

# **The Book of Revelation**

**Back to the Future**

**By**

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## Revelation 1:1-8

### Introduction

Dr. James Hamilton, in his commentary on Revelation wrote – “Persecuted people tend to feel persecuted. Persecuted people are not normally inclined to feel that God has blessed them, and persecuted people are not normally inclined to praise God”. And I would add to that, that suffering people tend to only think about suffering. And people who live in a fallen and broken world tend to be conditioned in their thinking that this is all that there is. And those who live for the now tend to only think about the now. But the book of Revelation is intended to change our outlook on life. To move the persecuted person towards praise, the suffering person towards hope, the person who is conditioned to live in a fallen and broken world to believe that there is a better world coming and the person who tends to lives for the now to be warned that he or she will have to give an account for how they are living in the now in the future.

### Background & Setting:

Many Bible scholars [theologians] conclude that the book of Revelation was written in AD 95 or 96 [during the reign of the Roman emperor Titus Flavius Domitian. The emperor had demanded that he be worshiped as “Lord and God” and the refusal of the Christians to obey his edict led to severe persecution. [Warren Wiersbe]

Therefore, the book of Revelation was written by a man who suffered for being a witness to the truth to people who were under the threat of suffering. This revelation wasn’t given to a false health wealth prosperity preacher who claims that it is a sin for Christians to suffer or to name and claim person who wishes to escape from the reality of pain, or an idol worshiper of comfort, nor to one who compromises the truth in order to avoid suffering for Jesus, but to a man who was willing to suffer for Jesus. And here’s an interesting truth, you will enjoy the book of Revelation more if you are of suffering in this life. Because suffering people are tired of suffering. And this book teaches that suffering people will soon suffer no more, that being tired of suffering doesn’t mean you give up or give in, but you give it over to the Lord. But if you are not suffering, if life is pleasant for you, then this book will only be intellectually stimulating to you, it will be approached based on academic reflection and interpreted based on superstitious musings. But the true meaning of the book of Revelation is all about suffering and triumph for the people of God at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the first eight verses of Revelation introduce us to purpose of the book. This is referred to as the prologue.

### Exposition:

Two reasons why reading the book of Revelation will bless the church: The 1<sup>st</sup> reason why reading the book of Revelation will bless the church is because: The church will be blessed in knowing that the time is near for evil to end [vv. 1-3]

**[1] The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it [KJV “signified it”] by His angel to His bond-servant John,**

Much of what we can understand about this book is given by the statement at the beginning of verse 1: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” – the book is called “Revelation” because that is the first word at the beginning of the verse in the original. “Revelation” is the Greek word Apokalupsis, which when transliterated in English is pronounced “Apocalypse,” which means [uncovering what was once hidden, a laying bare, to disclosure; nom. fem. singular]. The first point I want you to notice is that the book of Revelation is not written to confuse, obscure or hide its meaning but to clearly reveal God’s plan concerning the future. The second point I want you to consider is that the book is referred to as the Book of Revelation, not the book of Revelations. It’s singular not plural. There is only one Revelation being given here.

“of Jesus Christ” – states both the origin and content of this book. The origin of this book can be understood and translated as – “The Revelation from Jesus Christ” [subjective genitive] because the rest of the verse declares that this revelation was given to Jesus Christ from God the Father to show to His slaves. But also, since the content of the book is revealing what will take place in the future in and through Jesus the content of this book can be understood and translated – “The Revelation about Jesus Christ”. This prophecy is centered in Jesus. You cannot talk about end time prophecy without mentioning the main subject of end time prophecy and that is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is both the medium and the message of Revelation. The medium is seen in the next statement: “which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants” – “God gave Him” – **Scrip. Ref:** Eph. 1:9 – He [the Father] made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him; [10] the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.... [the Father] who works all things after the counsel of His will – What Jesus Christ reveals from the Father is concerning Himself as it relates to the Father’s purpose to exalt His Son before the world.

“His bond-servants” [tois doulois – to the slaves – refers to those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. Christians are slaves because when God saves you, you have a desire to do His will. Christians are set free from being slaves to sin to being slaves to God.]. Now the message given from the Father to the Son to give to us is seen in the next statement: “the things which must soon take place” – this phrase is repeated in Revelation 1:19 – “the things which shall take place after these things”. This refers to the content of the book. The book is concerning the things that will take place in the future. Now there are 4 interpretive views concerning what the phrase “the things which must soon take place” mean:

**4 Interpretative Views:** 1] The preterist perspective... suggests that most of the material in Revelation is about events taking place in the first century, often prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, in AD 70.

2]. Another approach has been called “historicism” .... Treating the book as a panorama of church history from John’s time to the second advent. Revelation as predicting the major movements of Christian history. [there have been many esteemed advocates of the historicist approach – Wycliffe, Know, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Wesley, Edwards, Finney, Spurgeon]

3] The idealist view, the timeless symbolic approach... the allegorical or symbolic hermeneutic espoused by the Alexandrian church fathers... understands Revelation to depict the cosmic struggle of good and evil while forecasting the eventual triumph of God’s purpose.

4] The futurist view of Revelation regards chaps. 4-22 as future prophecy. Therefore, we will interpret the phrase “the things that must happen soon” based on the futurist view. And here’s the reason, the futurist view takes into consideration OT prophetic literature. In other words, we don’t look outside the Bible to find the meaning to the book of Revelation we look inside the Bible. In fact, it has been estimated that 278 of its 404 verses in the book of Revelation all allude to OT prophecy from the book of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah. There are over 500 verses in the Bible that predict Jesus Christ’s return, that factors into one out of every 25 verses in the NT affirming the truth of the Second Coming.

**Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 11:4 – But 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 And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked [10] In that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, and His resting place will be glorious

**Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 25:8 – He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth.

**Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 9:6-7 – For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness, From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

2 Tim. 2:12 – If we endure, we will also reign with Him

The message of Revelation is simple; the time is near for the end of all evil. “and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John”; “He sent and communicated it” – [KJV “signified it”]; “communicated it” [‘semaino’ – to make known – the word is translated in the Gospel of John as signs – so you can translated “to make known by signs” – so the communication of this Revelation is given in symbols, numbers, colors, names and creatures.] lit. “He made it known by way of having it sent” [“sent” apostello – aorist participle active, nom. mas. singular; modal participle]; – there are three intermediaries here – one divine, Jesus, the other angelic and the last human.

“John” is none other than the apostle John the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, the one who referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved in the Gospel of John. John outlived the rest of the apostles. **Scrip. Ref:** John 21:22 – Jesus said to him [Peter], “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me? As a result of this statement, it was rumored that John the apostle would not die but Jesus did not say that. But we know that John would not die until he had recorded the vision of Jesus’ second coming.

**[2] who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.**

“testified” [maptureo – to bear witness; aorist indicative active; 3rd person singular]; “to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” refers to the book of Revelation, “even to all that he saw” – John suffered because of his testimony of Jesus.

**[3] Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.**

“Blessed” [makarios – highly favored; this is a pronouncement of God’s grace to enrich to your soul. This is not a wish but a prophetic pronouncement] This is the first of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation [14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14]; There is a 3 fold blessing: **1] “he who reads”** [anaginosko – to read; to know accurately; to distinguish between; present participle active nom. mas. sing.]. If you notice “he” is singular, “those who hear” is plural. In the early church there was a practice of the preacher reading the Scripture aloud to the congregation. This practice was borrowed from the worship services conducted in the synagogues. **2] “those who hear”** [who listen attentively] **3] “and heed the things which are written in it”** – “heed” [tereo – to keep, to observe, to obey; present participle active] There is a blessing for you when you apply the commands given in this book – keep reading, keep hearing and keep obeying is the only way by which God’s grace will enrich your soul. Why should we do this? “for the time is near” – “time” [Kairos – fixed and definite time] The church age is the final age before the events leading up to the Lord’s return take place [**Scrip. Ref:** 1 John 2:18 – Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming; 1 Pet. 4:7 – The end of all things is at hand; Rom. 13:11 – And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> reason why reading the book of Revelation will bless the church is: The church will be blessed in knowing that the Triune God is for His people [vv. 4-8]:

**[4] John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace and you to peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before the throne,**

“to the seven churches” – This is the first of the number “seven” mentioned in this book. Next you will have seven Spirits, seven lampstands, seven stars, seven horns, seven eyes, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven angels, seven peals of thunder, seven heads, seven plagues, seven mountains, seven kings. Seven is the number of completeness.

These seven churches typify the spiritual condition of all the churches in Asia Minor [modern day Turkey] as well as all the churches throughout church history up till our present time. “Grace to you and peace” – this is the only book in the NT written to the churches that receives greetings from each member in the Godhead. And like the greetings in the NT letters grace always comes before peace. You need God’s unmerited favor before you can experience God’s uninterrupted peace. This greeting is not a prayer wish but an acknowledgement of what every believer has and will continue to experience because of who they belong to.

No matter what is happening in your life you are always under grace because you belong to God – it could be worse and it will work for your good; no matter what God purposes to happen to you on the outside, peace is always available to you on the inside. “from Him who is and who was and who is to come” – lit. “the One who is [being] and the One who was and the One who is Himself coming”; “the One who is” He is ever present, never absent; He governs time but He is never governed by time; “the One who was” – the One who was in the OT is the same One who is [now] – He has not changed He is still Jehovah Jireh, He is still Jehovah Nissi; He is still a Strong Tower, He is still the Most High God, He is still the Shepherd of Psalm 23, He is still the Great I Am, He is still the lily of the valley; and the One who is, is the same “One who is to come” – I Am that I Am.. God cannot change. “from the seven Spirits who are before the throne” – “seven” – the number of fullness; “Spirits” – some believe this is referring to angels, but angels are not in the place to pronounce to grace and peace on the same level with God. Plus, angels are not called “spirits” in Revelation. This is referring to the Holy Spirit: **Scrip. Ref:** Rev. 4:5 – “And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God”; Zech. 4:2 – And he said to me, “What do you see? And I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on it; [5] So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” [6] Then he answered and said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.” It’s not by our might that we can make it through this life but only by His Spirit. Praise God, that the fullness of the Spirit is available to us not partial or half of His enablement. The church needs the fullness of the Spirit.

**[5] and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood**

“the faithful witness” – lit. “the Witness, the Faithful One” – Jesus is testifying throughout this book that those who persevere through suffering will be rewarded in the end. He who says this is Faithful – He won’t let you down, He is absolutely reliable and dependable to bring about what He has promised. “Firstborn from the dead” – “firstborn” [prototokos – protos – first; tikto – to bring forth; to bear]; **Quote:** Paige Patterson – “this metaphor is particularly arresting since normally life can only emerge from existing life”; “and the ruler of the kings of the earth” – Jesus is right now the King of kings and Lord of lords. And how this truth applies to the book of Revelation is important because if Jesus is not the ruler of the kings of the earth, then He cannot

reveal in detail what is soon to happen if He cannot control what is happening now. If Jesus is ruling over the kings of the earth now, then He is also directing them towards God's predetermined ends. The exaltation of His Son. "to Him who loves us" [agapao - present participle active; dat. mas. sing.]; "and released us from our sins by His blood" – "released" [luo – to unfasten; to loose; to set free; aorist participle active; dat. mas. sing.] "by His blood" lit. "in His blood". The present tense of love and the past tense of released proves that Christ's death for our sins in the past is a continuous expression of His love for us in the present. The One who loosed us from our sins, is the One who never stop loving us since that time. Even when you sin, He still loves you because of what He already accomplished by His blood. Christ loves us in that He won't condemn us. He may cause us to suffer but He will never destroy us. He even loves us in our sufferings by strengthening us, sympathizing with us and interceding for us. If we did not have this ministry of Christ, we would be worst off. Love is not defined by receiving what you want but receiving what you need that you do not deserve, His support. This is how grace and peace is bestowed on you from the Father, the Spirit and the Son – the Father – the One who is, who was and who is to come – grace and peace; the Spirit in His fullness – grace and peace; the Son who loves you and released us from our sins – grace and peace.

