CHRIST IS COMING SOON! HALLELUJAH!

Today, we begin with the next two churches of the **Revelation** – Pergamum and Thyatira.

Read Revelation 2:12-13 (ESV) ¹² *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.’* 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.”*

The word Pergamum (Pergamos in the KJV) means ‘thoroughly married’ although not all Bible commentators agree. Ironside said Pergamum has two meanings: marriage and elevation. Others think it means citadel.

Pergamum had the first temple dedicated to Caesar and was a big promoter of the imperial cult. This is probably what is meant by Satan’s throne in verse 13. The city also had a temple dedicated to Aesculapius, the god of healing, whose insignia was the entwined serpent on the staff. You will recognize this as a medical symbol still used today. Satan, of course, is likewise symbolized as the serpent

Christ began His words to Pergamum by reminding them that these are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. **Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)** ¹² *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* This description is one of judgment. Pergamum was an important center for education, medicine, and religion. There was a great library in Pergamum that focused on book making. The fine, thin, tanned animal skin used for writing gained the name Pergamum sheeting. Today, it is called parchment. Pergamum would eventually lose its great library when Mark Anthony gave it to Cleopatra. To this city that was so captivated with words, Christ sent the message that His Word was the sharp, double-edged sword. This reminds me that the way to keep the Word of God is to write it permanently on our hearts. Then, if we lose our Bibles, we still have His Word.

Jesus mentioned Antipas. We know nothing about him other than he was a martyr for the sake of Christ. Jesus called him my faithful witness. He expects to find us faithful even in persecution. Some things were good but all was not well at Pergamum.

Read Revelation 2:14-17 (ESV) . 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.* ¹⁵ *So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.* ¹⁶ *Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.* 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.'

Christians at Pergamum began to live in worldliness and sins of the flesh – not so different from Christians today. The church at Pergamum was not living up the expectations of the One who died to free them from their sins.

The church was loyal in the faith but tolerated wrong views. It was being threatened by the doctrine of Balaam just as in Ephesus. In the Old Testament, Balaam was hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the people of Israel when they passed through the land of Moab on their way to Canaan. Balaam could not curse Israel, but he taught the Moabites to bring the men of Israel into Baal worship with its immorality. For this God would punish Israel. What Balaam could not accomplish with a curse he did so through seductive means. Just like the Ephesians, the church at Pergamum had trouble with the Nicolaitans.

The Lord gives them three promises in verse 17.

(1) *I will give you some of the hidden manna.* God fed the Israelites with manna during their wilderness travels, and a pot of the manna was placed in the Ark of the Covenant. Instead of eating *food sacrificed to idols*, the believers in Pergamum needed to feast on the Bread of Life – Jesus Christ through the Word.

(2) *I will give him a white stone.* In those days, a white stone was put into a vessel by a judge to vote acquittal for a person on trial. It was also used like a ticket to gain admission to a feast. Both would certainly apply to the believer in a spiritual sense: he has been declared righteous through faith in Christ, and he feasts with Christ today (**Rev. 3:20**) and will feast with Him in glory (**Rev. 19:6-9**). Taken from Warren Wiersbe's BE Commentary.

(3) *...with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.* Fructenbaum suggests, "Often a new name was given to a person after he had overcome certain spiritual problems. For example, Jacob who became Israel and Abram who became Abraham. McGee makes a different suggestion, "I do not believe that it will be a new name for you and me but that it will be a new name for Him. I believe that each name will be different because He means something different to each one of us. It will be His personal and intimate name to each of us." This is most likely unexplainable until we get to heaven.

Read Revelation 2:18-19 (ESV) ¹⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.' ¹⁹ "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first."

Wiersbe writes, "The longest message was sent to the church in the smallest city! Thyatira was a military town as well as a commercial center with many trade guilds. Wherever guilds were found, idolatry and immorality—the two great enemies of the early church—were almost always present too."

The description of what John saw in **Revelation 1:13-15** is the same as how Jesus describes Himself except John calls who he saw *like a Son of Man* while Jesus describes Himself as *the Son of God*. My simple explanation is that John recognized Jesus as the Son of Man he had spent three years with in the flesh. Jesus

described Himself as what He is now – *the Son of God*. In fact, this is the only time in **Revelation** this title is used. The city boasted a special temple to Apollo, the ‘sun god,’ which explains why the Lord introduced Himself as *the Son of God*. John had to deliver a message of severe warning and judgment to this congregation, which explains the description of the Lord's eyes and feet.