**[6] 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.**

"He has made us" – "made" [poieo – to make; aorist indicative active; 3rd sing.]; "to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father"; "kingdom" – the realm of God's benevolent favors ruling over His own. How do you become a part of this kingdom? **Scrip. Ref:** John 3:5 – Jesus answered, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"; "priests" [access]. If you are not in the kingdom, you don't have access. Being in the kingdom gets you into the theatre. Being a priest gives you direct access backstage to the Famous One. "kingdom" is the backstage pass at the concert. Being in the balcony doesn't guarantee a backstage pass. Sitting in the front row doesn't guarantee a backstage encounter. You need a pass to go behind the curtain and meet the stars. The kingdom gives us the backstage pass. Being priests means we have direct access – listen, worrying is refusing to us the privilege given to you to go directly to God for your needs, fear, doubt and discomfort. How does believing priests function? You persevere by performing your priestly duties – sacrifice and service; sacrifice – surrender yourself to the Lord; service – do His will no matter what.

"to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" – This first doxology is attributed to Jesus. He should be praise because of who He is and what He has done for us. Jesus is so worthy that there is no end to acknowledging it. Greatest Of All Time [GOAT] only fits Jesus because it will never be challenged or brought into question.

**[7] BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.**

This is the first prophetic oracle in the book. “Behold” [idou]; “He is coming” [erchomai – to come; present indicative middle voice; 3rd person singular]; “with the clouds” – **Scrip. Ref:** Acts 1:11 – They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven. How did He go to heaven Acts 1:9 – a cloud received Him out of their sight; “every eye will see Him” – “will see” [orao – to see; to look at; **future** indicative [fact]; middle voice; 3rd sing.; lit. every eye will see for itself]; “who pierced Him” – “pierced” “those who pierced Him” – [ekkevteo – to pierce; aorist indicative; active 3rd person plural; same verb used in John 19:37 – “They shall look on Him whom they pierced” Zech. 12:10] Those who rejected and crucified Jesus did not witness His resurrection or His ascension. The only memory of Jesus they have was a bloody man with nails driven through His hands and feet, with a crown of thorns on His head. This cannot be the way the Son of Man is to be remembered by His enemies. He will come back not in humiliation but in exaltation and every eye will see Him; “will mourn” [kopto – to cut; to smite; **future** indicative middle voice; 3rd person plural]

**Scrip. Ref:** Dan. 7:13 – “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him;

Zech. 12:10 – “And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.

Matt. 24:30 – “and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

“So it is to be” [nai – yea, assuredly, even so,]; Yes, so be it. People mock, dismiss and ridicule the church now but when Christ comes back there will be weeping in terror. Even so, Amen!!!

**[8] “I am Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”**

“I am” [ego eimi = ego is emphatic – I and no other am]; Alpha and Omega – those who are being addressed in these seven churches are Greeks. So, John refers to the first and last letter of the Greek Alphabet to speak of the eternality and all-knowing nature of God. Letters make up words, words convey knowledge. God the Father is everything from A-Z:

God is **Almighty; Beautiful; Compassionate; Deliverer; Everlasting; Faithful; Good; Holy; Immanent; Just; Kind; Lovely; Merciful; Near; Omniscient; Provider; Qualified; Refuge; Sovereign; Trustworthy; Unchanging; Victorious; Wonderful; X – Excellent; Yahweh; Zealous** for His glory

“the Almighty” [panto-krator – He who holds sway over all things [this title is ascribed only to the Father in the NT – 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22]; If He created and sustains the entire universe [planets, asteroids, comets, black holes, stars, suns, moons, and solar systems, why would you think He cannot sustain you?

## **Revelation 1:9-20**

### Introduction:

In the New Testament we are given Four Gospel accounts which record for us the life, ministry, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In these gospel accounts we are given proof of His humanity with His genealogical record, His place of birth, the place of His upbringing, His trade, His various human emotions during His earthly ministry of 3 years. As well as accounts of His deity as attested by His own statements of equality with God, and the demonstration of His power by signs and miracles.

But nowhere in these Gospel accounts are we given any descriptions of Jesus’ looks. We are not told how tall Jesus was, what color was His eyes, His hair nor skin complexion. And yet, since the 4<sup>th</sup> century [300 AD] there have been hundreds of depictions of what artists and sculptors have assumed of His looks. Typically, these representations of Jesus reflect the culture and ethnic identity of the artist. The most common and popular image in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is an American representation is of a fully bearded Jesus with blue eyes and blonde hair. There are painting of Jesus depicted as an Ethiopian in the Coptic churches in Africa, as an Asian man in China, as a Spanish man, and as a Jamaican man. But those who hold to the biblical description of Jesus as a Jew would describe Him as having olive colored skin, brown eyes, long black hair and a hooked nose. A famous painting of Rembrandt entitled the “Head of Christ” shows a young olive-skinned Jewish man, only half-emerging from the shadows.

But I believe that the reason why the Holy Spirit would not allow Matthew, Mark, Luke or John to describe what Jesus looked like in His humiliation is because what’s most important is not what He looks like but who He is.

### Exposition:

Two reactions when the Church sees Jesus as He is: The 1<sup>st</sup> reaction when the Church sees Jesus as He is will be: The church will experience hope-filled fortitude in Jesus during the difficulties of life [v. 9]:

**[9] I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and the perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.**

“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and the perseverance which are in Jesus”; “I, John” – this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time John has identified himself in this book [1:1, 4]; “your brother” – he didn’t write your apostle. By John stating he is our brother reminds us that the church is a spiritual family united to God who is our Father by the blood of His Son, Jesus, who is our elder brother; “fellow partaker” [sug-koinonos – a participant with others; fellowship with; one who shares together]; “in the tribulation” [thlipis – distress; pressure]; “and kingdom”; “and perseverance” [hupo-mone – steadfastness; endurance; lit. to remain under; bearing up under pressure] “which are in Jesus” – Every tribulation has a glory side to it, which is the kingdom intent to it, which enables us to persevere. There are some pressures in life you will have to deal with for the rest of your life – emotional grieving pressure, physical pressures, but what causes us to have hope-filled fortitude in these pressures is knowing that 1] it will not last always; 2] it will end in everlasting joy/victory; 3] Jesus will get me through this ‘in Jesus’ – in who He is – Savior, Strengthener, Sanctifier, Sympathizer, Helper, God with us, and God who is salvation; “in Jesus” – the fact that Jesus wants you to place your trust in Him in the midst of tribulations proves that you are suffering for Jesus while in Jesus. We share the same God, saved by the same Lord, redeemed by the same blood, and we share in the tribulations of life, the hope of the glory of the kingdom and the need to persevere in Jesus. There is one thing we have in common and that is we all have gone through difficulties, just came out of difficulties and about to go back into difficulties. You are not alone. You are in the right place if you have problems. We are here to encourage one another to persevere through our problems in Jesus. If you are in a trial, you are in the right place because we all are either in them, just came out of them or about to go back into them.

“was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” – “was on” [ginomai – aorist indicative; passive voice; 1 person singular; trans. “I came to be on”]; “Patmos” – was a small, rocky island about 8 miles long and 5 miles wide, located in the Aegean Sea some 40 miles southwest of Miletus. It may have been a penal settlement to which the Roman authorities sent criminals. Early Christian tradition says John was sent here during Domitian’s reign over Rome [AD 81-96] and was forced to work in the mines. The apostle John was in his nineties when he was sent to the prison, which means he was still going through tribulations even until his retirement years, but because he is in Christ, he can endure. So, John is locked up on a prison island in his nineties. But just in case you draw the wrong conclusion for why John was there he quickly says – “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

John wants us to know that he was not sent there because of an outstanding parking tickets, driving without a license, shoplifting, switching price tags on products in the marketplace or lying on his taxes, not because of any sin was he locked up on Patmos but because of his stance on the gospel. If you are going to suffer, make sure the intent is to glorify God not ruin your testimony.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> reaction when the Church sees Jesus as He is will be: The church will have a healthy fear of Jesus that will sanctify [vv. 10-20]:

**[10] I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,**

“I was in the Spirit” [ginomai – aorist indicative; passive voice; 1st person singular; trans. “I came to be”]; “the Lord's Day” – “The Lord's Day came to be the customary way of referring to Sunday by the end of the second century because it was the day of the week on which the Lord was raised from the dead.” [Thomas]; [it is interesting to note that in Greece the first day of the week is called the Lord's Day.... In Portuguese-speaking countries the same phenomenon occurs: Sunday is Domingo [Day of the Lord]. The first day of the week, was considered “the Lord's Day” in the early church because that was the historical day Jesus rose from the dead. In fact, Jesus appeared to His apostles after His resurrection twice on the Sunday. The Lord's Day should be the day we give ourselves to observing the activity of worshiping on Sunday.

**[11] saying, “[KJV - I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last] 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.”**

“write” [grapho – aorist imperative active 2nd person singular; a sense of urgency]; send” [pempo – aorist imperative active 2nd person singular]; “to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea” – [Geographical Background: These cities were centers of seven postal districts... The order of the names of the seven cities indicates the route the messenger[s] would follow in delivering the Apocalypse to its immediate addressees... Starting from Ephesus and moving clockwise, the party of messengers would have proceeded northward about 40 miles to Smyrna and about 40 miles to Pergamum. From Pergamum they moved in a southeasterly direction about 45 miles to Thyatira, then about 30 miles south to Sardis, then about 30 miles east-southeast to Philadelphia, and finally about 40 miles southeast to Laodicea. A messenger from each city would present the scroll to his own church who would read and probably make a copy of it before the remaining messengers moved on with the original to the next city. Thomas]

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

“I turned” [epi-strepho – to turn back; to turn to; aorist indicative active 1st person singular]; “to see” [blepo – present infinitive active; purpose infinitive]; “was speaking” [laleo – to speak;

imperfect indicative active 3rd person singular]; “And having turned” [epi-strepho – aorist participle active; nom. masc. singular; temporal participle – And (after) having turned]; “I saw” [eidov - aorist indicative active 1st person singular]; “seven golden lampstands” – “seven” is the number of completeness; “golden” – gold is a precious metal. These lampstands represent all churches which are precious to Jesus; “lampstands” – were stands for portable oil lamps. This is our purpose for existing as a church, not for style, not for dress, not for pride in our church history, not for the location of this edifice but to be a light in a dark world/community.

**[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.**

“and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man” – “in the middle” is a picture of the omnipresence of Jesus. He is ever present in the midst of His church, not as an idle bystander but as a sovereign Lord directly, controlling, orchestrating, navigating and ordering our lives for His glory; “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” – “one like a son of man” – John borrows this phrase from Dan. 7:13 – “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like the Son of Man was coming”. In the context of Daniel 7:13-14, the title Son of Man refers to His reign as King over the nations. Jesus is both Priest and King – we are priests unto God [6], but Jesus is our Great High Priest – He enters on our behalf to the Father to intercede for us, to sanctify us and to sympathize for us. What John records here is what he literally saw, but what he literally saw was the glorified and exalted Christ in symbolic form, which means these descriptions are symbolic of who He is in His person and work within the life of the church. He is the glorified Priest and King. Now these symbolic descriptions are repeated in some measure to 6 of the 7 churches in chapters 2-3. This lets us know that this is the depiction Jesus wants the church to have of Himself; “clothed” [enduno – to be clothed with; perfect participle middle/passive accus. masc. singular; trans. “having been clothed”]; “girded” [peri-zonuuo – aorist participle middle/passive voice; accus. masc. singular; trans. “having been girded” or “having girded Himself”]

**[14] His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.**

“He head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow” – “gray or white hair” is a picture of wisdom; “eyes were like a flame of fire” – holy omniscience. Jesus sees everything. He sees us as exactly as we are not what we pretend to be. Holy omniscience sees right through us to our hearts, our true motives. Jesus sees us not as what we pretend to be but who we really are. But let’s consider for a moment the relationship between the two attributes of Christ mentioned in verse 14 – wisdom and all knowledge. The relationship between these two attributes as it applies to our lives is comforting – the eyes of a flame of fire – sees everything, in other words, knows everything – everything actual, we call this reality – Jesus knows how you feel, what you are thinking, what you are trying to hide and all your inner secrets. He knows more about you than

you know about yourself; and He knows everything possible, some of the things you imagine, a wish, alternative scenarios, what if games – when we apply the attribute of His wisdom in this category, we deliver ourselves from seeking comfort in pretense, from trying to find escape into imaginary possibilities because when you put together the wisdom of Jesus with the all-knowing awareness of Jesus, you can only conclude that the reason why things are not as you would like them to be is because in the wisdom of Jesus He already saw what you are now imagining as a possible alternative to your life. But when He purposed your life before the foundation of the world it was His wisdom, the perfect determiner of the best plan for your life in light of His knowledge of all things possible, that decreed for you to be where you are, go through what you are going through, so that He might get the most glory by the deepening of your relationship with Him for your good. In other words, your life from Jesus' standpoint is not good but it could be better, but best because in His wisdom and knowledge there can be no better way that would bring Him the most glory: **Scrip. Ref:** Isa. 46:10 – Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'

In short, you cannot choose any better alternative to your life that will end as glorious as what Jesus has purposed for you. That's the point of the book, if you had the choice to change your life you would make life much easier to bear with, much more comfortable to get along with, less problems to deal with, but in the end you would not be as triumphant in the path Christ has purposed for you. Jesus doesn't want us to be so fixated on the journey that we lose sight of the destination.

**[15] His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.**

"His feet were like burnished bronze" – "since feet in the ancient world portrayed the direction of one's life"; "has been made to glow in a furnace" [puro – to be on fire; to burn; perfect participle passive voice; genitive fem. singular]; Jesus moves among the churches judging our intentions for worship and service. The presence of Jesus in the church has a purifying purpose. Jesus wants His church to be holy not entertained; He wants His church to be pure, not carnal. And He will do whatever it takes to make us holy. Trials, sickness, spiritual warfare, death of loved ones, financial difficulty, or removal of some cherished idol. The burnished feet of Jesus is meant to stamp out sin in the hearts of His people. **Quote:** Corrie ten Boom – "You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have".

"and His voice was like the sound of many waters" – His voice changes from the sound of a trumpet to the sound of crashing waters. It changes for an alerting call to a commanding call. The comparison of His voice to many waters suggests that power flows from His voice. His speech alone exerts power – has the power to change things. Do you know that Jesus' voice is so powerful that whether it is spoken audibly or written it can create something out of nothing? His audible voice brought the whole universe into existence out of nothing.

His written voice brought new life out of total depravity in your salvation. There was nothing in you that could save you, your choice was dead in trespasses and sins, your will was dead in trespasses and sins, your mind was dead in trespasses and sins. But one day Jesus spoke to you through His written word, by either you reading it or someone proclaiming it and Jesus purposed that His voice would regenerate your nature so that you were born again. Jesus is so powerful, He just has to say the word and all of creation must irresistibly comply. **Quote:** Steve Lawson, “The biggest miracle God performs is not creating the universe out of nothing but creating saints out of sinners.”

**[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.**

“He held” [echo – to have; present participle active; nom. masc. singular – “having” continuous]; “right hand” – the place of honor and protection; “came” [ek-poreuomai – to project; to come forth; present participle passive/middle nom. fem. singular]; “a sharp two-edged sword” – speaks of His words that cut, divide and judge. The most evil and misleading aspects of sin is not its ability to seduce you to do evil but its ability to deceive you into thinking Jesus will not judge you for it; “His face” [opsis – countenance; appearance; used 3 times in NT – John 7:24; 11:44]; “was like the sun shining in its strength” – the glory of Jesus, like the sun at high noon cannot be looked at with the human eyes. You can’t stare at Jesus; His glory will blind you. When you think about what Jesus looks like, all you need to know that His face is like the sun. I cannot look at it without the risk of going blind. Our natural eyes cannot behold the supernatural glory of Christ. Which means avoid trying to bring Jesus down on our level when we come to worship Him. Jesus is not someone you can be causal with, flippant with, indifferent too, He is Holy!!!

**[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,**

“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.”; “I fell” [pipto – aorist indicative active 1 person singular]; “like a dead man” [nekros – lifeless]; “He placed” [tithemi – aorist indicative active 3rd person singular]; “saying” [lego – present participle active; nom. masc. singular; temporal participle “while saying”]; “Do not be afraid” [me – not; phobeo – to fear; to seize with alarm; to terrify; present imperative middle voice 2nd person singular – “stop yourself from being afraid”]; Jesus did not appear to John to kill him but to encourage him; “I am the first and the last” – “I am” [ego eimi] “the First and the Last” – this speaks of the eternal, uncreated nature of Jesus. When this title is used in the OT is it always closely connected to the Lord enforcing what He has predicted to happen in the future for the comfort of His people – I Am the First [I decreed it] and Last [I will bring it to past]; By Jesus calling Himself ‘the First and the Last’ this self-claim refers to being the beginning, before time and the One who stands of the end of human history, who is eternal. And yet, when these Scriptures mention this title, it is always in the context of God bringing to past what He has decree. In other words, Jesus proves He is the First and the Last by revealing what He had decreed at the First and bringing it to past at the Last.

If Jesus is the First and the Last, then that means I don't have to be afraid of what is before me or behind me because Jesus is the First [the beginning] and the Last [the end]. In other words, it doesn't matter which time period you are in because Jesus is already there. He was there at the beginning of time, and He is at the end of time.

**[18] and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.**

“the living One” [ho Zao – articular present participle active nom. masc. singular]; Jesus is ever living, Jesus is alive. Dead gods cannot help, protect or provide for you. To worship a non-existent god is to live a useless/empty life. We serve a risen Savior; “I was dead” [ginomai – to be; aorist indicative passive voice 1st person singular – “I became dead”]; “I am alive” [zao eimi – literal trans. “I am living”]; “I have the keys of death and of Hades” – “I have” [echo – present indicative active 1st person singular – continue and present possession]; “the keys of death and of Hades.” Isn't it comforting to know Jesus has authority over your last enemy? If He has authority over death and Hades, then surely, He has authority over other things that contribute or lead towards death – heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, pneumonia, genetic diseases and the flu. The keys are not in the devil's hand, not in the hand of the doctor, not in the hand of cancer, not in the hand of statistics, not in the hands of fate, chance or coincidence but only and always in the hand of Jesus. This is comforting for our lives are never in the hands of sickness or our enemies but only in Jesus. Only when it is time for you to die will you die. And that time has been determined by Jesus. Jesus has the keys of death – that means He can open and place you there but also, He can open and bring you out. Just like He brought Himself out from the realm of death. Jesus got the keys while in the grave and came out with them in His nail pierced hand. Jesus removed the keys while the devil was not looking as He died on the cross for our sins. The devil lost the power to scare the church with death because Jesus now has the keys. We can say like the apostle Paul, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” We can look in the casket of our loved ones and not have to have anyone try to console us with explanations of how our loved died because we know who holds the keys of death and Hades. **Quote:** Warren Wiersbe – “We don't live off of explanations but promises”.

**[19] “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.**

“write” [grapho – aorist imperative active; 2nd person singular]; “the things which you have seen” [1:12-18]; “the things which are” [chaps. 2-3]; “the things which will take place after these things” [chaps. 4-22]. This is the outline for the book of Revelation.

**[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 stars are the angels” – the human messengers in each of the seven churches – Rev. 1:3 – “Blessed is he who reads [the angel, messenger or pastor in the church when he received this letter; he is singular] and those who hear [the congregation] the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near,” “seven lampstands are the seven churches” – each local assembly is regarded by Christ as golden, meaning precious, because of being purchased by the blood of the Lamb [Rev. 1:5-6]. And each local assembly is pictured as a lampstand. To bring the light of the gospel to dark communities.

## **Revelation 2:1-7**

### Introduction:

I want to take you on a visual trip back in time to the city of Ephesus. We just left the island of Patmos where John the apostle is imprisoned for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we set sail on the Aegean Sea to the city of Ephesus which is about a 40-mile trip. As we draw near to the city of Ephesus, we find ourselves struggling a little bit to make it up the Cayster river because of the silt or sediments on the water. But after some hours of rowing, we disembark at the harbor of Ephesus. And we come out to a wide and magnificent road called the Arcadian Way. And as we walk along the road we come into a city that is considered the fourth greatest city in the world after Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. The city’s population boasted 250,000 people. This is a happening city, this is where athletic events were hosted that would rival the great Olympic games, this is the city that had month long festivals in the springtime. This is the city where we might run into famous people like Cleopatra who would come and spend the winter here. And as we come to the end of the Arcadian Road, we notice right in front of us the theater which is mentioned in Acts 19:29 that seated 24,000 people.

As we turn left and move south down the city we are walking on Marble Street where there is an agora to the right [a public square where people assemble as well as a market for buying and selling]. As well as Celsus Library, which was one of three extensive collections of 9,500 rolls of historical information in the Roman world. As we move further down the road we run into the temple of Hadrian who was an emperor and he demanded that he be worshiped as a god, the temple of Domitian who was responsible for sending the apostle John to the island of Patmos because he refused to acknowledge him as lord and god, and then we come upon a number of bath houses where there was prostitution. So, we know we are in the bad part of town so we turn around and proceed north we passed the stadium where they had the gladiatorial games, where prisoners and slaves would fight wild animals imported from Africa. And we figure that was a little too violent for the kids. Some of us wanted to go to the athletic games at Vedius Gymnasium across from the stadium but when we found out that the athletes performed nude, so we decided against that. Then we become hungry so we see across from the stadium the Meat Market, all we can think of is a salami sandwich, a hamburger, turkey burger, and pork sandwich, but when they responded by saying that all the meat that is sold had been offered up to false gods, we lose our appetites. Suddenly, we begin to see a crowd of people, some running and

some walking, some singing and some dancing, heading further north outside the city limits. We decide to follow them and discover a beautiful marble temple, greater than the size of a football field, 425 feet long, 220 feet wide, 127 pillars each 60 feet high, and inside this marble temple housed one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. [**Cultural & Historical Background: It was guardian of a statue to the goddess that was supposedly a meteorite from heaven – a somewhat shapeless, black, many-breasted rock.... As Acts 19:19-20 tells us, there was great interest in magic and sorcery. Grant Osborne]; the temple served as the center for the localized worship of Artemis, to whom the citizens of Ephesus were probably more devoted than were the citizens of almost any other ancient metropolis... The actual Temple of Diana sat approximately a mile from the edge of the city and was the first thing viewed when a ship came into the harbor.**

[At the time John wrote the Apocalypse in AD 95, the inner parts of Artemis’ temple were a safe haven for any thief, robber, slave trader, and plunderer of a temple. The level of morality among the city’s population was notoriously low. The people were licentious, superstitious, vile and violent. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus, a resident of Ephesus, purportedly commented that ‘the morals of the temple were worse than the morals of beasts, for even promiscuous dogs do not mutilate each other.’ Kistemaker]

So, after spending a day in the city of Ephesus, we got the sense of the type of lifestyle our brothers and sisters in the church of Ephesus had been saved out of. But we also, get the sense of how deep their conviction was in the truth to maintain their testimony in such an immoral and idolatrous city, where everything around them, including old friends and family members kept seeking to entice them back into the immoral and licentious lifestyle Jesus had save them out of.