Again, we see Jesus’ example of praising the good before pointing out the faults in Thyatira. It is interesting to contrast the churches at Ephesus and Thyatira. The Ephesian church was weakening in its love, yet faithful to judge false teachers; while the people in the Thyatira church were growing in their love, but too tolerant of false doctrine. Both extremes must be avoided in the church. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

The believers in Thyatira were busy! They were involved in sacrificial ministry for the sake of others. What’s more, their works were increasing and characterized by faith, love, and patience; so the church was not guilty of just ‘religious activity.’

God never overlooks any good in a believer’s life whether there is much or little. In the days of Noah, when the world became so fearfully wicked, God spared the good (Noah and his family) before destroying the world with a flood. Sodom and Gomorrah were described as the most wicked cities of the ancient world and God brought judgment on those cities but not before taking out the good – Lot and part of his family. God knew all the goodness in Thyatira even the small things. God does not overlook the ministry of the little things. However, He did have something against the people of Thyatira.

Read Revelation 2:21-23 (ESV) ²¹ *I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.* 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.* 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,* 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.*

The Lord found much to expose and condemn at Thyatira. No amount of loving and sacrificial works can compensate for the tolerance of evil. The church was permitting a false prophetess to influence the people and lead them into compromise. It is not likely that this woman was actually named Jezebel because of the bad connotations that went with it and the name was also Phoenician in origin.

The name most likely is symbolic: *Jezebel* was the idolatrous queen of the Old Testament who enticed Israel to add Baal worship to their religious ceremonies. The seductive teaching of *Jezebel* was similar to the *doctrine of Balaam* that the Lord condemned in the church of Pergamum. Whoever this person actually was at Pergamum she taught believers how to compromise with the Roman religion and the practices of the guilds – all immoral in their makeup.

Not only was the church at Thyatira tolerant of evil, but it was proud and unwilling to repent. The Lord gave the false prophetess time to repent, yet she refused. Now He was giving her followers opportunity to repent. His eyes of fire had searched out their thoughts and motives, and He would make no mistake. the Lord threatened to

use this assembly as a solemn example to *all the churches* not to tolerate evil. Jezebel and her children (followers) would be sentenced to tribulation and death! Idolatry and compromise are, in the Bible, pictured as fornication and unfaithfulness to the marriage vows. Jezebel's bed of sin would become a bed of sickness.

Read Revelation 2:24-27 (ESV) 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.* ²⁵ *Only hold fast what you have until I come.* ²⁶ *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,* 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.*

Not everyone in the Thyatira church was unfaithful to the Lord, and He had a special word for them. They had separated themselves from the false doctrine and compromising practices of Jezebel and her followers, which Christ denounces as *the deep things of Satan*. The Lord had no special demands to make; He simply wanted them to hold fast in their resistance to evil. *Until I come* refers to Christ's return for His people, at which time He will reward them for their faithfulness. This is the first mention in **Revelation** of the Lord's coming for the church, the event we commonly call the Rapture. In contrast, the reference in **Revelation 1:7** is to Christ's return to earth in judgment, to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom.

Read Revelation 2:28-29 (ESV) ²⁸ *And I will give him the morning star.* ²⁹ *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

The first reference to the morning star as an individual is in **Isaiah 14:12 (ESV)** ¹² *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! The KJV uses the word *Lucifer, son of the morning*. The rest of the passage makes it clear that Isaiah's reference is to Satan. In verse 28 and **Revelation 22: 16**, Jesus is revealed as the morning star.*

The idea of a *bright morning star* is a star that outshines all the others, and Jesus is the One who is called *bright*. Satan was a morning star. Jesus, as God incarnate, the Lord of the universe, is the BRIGHT morning star. Jesus is the most holy and powerful *Light* in all the universe. So, while both Jesus and Satan can be described as ‘morning stars,’ in no sense is this equating Jesus and Satan. Satan is a created being. His light only exists to the extent that God created it. Jesus is the light of the world. Only Jesus' light is bright and self-existent. Satan may be a morning star, but he is only a poor imitation of the one true bright morning star, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

A morning star in nature appears just before dawn, when the night is coldest and darkest. When the world is at its bleakest point, Christ will burst onto the scene, exposing evil with his light of truth and bringing his promised reward. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*. Our Bright Morning Star is coming for His children!