2 observations Jesus made when He examined the Forgetful Church, so that our church may never forget what’s most important: The 1<sup>st</sup> observation Jesus made when He examined the Forgetful Church was: It is good to never forget the importance of ministry in the name of Christ [vv. 1-3]:

**[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:**

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write” – “to the angel” – refers to the messenger or overseer/pastor to the church in Ephesus. The senior or lead pastor the church. In 1:3, it states “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear” – It doesn’t read “Blessed are they who read” but “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear.” And the reason why it is worded this way is because in the early church there was a practice of the preacher reading the Scripture aloud to the congregation. So, the angel of the church is the one who led the church in the exposition of the Scripture while the congregation listened. Therefore, the angel was not a heavenly messenger because what Jesus says to 5 of the 7 angels and their churches are rebukes for sin, which could not be true of an unfallen angel. The word “angel” can refer to a human messenger in the NT or in this context a pastoral guardian over the church; “of the church in Ephesus” – the church in Ephesus had a rich history – It was the only church in the NT that was led by two apostles, Paul

and John. Along with Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla, and Timothy. It was the only church in the NT that had seven letters written to it: The epistle to the Ephesians, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, 1st and 2nd Timothy. Along with the book of Revelation; [“the metropolis of Asia” as Ephesus was called but also of its heritage as the mother church of the region. Grant Osborne]; When the apostle Paul had written to this church over 40 years ago, he was writing to the first generation of believers who had made an impact in the city of Ephesus as well as the surrounding cities, the other 6 that are mentioned in chapters 2 & 3. But now that first generation has pasted on and now Jesus commands the apostle John to “write” [grapho – aorist imperative active 2nd person singular – the tense of the aorist verb conveys urgency] – to the second generation:

“The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: - “the One who holds” [ho kratoo – to have power; articular present participle active nom. masc. singular; continuously holding by His power]; “the seven stars” – the overseers or guardians over the seven churches; “in His right hand” – position of power, authority, protection and control; these pastors are never under the control or authority of Satan nor ultimately under the control of the congregation but only to Christ; “the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands” – “the One who walks” [ho peripatoo – articular present participle active nom. masc. singular – continuous presence within the midst of the church]; “the seven golden lampstands” – Rev. 1:20 makes it clear that the seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches in Asia Minor. Seven is the number of completeness, which means that these literal churches are characteristic of local churches throughout church history. “says this” – lit. “these things says” [It was used to introduce with great solemnness a prophetic message or a royal letter or edict. The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek NT]

**[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;**

“I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance” – “I know” [oida – perfect indicative active 1<sup>st</sup> person singular; knowledge in the completed sense; to know fully]; “your deeds” – your ministry work, your church involvement, your conduct in all areas of life; “your toil” [kopos – labor]. I know that you are a busy church, a hard working church; “and perseverance” [hupomone – remain under pressure]; The noun ‘endurance’ [hupomene – 1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12] occurs seven times always in the context of pervasive evil. Osbourne];

“Perseverance” is one of my favorite words in the Bible because it teaches us how to face life in a broken world – “endure” to bear up under pressure; to persevere through adversity; to be steadfast in the face of temptation and trials – to trust the Lord in all things and obey Him in all things. To apply the commandments of God in your life as personal convictions so that you never waver in your faith when life hurts. To believe that God is for you when life is against you, that’s how you endure. “and that you cannot tolerate evil men” – “cannot tolerate” [bastazo – to bear; endure; carry; aorist infinitive active; this same word is used in Gal. 6:2 – Bear one another’s

burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ.] But in this context the Ephesian believers could not bear, carry the weight of “evil men” [kakous – wicked men; accus. masc. plural]; The Bible does not support Christians being tolerant or cordial with evil false teachers. We are to bear with the broken and repentant, not with the false and misleading. “and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles” – “to test” [peirazo – aorist indicative active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]; They tested their doctrine, observed their character and evaluated them according to the characteristics of a true apostle. They just didn’t receive them simply because they called themselves ‘apostle,’ ‘bishop,’ ‘anointed’ or prophet[ess] but you tested what they claimed themselves to be by the objective standard of the word. They did not allow their feelings, personal opinions or positive impressions to cloud their judgment or rob them of their discernment. But they tested their credentials against the Word: **Scrip. Ref:** 1 John 4:1-3 – Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; [3] and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

“and they are not, and you found them to be false” – “they are not” [eisin – present indicative active; 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural – they continue to not be true]; “you found them to be false” – “found” [eurisko – aorist indicative; active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]; “false” [pseudes – deceitful; lying]; The Ephesian believers had heeded the warning the apostle Paul communicated to the elders of Ephesus over 40 years earlier: **Scrip. Ref:** Acts 20:28-30 – “Be on guard for yourselves 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.”

**[3] and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.**

“and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake” – “you have” [echo – present indicative active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]; “perseverance and endured for My name’s sake” – “perseverance” – remained under the pressure of being unpopular in your community because of your uncompromising stance against false teachers and false teaching; “and endured” [bastazo – to bear; aorist indicative active 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]

“for My name’s sake” – the motive for removing false teachers from the church, perseverance amid a crooked and perverse environment was for the purpose of maintaining the reputation of Christ in the church; “and have not grown weary” [kopiao – to grow tired; exhausted; perfect participle active; nom. masc. plural]; You have been tired in the work but not of the work; Ministry is hard work but it is also heart work.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> observation Jesus made when He examined the Forgetful Church was: It is bad to forget the importance of ministry for the love of Christ [vv. 4-7]:

**[4] But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.**

“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love” – “But” [alla – a strong adversative; this is meant to mark a contrast between the good things that were being done in the name of Christ from the bad thing they had done in the church]; “I have” [echo – **present** indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular] “that you have left your first love” – **lit.** “**your love, the first, you left**”. Your first love refers not only to your initial expressions of affection towards Christ when He first saved you but also “first” in priority.

Your First Love: Elective Love [**Scrip. Ref:** Deut. 7:6-7 – For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. [7] The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the people; Eph. 1:4d-5 – In love He predestined us]; The doctrine of election is simply God setting His love on you before the foundation of the world.

**Effectual Love** [aka Effectual Calling; Irresistible Grace] – **Scrip. Ref:** Jer. 31:3 – ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. **Scrip. Ref:** 1 John 4:19 – We love, because He first loved us.

**Exceeding Love** – **Scrip. Ref:** John 15:13 – “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

**Enduring Love** – **Scrip. Ref:** Romans 8:38-39 – “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**[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.**

“Therefore remember from where you have fallen” – “Therefore” since I have against you that you have left your first love – “remember from where you have fallen” – “remember” [mnemoneuo – to call to mind; to be mindful of; **present** imperative active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular; “continue to call to mind”];

“where you have fallen” [pipto – to fall; **perfect** indicative active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular; the perfect tense expresses an act that took place in the past with ongoing present results] You fell in the past and you still haven’t gotten up. How should the believers at Ephesus “remember from where they have fallen”? First, they should remember their past before Christ saved them. How they were living in sin and had no peace. Going to the temple of Artemis, coming to the Meat Market,

spending their time at the athletic games and festivals but it brought no true joy, and it did not remove the guilt. You have forgotten how your ‘first love’ saved you when you were lost in sin? You have forgotten where the Lord Jesus found you and brought you from? You weren’t born saved. You were born dead in trespasses and sins. Remember where Jesus brought you from? The hymn writer put it, “I was sinking deep in sin far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within sinking to rise no more but the Master of the Sea heard my despairing cry, from the waters lifted me now safe am I, love lifted me, love lifted me, when nothing else could help love lifted me. **Scrip. Ref:** Ps. 103:1-3a – “Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name. [2] Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; [3] Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases [soul diseases – anxiety, depression, discouragement, fear, sadness, hopelessness]; **Quote:** John MacArthur - forgetfulness is frequently the initial cause of spiritual decline.

Notice the contrast here: [1] “The One who holds the seven stars” [4] “you have left your first love”. Remember where you have fallen and considered that while in that state of falling away from Him, He kept holding on to you [His right hand]. While your heart had drifted away from Him, His presence remained close to you [He walks in the midst]. The sin of indifference can be overcome when you think about how Christ loves you despite how much you have sinned against Him. **We are always sinning in the full experience of grace and mercy.** **Scrip. Ref:** Ps. 103:10 – He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [11] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness towards those who fear Him.

The command to “remember” entails: 1] the things you used to do that expressed your joy in worshiping Jesus – prayer, Bible study and fellowship; 2] when that joy began to fade. Let me help you understand how we can so easily forget that love for Jesus should be the priority and driving passion in our lives: 1] Typically we forget our first love when there is no time devoted to Him. How we schedule our time reveals what matters most to us. To the point that we make everything else in our life a priority, while time for Jesus is relegated to “I’ll get to that later”. When we begin to say yes to all things that advances our personal pleasures until Jesus is crowded out of our memory. To the point you begin to forget to read your Bible, when you begin to pray without adoring Him, you sing without delighting in Him, listen to the preach Word without treasuring Him. You know what keeps us fallen from our first love? Excuses. **Quote:** Billy Sunday said that an excuse is “the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie.”

And the fact that Jesus warns the church and especially the leadership in the church that He will remove the lampstand if they don’t repent proves that a failure to love Christ can disqualify a preacher from ministry; “and repent and do the deeds you did at first” – “repent” [metanoeo – to turn away from; to change your mind; aorist imperative active; 2nd person singular; aorist tense notes urgency]. You need to hate how you have allowed your relationship with Christ to be

relegated to religious formalism, ritualism, mechanical-ism and indifference. Repentance means I hate that I have turned from my love for Christ towards false substitutes that dishonors His worth; “or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent” – “I am coming to you” [erchomai – present indicative middle voice; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular – lit. “I myself am coming”]. This refers not to the second coming but coming to visit upon this local assembly the consequences for their sin; “will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent” – “remove” [kineo – future indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; “your lampstand” since lampstand represents the local church. **Jesus is threatening to un-church the church**; “unless you repent” [meanoeo – aorist subjunctive active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]; **[Historical Background:** Writing in 1861, archbishop RC Trench described in melancholy terms the situation of the Turkish town, which had been established on the ruins of Ephesus – “How awful for Ephesus the fulfillment of the threat [Rev. 2:5] has been... One who did so long found only three Christians there, and these sunken in such ignorance and apathy as scarcely to have heard the names of St. Paul or St. John”. NT Cities in Western Asia Minor]; **Quote:** Grant Osborne – “A church that has forgotten to love is a church that has ceased to be a church”.

**[6] ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

“Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” – “you hate” [miseo – to detest; present indicative active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]; “which I also hate” [miseo – present indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; You cannot love Christ without also hating sin. A church that is truly committed to the truth will hate that things that Jesus hates; “the deeds of the Nicolaitans” **[Historical Background:** Irenaeus took the sect to be followers of Nicolaus of Antioch, one of the seven original deacons [Acts 6:5], a Jewish proselyte, who is said to have apostatized.... Added to Irenaeus are the testimonies of Tertullian, Hippolytus, Dorotheus of Tyre, Jerome, Augustine, Eusebius. They all say this was a sect of licentious antinomian Gnostics who lapsed into their antinomian license because of an overstrained asceticism. Hippolytus adds that Nicolaus was the forerunner of Hymenaeus and Philetus who are condemned in 2 Tim. 2:17. Thomas]

**[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.’**

“He who has an ear” [this formula was repeated by Christ in His earthly ministry. It is called to heed the warning to the Forgetful Church]; “let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” – “let him hear” [akouo – aorist imperative active; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular]

“what the Spirit says to the churches” – the Spirit is speaking to us this morning do you hear Him?; “To him who overcomes” [nikao – articular participle active; dat. masc. singular; to conquer; to be victorious] Every true believer is an overcomer because of their faith in Christ. In other words, God will give you the grace to overcome your weaknesses and your challenges for His glory; “I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God” [**Cultural &**

**Historical Background:** Excavations, as well, as examination of historical sources, have led to the discovery that a large garden area was a part of the temple of Artemis in Ephesus... In the heart of that garden, there was a tree, either an oak or an elm... “marked by the fixed point of the ancient tree-shrine which was the place of ‘salvation’ for the suppliant, surrounded by an asylum enclosed by a boundary wall. But this ‘salvation’ for the criminal corrupted the city.” This ‘tree-shrine’ was a special holy place for the worship of Artemis. Evidence suggests that it was, in fact, the most sacred of all the parts of the famous temple shrine and may even have been spoken of as a ‘tree of life’. The image appears in some form on most of the coinage from ancient Ephesus along with the additional symbols of the stage and the bee, which were associated with the worship of Artemis. John’s readers in the church at Ephesus knew well that tree could provide no life at all. Patterson]

## **Revelation 2:8-11**

### Introduction:

**[Cultural and Historical Background:** The city of Smyrna was remarkable for its beauty. Though rivaled by Ephesus and Pergamum... The city was surrounded by sturdy walls, and on the Pagos [‘the Hill’] above the city were stately public building that, because of their orderly arrangement, were called ‘the crown of Smyrna’. “The Street of Gold” curved around the sloping hill from east to west and had a temple to Cybele at one end and a temple to Zeus at the other... including temples to Apollo, Asklepios, and Aphrodite, the street was compared to a necklace of jewels around the neck of a statue. To some this was the ideal city on earth. The wealthy and beautiful city also lay at the end of a road serving the rich valley of the Hermus River on the interior... The protecting deity of the city was a local adaptation of Cybele, known as the Sybeline Mother. The Greeks identified her with Nemesis, the Greek goddess of retributive justice [the goddess over the nature world]... Only here in the Greek world was she worshiped. Another religion very important to the city was worship of the Roman emperor. This was an enthusiastic center for such because of its close ties with Rome. Under Domitian [AD 81-96] emperor worship was made... failure to comply meant death. Each year every citizen had to burn incense on Caesar’s altar, after which he was issued a certificate.

To be without a certificate, as must have been the case for Christians obedient to Christ, was to risk discovery and the death penalty... Smyrna’s modern name is Izmir, a city which still has a Christian church. Thomas]; [p. 91 – Ismir, the third largest city in modern Turkey, is literally built on the rubble of ancient Smyrna. Patterson]. It was believed that Homer the Greek poet who wrote Iliad and Odyssey was from Smyrna. There were two things the city of Smyrna was known for. To be a city of beauty and a city of suffering. And there was a church in that city that was going through a season of suffering.

Exposition:

Five reassuring truths Jesus announces to the suffering church, so that they may not lose heart:

The 1<sup>st</sup> reassuring truth that Jesus announces to the suffering church is: I want you to focus on Me to endure your suffering [v. 8]:

**[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:**

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write” – “the angel” refers to the pastoral guardian or preaching messenger in the church who was responsible for expounding this letter to the congregation; “Smyrna” [means bitter or myrrh. Myrrh came from a tree in Smyrna that produced a brown to reddish aromatic gum that when pounded gave off a fragrance. This aromatic gum was bitter to the taste but sweet to smell. This truth presents to us both the human and divine perspective of suffering. To the human side suffering is bitter as we find ourselves pounded in life. But from the divine side the pounding of suffering is meant to produce a sweet smelling aroma to His glory; “write” [grapho – aorist imperative active 2nd person singular; aorist tense is used for a note of urgency]; “The First and the Last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this” – “the First and the Last” – this speaks of the eternal, uncreated nature of Jesus. When this title is used in the OT is it always closely connected to the Lord enforcing what He has predicted to happen in the future for the comfort of His people – I Am the First [I decreed it] and Last [I will bring it to past]; By Jesus calling Himself ‘the First and the Last’ this self-claim refers to being the beginning, before time and the One who stands of the end of human history, who is eternal. In other words, the title the First and Last, refer to the prophetic nature of His claim to be the beginning and the end – if He is the first and the last then He should be able to tell us at the beginning what is about to happen in the end. Whenever this title is used, it is meant to prove that point [Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12 and in v. 10 of this passage]. This title is important when it comes to the subject of suffering, because amid suffering we tend to draw pessimistic conclusions. The First and the Last, lets us know at the beginning how things will end. For His glory and our good. The reason why some Christians complain or grumble against the Lord is because they thought He was bluffing when He promised us that we would have tribulation in this life. Jesus does not intend to keep us from suffering, but He does intend to prove to us that He can bring us through it. **Quote:** As one commentator wrote, “There are no promises of an easy life in Scripture”.

“who was dead” [ginomai – aorist indicative middle or passive voice [middle voice: He laid down His life Himself meaning no one took it; or passive voice: He voluntarily gave Himself over to the Father’s will; 3rd person singular]; “and has come to life” [zao – aorist indicative active; 3rd person singular; ingressive aorist = beginning of the verbal action; this speaks of the resurrection]; The First and the Last speaks of His control over all things from the beginning to the end. The mention of His substitutionary death and resurrection is meant to remind us that He conquered sin, death and the devil. How can the First and the Last, die?

The First and the Last became the Second Adam in His humanness and died as a substitute for repenting sinners on the cross. And rose from the grave on the third day. Two things that are impossible – it is impossible for God to die, but as man it became possible. And it is impossible for man to rise from the dead, but as God it became possible. The 1<sup>st</sup> reassuring truth Jesus announces to the suffering church is: I want you to focus on Me to endure your suffering – focus on who I am and what I have accomplished on your behalf. Listen, the fact that Jesus died and rose again on our behalf in the past means that He ever seeks to apply the benefits of His victory over sin, death and the devil to us in the present. Christ did not conquer sin and death in the past for us to lose in the present. So, when we are going through suffering we must focus on Christ to endure. The devil is not the first and the last; suffering is not the first and last; sorrow is not the first and the last; only Jesus is the first and the last. And listen, we are not called to understand why Jesus intended things to happen the way it happened, but we are called trust Him for who He says He is.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> reassuring truth Jesus announces to the suffering church is: I know about your suffering [v. 9]:

**[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.**

“I know your tribulation” – “I know” [oida – perfect indicative active; 1st person singular; a perfect tense but used as a present tense; perfect tense entails an act that took place in the past with ongoing present results; translate “I have known your tribulation”. Suffering has a way of making us feel like we are all alone. We tend to reason within ourselves that others don’t feel like I feel. They don’t understand what I am going through. They don’t know what this is like. But here’s the comforting part, Jesus says, “I know your tribulation” – He knows your pain, He knows your predicament, and He knows the source of your problems. Because I haven’t removed you from your tribulation doesn’t mean I haven’t been aware of your tribulation.]; “tribulation” [the pressure of affliction you have been going through]; Jesus knows your pain; “and your poverty” – “poverty” [ptocheia – abject poverty; beggarly poverty; destitute of necessity type poverty]; Jesus knows you don’t have enough money to pay your bills. Jesus knows that you are out of work. Jesus knows what will happen if the rent money doesn’t come. Jesus knows that the money that you have is not enough to hold you till the end of the month. Jesus knows our financial and physical predicament; “and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” – Jesus knows the source of your problems; “and the blasphemy” [blasphemia – reviling; slander]; [**Historical/Cultural Background:** Since apparently the blasphemy here is toward Christians, they have chosen to render it “slander”.... These included the charge of cannibalism since Christians were heard to talk about “eating the body” and “drinking the blood” of Christ. Because they had ‘love feasts’ they were accused of immorality. Because they did not accept the Greek gods, they were accused of atheism... their unwillingness to pay homage to Caesar as lord earned them the accusation of disloyalty to Rome. [Patterson]

[In AD 155 the famous bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, was burned alive for refusing to call Caesar “Lord” during an extensive persecution instigated by the Jews. Osborne]. In fact, history records that the Jews in Smyrna help gather the wood to burn Polycarp on the Sabbath, when it was unlawful for them to work: “those who say they are Jews and are not” [These were physical descendants of Abraham but in the true sense of the meaning of the word “Jews,” they were not. “Jew” is derived from the word “Judah” which means ‘praise’ or ‘celebrated’. These Jews did not praise Jesus as the Messiah, as the God-Man, but spoke evil of Him and His followers. Jesus said it best in John 5:23 – He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. It’s not who you say you are that proves you are genuine but how you live that proves whether your profession as a child of God is true. Thus, they blasphemed and were of the synagogue of Satan.]; “but” [alla – strong adversative]; “are a synagogue of Satan” refers not to the building but to the Jewish assembly who gathered there against the church, “of Satan” means adversary; How can you discern when Satan is attacking you? If you identify yourself as a follower of Jesus and seek to obey His will, whatever attack, persecution or slander you receive from other folk because of your commitment to Christ, is an attack from Satan himself. Satan loves to influence the sinful behavior of the unsaved. And sometimes he influences the carnal behavior of the saved. Persecution will come from religious people who falsely call themselves the people of God. “but you are rich” [“but” [alla – strong adversative] despite to the fact that you don’t have any money in the bank; “you are” [eimi – present indicative active 2nd person singular]; “rich” [plousios – wealthy] spiritually because of who you possess – The First and the Last, the One who died and rose from the dead for your salvation; in what He has promised you – He will never leave you nor forsake you; will work all things together for your good. We are rich because we have a Sovereign Christ. This is the paradox of the Christian life that suffering oftentimes draws us to experience our riches in Christ. When we are made to feel at our lowest, Christ will make us to experience our riches. The church of Smyrna was the poor rich church.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> reassuring truth Jesus announces to the suffering church is: I am in control of your suffering [v. 10a]:

**[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.**

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer” – “fear” [phobeo – to terrify; to be afraid; present imperative **middle voice**; 2nd person singular – “Do not allow yourself to be afraid”]; “what” [relative pronoun; neut. nom. plural = what things]; “you are about” [mello – present indicative active; 2nd person singular; present tense – about to continually]; “to suffer” [pascho – present infinitive active]; How can we keep ourselves from being afraid when it comes to suffering? [1] Believe who Jesus says He is – the First and the Last – Sovereign over all things; **[2] Believe** what He did on your behalf – He died and rose again – this proves that He loves us and that He conquered sin, death and the devil for us; and **[3] Believe** in His promises – He will never leave you nor forsake you]

“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” – “the devil” [ho diabolos – slanderer] the devil will throw some of the believers in Smyrna in prison by means of the Jews slandering them. The Lord will allow the devil to use people to lie on you. To ruin your reputation by gossip and slander. Persecution is both physical and verbal attacks; “to cast” [ballo – present infinitive active]; “some of you into prison” – “some of you” [lit. “out of you all”]; “so that” [hina – purpose clause = what’s the devil’s purpose in doing this?]; “you will be tested” [peirazo – to test; to try; aorist subjunctive passive voice; 2nd person plural]; The devil seeks to test you with the intent to: [1] To get you to question the Lord instead of trusting the Lord; [2] To get you to complain against the Lord instead of obeying the Lord; and [3] To get you to take matters into your own hands instead of waiting on the Lord. But do you know that how you respond to your suffering will determine how Christ will deal with you? Scrip. Ref: 1 Pet. 5:5 – God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. God is biblically predictable on how He will respond to those who either humble themselves or promote themselves. If you humble yourself, He will give you grace. But if you become proud, He will oppose you. What the devil does to me in my trials doesn’t determine how God will deal with me, I determine that. As the church of Smyrna humbled themselves under the pain of suffering Christ would grant them the grace to endure.

“and you will have tribulation for ten days” – “you will have” [exo – future indicative active; 2nd person plural]; “ten days” [literal meaning not symbolic; the context gives us no reason to spiritualize it]; Every test that the Lord allows the devil to have against us is limited. Every enemy of the church is under the authority of the Head of the church.

The 4<sup>th</sup> reassuring truth Jesus announces is: I promise to grant you victory at the end of your suffering [v.10b]

**Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

“Be faithful” [“Be” [ginomai – to become; present imperative **middle voice**; 2nd person singular; “keep on keeping yourself faithful” – Don’t start questioning what you have known to be true about Christ all along – He does love you, He’s in control of the situation; He did purpose this trial for His glory and your good. Therefore, keep trusting, keep praying, keep in the Word, keep yourself in fellowship, keep claiming the promises of God and keep waiting on Him to fulfill His word; For how long? “until death” – “until” [even to]; “and I will give you” [didomi – future indicative active; 1st person singular]; “the crown of life” – “crown” [ton stephanos – a wreath/garland given as a prize to victors in the public games; translated – “crown which is life or what true life is,” epexegetical genitive: drawing out the meaning of something]

**[Historical Background:** The famous golden street that wound up Mount Pagus was studded like a crown with various public edifices and temples of notable architectural achievement. Therefore, for Smyrnans to speak of the city itself as ‘the crown’ was not unusual... In other words, it was a “winner’s crown,” and the Smyrnans are invited to see themselves, whatever their sufferings, not as losers but as winners. Patterson]. But Jesus promises a better crown, eternal life. And the point is, Jesus will cause all suffering to end in victory.] **Quote:** Amy Carmichael – It was this understanding of God’s ability to fulfill the promise of Romans 8:28 that led Miss Carmichael to write, “A wise master never wastes his servant’s time.” As someone put it, “No matter what set of circumstances we receive, God will not waste an experience if we remain obedient to Him.”

The 5<sup>th</sup> and last reassuring truth Jesus announces to the suffering church is: I will not abandon you in your suffering [v. 11]

**[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, let him hear” [akouo – aorist imperative active; 3rd person singular]; “what the Spirit says” – “says” [lego – present indicative active 3rd person singular; presently and continually says]; “to the churches” – the Spirit is speaking to us as well; “He who overcomes” [nikao – to conquer; to be victorious; present participle active; nom. mas. singular]; Every truly born-again believer will conquer the sufferings in this life: **Scrip. Ref:** Psa. 34:19 – Many are the afflictions [rah – sorrows; bad things; calamities; miseries] of the righteous; But the Lord delivers him out of them all]; **Scrip. Ref:** Rev. 12:11 – “And they overcame him [the devil] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death” – It is the blood of the Lamb that enables me to face death knowing that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ”. Every believer is an overcomer because Christ is the One who enables him to persevere through sufferings. In fact, the perseverance of the saints is always the result of the preservation of God. Our faithfulness does not earn eternal life; faithfulness proves that one possesses eternal life. “will not be hurt by the second death” – “will not” [ou me – double negative in the original – lit. “no not”; the strongest negation in the Greek language – definitely not]; “be hurt” [adikeo – to damage; to harm; alpha-privative – not harm; not hurt; aorist subjunctive; passive; 3rd singular]; Jesus will not allow you to ever be hurt again after you die]; “by the second death” – **Scrip. Ref:** Rev. 20:6 & 14 – Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power; [14] This is the second death, the lake of fire; **Scrip. Ref:** John 8:51 – Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death – thank God for double “truly” [This is truth, this is truth, I say to you] “he shall never see death.”

You and I have not seen ultimate and eternal death; we have only seen temporal death, the body without the soul. But not eternal death, the soul with body in hell forever. Everyone will experience the first death but only the overcomer will not experience the second death.

### Conclusion:

As Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, traveled to Rome to be martyred in about 117, he wrote letters to Smyrna and to its bishop, Polycarp. The aged Polycarp himself was to be martyred. The text which describes his death is the first of the martyr acts from the early church... Polycarp knew St. John at Ephesus. When the proconsul Quadratus adjured Polycarp to deny Christ, the venerable bishop answered in memorable words: Eighty and six years have I served Him and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me? [NT Cities in Western Asia Minor: Edwin Yamauchi]; **Quote:** Philip Doddridge [1702-1751] "I am more afraid of doing what is wrong than of dying."

## **Revelation 2:12-17**

### Introduction:

The city of Pergamum has a population of 120,000 people. But the city had zoning laws which divided the population into sections. At the foot of the hill is where the poor people lived. The next level was the business district and above the business district is where the rich lived and at the top of the hill is where you have important public buildings and temples. The local deities that they worshiped in these temples were Zeus, the savior god, Dionysos, the god of the royal family whose mystical name was Bull. The goddess Athena, the goddess of wisdom and military, who was the daughter of Zeus. And Asklepios, the god of healing. It was his temple that attracted people from all over the world, because within the temple there were living non-poisonous snakes, slithering all over the floor in the temple. And what happened is the sick person would spend the night on the floor in the temple hoping that Asklepios would heal him through the touch of snakes. You might find it interesting to know that a medical symbol came from this religion that has been passed down to our modern day in the form of two snakes intertwined around a pole. This city is so well-known for its medical advancements because it was the birthplace of Galen who was second only to Hippocrates as the most famous physician in ancient times. It was Galen who perfected his medical skills by tending to injured and dying gladiators.

But also, Pergamum was known to have manufactured parchment out of animal skin, which was writing material. In fact, this parchment was called "pergamenezed". This city was committed not only to medical science but also academics. It had the second largest library in the world with 200,000 volumes of material but Mark Antony gave the library to Cleopatra as an expression of his love for her.

But besides being a beautiful city seated on a hill overlooking the surrounding lands and being a city committed to medical science and education it was also the first city in Asia to have a temple dedicated to a Roman emperor.

[Historical/Cultural Background: It preceded both Ephesus and Smyrna with this distinctive. Compared to all the surrounding cities, Caesar-worship was the most intense here. In other cities a Christian might be in danger on only one day of a year when a pinch of incense had to be burned in worship of the emperor. In Pergamum, however, Christians were in danger every day of the year for the same reason. Thomas]

Exposition:

Four sharp reactions Jesus has towards the compromising church, so that we may learn how to conduct ourselves: The 1<sup>st</sup> sharp reaction Jesus has towards the compromising church is: Jesus commends the church for persevering in persecution [vv. 12-13]:

[12] **“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:**

“The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this” – Jesus addresses the letter to the preaching messenger of the church by identifying Himself as “The One who has the sharp two-edged sword” – this self-identification is taken from the vision the apostle John had of Jesus Christ as the Exalted Priest King whom John saw as having “a sharp two-edged sword” coming out of His mouth [Rev. 1:16]. This self-identification is not meant to be comforting or encouraging but is meant to strike fear. This large, sharp, double edge sword represents judgment.

Jesus doesn't want us to picture Him as the meek and lowly in His earthly humiliation. But as exalted and glorified in heaven. Yet, He is still loving, merciful, sympathetic and gracious but He is also holy and righteous. And we as the church would do well to ever maintain the balance of who He is. If we hold to Jesus as only being loving, gracious and merciful then we will tempt ourselves to downplay His warnings and commands in Scripture. However, if we also believe that Jesus is righteous and possesses a holy hatred against sin, then we will heed His warnings and commands. This picture of a large sharp two-edged sword, which speaks of Christ's precision to cut to the heart of the problem and execute judgment upon those who defy Him is meant to turn the focus of the congregation away from the fear of man to Himself. See, the Roman proconsul or governor in charge of the province of Asia Minor resided in Pergamum and the symbol of his sovereign control over every human life was the sword, which executed the enemies of the state. But Christ has a sharp two-edged sword, not in His hand but in His mouth, which means He judges His church with His words. And His first words to His church are words of commendation for persevering in persecution:

**[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.’**

“I know where you dwell” – “I know” [oida – perfect indicative active 1<sup>st</sup> person singular; “I have known” – Jesus has full and intimate knowledge of the circumstances of this church. He is fully aware of the context of your life. He knows the details of your situation. This knowledge is the caring knowledge not abstract knowledge]; “where you dwell” [katoikeo – to dwell; reside; **present** indicative; active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]; Jesus knows the neighborhood these believers live in]; “where Satan’s throne is” – “throne” refers to control and authority. There is debate among theologians on what “Satan’s throne” represent. Some believe that it refers to the temple of Asklepios, the god of healing, whose temple floors were covered with slithering non-poisonous snakes. And since Satan is referred to as a serpent, then the throne of Satan must represent the snake religion of Pergamum. But other theologians believe that the throne of Satan refers to the imperial cult in Pergamum, emperor worship. If the early church did not give a pinch of incense in worship to the Roman emperor, they were in danger of being killed.

When Jesus addressed the church at Smyrna, He referred to the Jews of that city as belonging to the “synagogue of Satan”. To the church at Philadelphia were also being persecuted by the Jews in that city, Jesus referred to them as belonging to the “synagogue of Satan” [3:9]. Many have the misconception that Satan is residing in hell. But the devil is not in hell, he is roaming back and forth on the earth seeking to devour the people of God. And he attacks the church through religious people and governing authorities. And the attack against the Christians through Roman authorities in Pergamum was so fierce that Jesus refers to them living where Satan’s throne is. Basically, Jesus addressed this church as: The Church Where Satan Lives.

Yet even though Satan attacks the church through religious people and governing authorities, his power is always limited when it comes to attacking us. In the book of Revelation, the word “throne” is used 42 times. 40 out of 42 times the word “throne” always refers to God’s throne, which means “throne” is only used twice in reference to Satan. In other words, Satan is not ultimately in control of our lives, God is. And the only reason why Satan attacks us is because God gave him permission to do so for His glory and our good. Now the question is: Why would God give the devil permission to attack us? I’ll tell you what’s not the answer: So that we may retaliate and curse folk out. Or that we may complain to others about it. But for two reasons: **[1]** That God might prove to the devil that no matter what he throws at His people He is able to keep them from stumbling [Jude 24]; **[2]** To show the devil that the church loves His Son more than comfort.

“and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith” – “you hold fast My name” – “hold fast” [krateo – to keep carefully/faithfully; to have power; **present** indicative active 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular; “you keep holding fast”]; “My name” – refers to who Jesus is. He is Lord. In other words, you refused to say Caesar is Lord and kept holding fast to Jesus is Lord;

“and did not deny My faith” – “and did not deny” [arneomai – to deny; aorist indicative **middle voice** 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular; aorist tense refers to an event in the past]; “My faith” – when these believers were tested as to whether they would deny Jesus as Lord, they did not deny but kept trusting in Him. Sufferings in and of itself doesn’t make you a strong Christian. You may have been through a lot of things in life but that doesn’t mean you are a strong person; it may mean that you are a stubborn person. Only faith in Christ can make you a strong Christian in suffering. If you suffer without faith, you will falter. These believers kept trusting in the Lordship of Jesus Christ even when their lives were threatened. **Quote:** Dr. Hamilton – “To deny the faith in the face of death would be to declare that one believes life in the here and now is better than Jesus, better than having the life He promises”. These believers testified by their actions that seeing Jesus in death was better than denying Jesus in life.

“even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” – “Antipas” – there is no information about Antipas in the NT besides this verse. But tradition says, “he had been roasted to death in a brazen bull during the reign of Domitian for standing against paganism (his name means “**against all**”) Grant Osborne]; It is believed that since he was the only one killed and not the church that he might have died due to mob violence. But Jesus refers to Antipas as “My witness. My faithful one” [“witness” – martus – by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the Greek word for “witness,” martyr came to be used for Christians who died for the faith. Jesus calls those who are willing to die for His name “My witness, My faithful one”. Can Jesus say that about you? Are you a witness for Jesus? Or are you a worldly wimp? It’s easy to be a witness around those who agree with you but are you a witness for the truth of Christ around those you know will oppose you if you speak up. Antipas spoke up, he lived according to his name “against all”. **Scrip. Ref:** Matt. 10:32 – Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. [33] But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> sharp reaction Jesus has towards the compromising church is: Jesus confronts the church for being passive when it comes to sinful members [vv. 14-15]

[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 immortality.**

“But I have a few things against you” – “But” [alla – strong adversative; Though I commend you for not being willing to deny Me before My enemies – “But I have a few things against you”; “because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam” – “you have” [eko – present indicative active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular]; “some who hold” [krateo – to hold fast; to not let go; present participle active; accus. masc. plural – “some who keep holding and will not let go”]; “the teaching of Balaam” – “Balaam” is the false prophet mentioned in the book of Numbers, chapters 22-24.

In the OT, Balaam is mentioned about 60 times because he is considered the prototype of all corrupt, money seeking, false prophets. All false prophets are the same, they are in it for the money, not for you to receive a blessing. And the context here seems to show that these believers did not participate in the false doctrine of Balaam but that they knew about it and did not nothing. That's why Jesus has a few things against you.

Sometimes, when the world is against you, your flesh and the devil will tempt you to find middle ground with those who are in sin to avoid further conflict. When you make enemies on the outside, you will be tempted to compromise with enemies on the inside: “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 immortality” – “who kept teaching” [didasko – imperfect indicative active 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular]; “Balak” – the king of Moab, who hired Balaam to curse Israel because he was afraid that Israel would destroy him. But instead, Balaam kept blessing Israel because the Lord confronted him and told him that he could not curse what God had blessed. So since, Balaam knew that he could not curse Israel in the name of the Lord, he counseled Balak to tempt Israel to sin in order that Israel may be judged by the Lord; So Balaam kept teaching Balak “to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immortality” – “stumbling block” [skandalon – means to cast a trap or snare; to place a bait in order to trap an animal; we get our English word “scandal” from this word – “a cause of stumbling”]; “to eat” [esthio – aorist infinitive active]; “to commit acts of immortality” [porneuo – aorist infinitive active; to have unlawful sexual intercourse; comes from the noun porneia; English word “pornography”; any sexual behavior outside the covenant of marriage between a male and a female]; Meat sacrificed to idols and fornication simply communicates the lie that God gives us a license to pursue our pleasures. In Numbers 25, it says that “the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab”. And the Lord's anger burned against Israel that He sent a plague among them and 24,000 died.

Years ago, the United States Episcopal diocese voted to stop using masculine pronouns for God. This was their reason, “By expanding our language for God, we will expand our image of God and the nature of God”. This is the sin of idolatry. By no longer referring to God in the masculine gender, which communicates headship and authority. They will address Him in the neuter gender to support their transgender and homosexual tendencies. These are Balaamites who keep putting a stumbling block before the church.

When you distort the God of the Bible, you have just created an idol with a Christian name. And if our teaching concerning Christ is different than His self-identification here in revelation, then we will be passive when it comes to sin. Now the question is, why does the church have these problems? Why does the church lack discernment today? How can people who have been raised in church all their lives be so gullible? You know why? Because their knowledge of the Christian faith is nothing more than watered down song lyrics and religious clichés rather than Scripture.

And here's what happens when a pastor seeks to conform the church to what the Bible teaches. There will be those in the church who are biblically illiterate who will have a problem with it. Everyone else who knows their Bibles see no problem with it because Christian common sense says, "Well, if we say that Christ is the head of the church, then His Word should be the authority in the church." That's simple. That's not complicated. But because some people's theology is nothing more than watered down song lyrics and Christian t-shirts their standard of measure is governed by compromise and sentimentality. People who claim unity but appeal to feelings as a measure of what is right. Thus, if it feels right, then it must be of the Spirit, since we have always attributed the movement of the Spirit to worship music. Therefore, when the truth of the Word is being applied it always feels off key. It feels stern, rigid, hard, unloving and judgmental. But the Spirit never moves apart from His Word nor against His Word. In fact, the Bible says that a Spirit-filled believer is a Word-filled believer [Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16]. In short, a compromising church is a church that divorces itself from the Word and measures everything subjectively. So why does the church lack discernment today? Because there are some in the church who want a feel good religion rather than a relationship with the true God.

**[15] 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.**

"hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans" – "hold" [krateo – to have; to not let go of; present participle active accus. masc. plural]; [Historical Background: Irenaeus took the sect to be followers of Nicolaus of Antioch, one of the seven original deacons [Acts 6:5], a Jewish proselyte, who is said to have apostatized.... Added to Irenaeus are the testimonies of Tertullian, Hippolytus, Dorotheus of Tyre, Jerome, Augustine, Eusebius. They all say this was a sect of licentious antinomian Gnostics who lapsed into their antinomian license because of an overstrained asceticism.] That you can live in open sin with the blessing of God – libertarianism – one who believes he or she is free from obedience to God's commands to live however they want; antinomianism – grace sets a person free from adherence to the law. And listen, Jesus is against the church not because the church was believing or practicing these things but simply because they were passive in not confronting sinful members who were living this way.

Are we a compromising church? A passive church? A keep quiet church? A so let it be church? A cowardly church? For there are a number of churches in our community who are spiritually weak, carnal, immature and shallow because they are a congregation of compromisers. There is no spiritual power in these places. But there's a lot of God talk, a lot of shouting, a lot of activity, a lot gimmicks but what is absent is the glory of God, the exaltation of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> sharp reaction Jesus has towards the compromising church is: Jesus calls the church to repent of her compromising ways [v. 16]

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

“Therefore repent” – In the original the word “repent” is placed at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis – “repent” [metanoeo – to hate and turn away from sin; **ao**rist imperative active; 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular; aorist is used as a note of urgency] “or else I am coming to you quickly” – “I am coming” [erchomai – present indicative middle voice 1 person singular; I myself am coming]; “to you quickly” This coming is not referring to the second coming but a promise to visit this church in judgment in the near future; “and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” – “I will make war” [polemeo – to fight; to war; from this word we get the English word “polemic” – controversial; a serious controversy is when the Head of the Church is about to fight His bride; future indicative active 1<sup>st</sup> person singular] “against them” – notice the statement before “I am coming to you quickly” – the “you” and the “them” is referring to the entire church; “with the sword of My mouth” – judgment. People think that sin should not be confronted in the church for fear of offending members, but Jesus says if we don’t fight against sin He will fight against us. Therefore, judgment is necessary.

You don’t have to agree with the person in the wrong to be a compromiser. All you have to do is ignore, excuse, pretend or be passive in not confronting that person you know is living in sin. But in the mind of Christ, you are just as guilty as the one committing the sin because you know it is wrong and you are not willing to love that person enough to confront them. If your idea of love is to turn a blind eye, then you don’t understand the gospel. The gospel is God loving us enough to deal with us where we were, dead in trespasses and sins and on our way to hell. But He sent His Son to deliver us from our sins and sent His Spirit to turn us away from our sins. A love that ignores sin, is not the love of God but the hatred of Satan. And if we allow false doctrine and ungodly living to go unchecked Jesus will fight against His own church. Sin will always bring God’s opposition in your life. If you reject the Word, the Word will attack you [Heb. 4:12]. Balaam was killed by a sword from Israel – Josh. 13:22

The 4<sup>th</sup> and last sharp reaction Jesus has towards the compromising church is: Jesus confirms a promise of eternal rewards to those who overcome compromise [v. 17]

[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.**

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” – Everyone wants to hear the Spirit speak now and days, but not when He is confronting the church; “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” – “To him who overcomes” [nikao – to conquer; to be victorious; present participle active; dat. masc. singular; a victorious Christian is not a compromiser but is one who demonstrates that he or she is truly saved by being faithful in living out the truth of God’s word.]; Two promises are given to the overcomer: “to him I will give some of the hidden manna” – “hidden” [krupto – to conceal; perfect participle passive voice gen. masc. singular; “which has been hidden”];

[“manna” - “Tradition says that at the time of the destruction of Solomon’s temple, Jeremiah, or others say an angel, was told by God to take the ark and hide it underground at Mount Sinai, there to await the eschaton, when the Messiah would place the ark in the new temple [Jer. 3:16; 2 Macc. 2:4-7]; This manna is not referring to Jesus who is the true bread, because He has not been hidden from us. This is heavenly food.]; “I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” – “I will give him a white stone” – “I will give” [didomi – future indicative active 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; “a white stone” – a smooth white stone]; [**Historical/Cultural Background:** Such a white stone with one’s name on it was the basis for admission to special events. It was also a well-established custom to reward victors at the games with such a token enabling them to gain admission to a special feast... The white stone is, then, a personalized tessara, which would serve as his token of admission to this great future feast. Thomas]; “and a new name written on the stone” – “new” [kainon – fresh; unused; unworn; “new” does not mean new in contrast to what is old, but something that is different in nature. Clearly the new name is the recipient’s own name, a new one, reflecting his status as belonging to Christ. Thomas]; “the hidden manna” is in contrast to “eating food sacrificed to idols” and “a white stone with a new name” contrasts with “committing fornication”. The “hidden manna” and the “white stone” are symbols of the Messianic feast that we will participate in when He returns. Jesus provides true food that comes from God that satisfies and Jesus provides true intimacy as opposed to cheat and immoral substitutes.

### **Revelation 2:18-29**

3 penetrating discoveries Jesus reveals about the ministry philosophy of the tolerant church, so that all churches be warned: The 1<sup>st</sup> penetrating discovery Jesus reveals about ministry philosophy of the tolerant church is: It is a church that strives to become better at loving others and serving the community [vv. 18-19]:

[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:**

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write” – “the angel of the church” as you remember refers to the pastoral messenger and guardian over the local congregation. The pastoral leadership is held responsible for what happens in the life of the church; “in Thyatira” means “perpetual sacrifice or continual offering”. For the sake of context, you need to know this about Thyatira: [**Cultural Background:** It was known “for its numerous guilds [roughly equivalent of today’s labor unions]. Thyatira’s main industry was the production of wool and dyed goods [especially purple goods] but inscriptions also mention guilds for linen workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths. [There is one person we are all familiar with who came from this city. According to Acts 16:14, when the apostle Paul arrived in Philippi, he met “a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics.”]

The primary god worshiped by the Thyatirans was the Greek sun god, Apollo. The pressure faced by the Christians in Thyatira came from the guilds. To hold a job or run a business, it was necessary to be a member of a guild. Each guild had its patron deity, in whose honor feasts were held – complete with meat sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. Christians faced the dilemma of attending those feasts or possibly losing their livelihood. MacArthur]. It is like the intimidation that takes place in some secular environments, where a Christian is expected to agree with secular beliefs or deny his own beliefs under the threat of termination. This is the environment that these believers lived in. And maybe one of the reasons why Lydia left Thyatira. Therefore, knowing that the tension was high Jesus commands John the apostle “to write” to this church with a sense of urgency to remind this church of who He is. He is: “The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this” – “Son of God” – the Greek god Apollo was also known as the son of Zeus. Jesus begins with this self-identification of the “Son of God”. The True Son of the Living God, the One possesses the very nature of God the Father. This is the only time this title is used in the book of Revelation. And it used here to call the church to realize that there is only One God they should be concerned about in pleasing and that is Jesus, the Son of God, not the god of the culture. It is a way of reminding the church of who is the true authority over the church; “who has eyes like a flame of fire” – “who has” [ho echo – present participle active nom. masc. sing; articular participle; lit. “the One who continually has eyes like a flame of fire; this speaks of holy omniscience. Eyes that pierces through to the inner most being and exposes what is hidden. This is not a causal glance but a look of scrutinizing judgement; “and His feet are like burnished bronze” – is meant to convey that Jesus’ feet is at war against sin, seeking to stamp out rebellion in His church. The holiness of Jesus is no abstract concept. The holiness of Christ must be expressed and experienced in the lives His people both to sanctify us and scared us away from sin. Christ is not just manifesting His sovereignty over the church, but He also intends to manifest His holiness in the church. **Quote:** Old Scottish philosopher “Men never thought of painting a picture of Jesus until they had lost His presence in their hearts.”

**[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.**

“I know your deeds” – “I know” [perfect (with a present meaning) indicative active 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; “your deeds” – your actions; your behavior; your lifestyle. In this context this refers to both their attitude and actions articulated in the rest of the verse – “and your love and faith and service and perseverance” – “your love” [agapen – sacrificial love for God and others; a love governed by the will]; “and faith” [“pistis” refers to trust in the Lord]; “and service” [diakonian – ministry service to the needs of others; out of the seven cities this is the only church that was commended for both its love and service].

The first penetrating discovery Jesus reveals about the ministry philosophy of the tolerant church is a very good one. It is a church that strives to get better in showing love, exercising faith, commitment to service and continuing to persevere through the difficulties of life. Not all tolerant churches have unloving and unkind people in fact you might meet some of the nicest and most sincere people in these settings, more than those in a lot of doctrinally sound churches sad to say. What use is it to know the truth and be so unkind and uncharitable? But the balance of our Lord's first assessment of this church is to first see the positive side before the negative side. "and that your deeds of late are greater than at first." – "greater" in quantity "than at first" – the attitudes of love and faith, that manifested itself in the actions of service and endurance was growing and expanding in this church.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> penetrating discovery Jesus reveals about the tolerant church is: It is a church that tolerates sin to avoid being rejected by the community [vv. 20-23]:

[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.**

"But I have this against you" – "But" [alla – strong adversative; Not "But" on a lesser note; "But" despite the good "I have against you"]; "I have this against you" ["I have" – echo – present indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; "that you tolerate the woman Jezebel" – "you tolerate" [aphiemi – to permit; to allow; not to hinder; present indicative active 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular] "you" refers to the whole church collectively. Jesus accuses the whole church of tolerating – "the woman Jezebel" – now this is not the woman's real name but it is a symbolic designation given by Jesus because her character and actions in the church were Jezebel like. As you recall Jezebel of the OT was the Canaanite wife of King Ahab, who ruled over the Northern kingdom. Jezebel led the nation of Israel in the worship of Baal. In 1 Kings 21:25, it says that "there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him". When your behavior is such that Jesus refers to you by the name of the vilest woman in history that is saying something. This is sobering! I wonder when the Lord looks at our lives do we live in such a way that our behavior reminds Him of a godly saint of old or a wicked person? Would Jesus call you a son of Abraham or Sarah by the demonstration of your faith and obedience? Or would He call you a Jezebel or a Judas by the behavior of your life? "who calls herself a prophetess" – "who calls" [lego – to say; present participle active; fem. nom. singular]; "herself a prophetess" – when someone gives himself/herself a title of authority doesn't automatically mean that God has called them to that position; "and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray" – "teaches" [didasko – present indicative active; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular; this means that she was teaching over the whole congregation of men and women in clear violation of 1 Tim. 2:12-15 on a continual basis.]; "leads astray" [planao – present subjunctive active; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular; from this verb we get the English noun "planet" a wandering body]

“so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols” – “commit acts of immorality” [porneuo – to commit fornication; to have sexual relations outside the covenant of marriage between a male and female; aorist infinitive active]; “to eat things sacrificed to idols” – “to eat” [esthio – aorist infinitive active]; Today it would be to consume/ingest a belief system that teaches that Christians can still be considered Christians even though they prize the valuable system of the world above Christ.

A tolerant church typically selects its leadership based on furthering its reputation in the community rather than selecting leadership that will help the church to grow in its relationship to Christ. It might be that this Jezebel had to first convince these believers that in order to maintain their jobs and be a witness in the community that had to participate in the pagan ritual of fornication that came after eating food to idols knowing that eating food to idols would lead to immorality. False teachers always seek to remove the shock value from something that is deemed wrong in order that people might feel more comfortable indulging in evil. So, they will talk openly about sex until the hearts and minds become desensitized to immorality. In other words, false teachers seek to normalize sin. They will even sprinkle throughout the congregation those who follow them to seduce the church into thinking it’s okay to do sinful things since grace covers it. God wants you to experience the freedom from guilt by indulging in sin. The lies of the devil.

3 warning signs of a false teacher/preacher – 1] self-appointed – “calls herself a prophetess”. They are not Spirit-led and Scripture qualified leaders but self-promoted and self-appointed, even in matters where a pastor may ordain them to the office. These are ones who don’t submit themselves to the authority of Scripture. This is my main concern when it comes to women preachers. It has nothing to do with ability or giftedness in comparison to men but everything to do with a refusal to submit themselves to the authority of Scripture that clearly says that a woman ought not to teach or exercise authority over a man [1 Tim. 2:12-15]. There is and there has never been a biblical or exegetical basis for ordaining women preachers. You can’t find a woman pastor in the NT, because there were none. So, these women undermine the authority of Scripture by appointing themselves as leaders in the church. There are 3 ways the Bible can be lost in the church: 1] when the preacher doesn’t preach from it; 2] when the Bible is no the authority in the church but tradition, by-laws or church committees are the authority; 3] when the leadership and congregation places themselves before the Bible as the source of divine revelation; 2] teaching that leads God’s people away from the truth – “and teaches and leads My bondservants astray” – like people like priest. All self-appointed leaders have bad theology. Why? If a self-appointed leader does not submit to the authority of Scripture, then that means they have appointed themselves as an authority. And when you are the authority as opposed to Christ being the authority, then your teaching will reflect an anti-Christ theology. Thus, in this case, the woman Jezebel was teaching in such a way that it was causing the bondservants of Christ to be led astray. If you have unqualified leadership, you will have a mislead people;

**3]** worldly behavior is tolerated in the church – “so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols” – all unqualified and disqualified leadership espouses false doctrine, whether it relates to distorting the Christian belief system or Christian behavior. This woman Jezebel like woman had no virtue or sacred honor for the marriage bed. She was sensual, exotic and profane in teaching the whole congregation that Christian living is not living holier than thou but indulging in the sins of the world. And this woman practiced what she preached. Loose doctrine always leads to loose living.

Therefore, false teachers will get you to believe that your sin betters your witness. Nobody in the world wants to be around someone who’s perfect, because perfect people are condemning people. But imperfect people can better relate to lost people. So, flaunt your sin as a witness for God. Is that how you reason away the call to live a holy life? But the gospel says that we are to let our light shine before men in such a way that they may see our good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Christians are not perfect people nor they just forgiven people, they are new creatures in Christ. Good service in the church and the community is no substitute for tolerance of false teachers, false doctrine and sinful lifestyles in the church.

**[21] ‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.**

“I gave her time to repent” lit. “and I gave her time so that she might repent” – “I gave” [didomi – aorist indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; “time” [chronos – a countdown from the time she was warned to the present time; the Lord may have given her months or years]. This time to repent probably came from the group within the church who did not agree with her sinful behavior and confronted her about it. Listen, when the Lord has not judged you for your sin, it doesn’t mean that He doesn’t have a problem with your sin. Don’t interpret the patience of God as the permission of God. The patience of God towards sin has a purpose “so that” [hina – in order that; purpose clause]; “to repent” – lit. “she might repent” [metanoeo – aorist subjunctive; active; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular]; “and she does not want to repent of her immorality” – “she does not want” [ou thelo – not desire; not intend; not determined; present indicative active 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular]; “to repent” [metanoeo – to turn away from; to change her mind which would lead to a change in behavior; aorist infinitive active]; “of her immorality” [tas porneias – her sexual promiscuity]; I have dealt with people like this in the church. Instead of repenting, they say pray for me.

**[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.**

“Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness” – “Behold” [See]; “I will throw her” [Ballo – to cast; present indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; “on a bed of sickness” – lit. “into a bed”; It’s a play on words here. The Lord is saying, “If Jezebel wants to be in bed. I’ll put her in bed. Her sickbed.”; “and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds” – “those who commit adultery” [tous moicheuo – present participle active mas. accus. plural; the men of the church were cheating on their wives in the name of Christian liberty.];

“into great tribulation” – not the end times tribulation detailed in chapters 4-19 of Revelation but a great physical affliction; “unless they repent of her deeds” – this entails turning away from submitting to her false doctrine of sexual sin and idol worship. Safety from judgment is found in repentance from sin. Notice that Jesus extends grace to His bondservants if they repent but not to false teachers who refuse to repent.

**[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.**

“And I will kill her children with pestilence” – “I will kill” [apokteino – to kill; future indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular]; “her children” – this doesn’t mean Jezebel’s biological children but her spiritual children, her followers; “with pestilence” [thanoto – death but in this context a disease that leads to death; this same word is translated “pestilence” throughout Revelation (6:8; 18:8)]; How do you know the ones who are children of Jezebel from those who are children of God in the church? Listen, Jesus says that those who tolerate professing Christians living in open sin are children of Jezebel not of God. You can always spot Jezebel’s children in the church. They support her teaching and defend her lifestyle. They shout in support of her false teaching and post it on social media. And they defend or attack those who speak against her and her lifestyle. Are you a child of Jezebel? Are you tolerant of false teaching and ungodly living in the church? Jesus will judge Jezebel’s children. “and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts” – “will know” [ginosko – future indicative; **middle voice**; 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural – lit. “and all churches will themselves know”; “that I am He who searches the minds and hearts” – “I am” [ego eimi]; “He who searches” [ereuvao – to examine into; present participle active; nom. mas. singular; “continually searches or examines “the minds and hearts” [mind literally means “kidneys” – the feelings and desires; heart – the thoughts, motives and will]. Every hidden aspect of our being is continually searched by Jesus.

“and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds” – “I will give” [didomi – future indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular – this is a promise]; “according to your deeds” – Jesus tests the mind and judges the actions, which means He doesn’t buy into the philosophy that you can do wrong and yet your motives can be right. He judges the deeds as a reflection of your motives. If Christ must choose between Himself being dishonored while you indulge in unrepentant sin or Him being honored while you suffer for sin. He will always choose His honor.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and last penetrating discovery Jesus reveals about the tolerant church is: It is a church that has some members who stand for the truth against the immoral standards of the community [vv. 24-29]:

**[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.**

“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.” – “the deep things of Satan, as they call them” was Jezebel’s boasting that Christian can participate in idol worship and fornication because in essence there are not gods, but the One true God and His grace will cover our sin. “I place no other burden on you” – the burden or vexation of being in a church where the leadership teaches error and the people are living ungodly.

**[25] ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.**

“what you have, hold fast” – refers to the Word of God, the gospel. The only instrument that will guard us from being led astray into error and sinful living is the Word of God; “until I come” – for His church.

**[26] ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS;**

“He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end” – “He who overcomes” [nikao – to conquer; present participle active; nom. masc. singular]; “he who keeps” [tereo – to guard; to observe; present participle active; nom. masc. singular]; “TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS” – This is a quote from Psalm 2:8 where the Father promises His Son, the Messiah authority over the nations of the world. This is referring to the time of Christ’s second coming. And here the church is promised to share in Christ’s reign over the nations. In other words, instead of enslaving ourselves to the standards of the culture realize that one day you will be reigning over it.

**[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;**

“AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES” – this speaks of punishing rebellion against the Lord; “as I also have received authority from My Father” – “have received” [lambano – perfect indicative active; 1<sup>st</sup> person singular; received authority to reign over the world Christ also has given to us the promise of reigning over the world with Him.

**[28] and I will give him the morning star.**

“the morning star” refers to Jesus Christ [Rev. 22:16]. The morning star is the brightest star that appears at the break of dawn. When Jesus Christ comes back, we will reign with Him. So why group yourself with a culture who one day will be subdued under your feet? Why would winners want to live like losers? Why would you want to be accepted by those who will one day be defeated? The challenge when times get dark is to give in to the darkness, to compromise or be tolerant of evil, but the night is always darkest before the dawn. The morning star is Jesus Christ. A new day is coming [Rev. 22:16]

**[29] ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’.**

“let him hear” [akouo – aorist imperative active; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular]; The Spirit is speaking to us this morning. It may not be what you want to hear but it is what we need to hear. Are you listening?