

# Revelation Chapter 2

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# Seven Churches of Revelation

- ① Ephesus
- ② Smyrna
- ③ Pergamos
- ④ Thyatira
- ⑤ Sardis
- ⑥ Philadelphia
- ⑦ Laodicea

Island of Patmos: where John received the vision



# The Letters to the Seven Churches

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1. Jesus identifies Himself in a way that is unique and meaningful to each church.
2. Jesus commends the church, save Laodicea.
3. Jesus confronts the church, save for Smyrna and Philadelphia.
4. Jesus will always offer hope and blessing to the faithful.

# The Letters to the Seven Churches

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Many theologians and scholars correspond each letter to a certain period during the Church Age.

While this may be true, we can run the risk of ignoring the letter if we do not think it pertains to this final period before Jesus returns.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Ephesus had anywhere from 250,000 – 500,000 people, making only Rome a bigger city. It was the capital of Asia Minor until Constantinople takes its place.

It had the Temple of Diana or Artemis (Greek and Roman goddess of fertility).

Paul ministered there for three years, and John became the overseer of the church.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Introduction: Jesus is reminding them that He sees all and knows all and is over all. He alone is in control.

Jesus is not there to brow beat, but to encourage the churches, normally to repent and change their ways.

Also, gold, if it is to be of great worth, must be pure and untarnished.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Commendation: They labor for Christ, the word labor in the Greek has a sense of weariness that goes along with the labor.

3 You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. (NLT)

“I grow weary in the work but not of the work” – D.L. Moody

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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## Commendation:

They are faithful to the true doctrine of the Bible. They examine everyone who comes in and tries to claim authority.

Notice again the praise of Jesus: Faithful in works, even when they were tired. Faithful in doctrine. Faithful in protection. Faithful in shunning evil. It sounds like the perfect church.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Jesus' Complaint: 4 But I have this [charge] against you, that you have left your first love [you have lost the depth of love that you first had for Me]. (AMP)

“The church at Ephesus went off track not in their doctrine but in their personal relationship to Jesus Christ”. – J. Vernon McGee

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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How confused must some in the church be. Isn't sound theology the goal? Isn't holiness our pursuit?

Yet we see, there is an element that Jesus desires above all things, love.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Here is the great truth of this passage, “Without love, everything we do in church or as Christians becomes hollow religion”.

Religiousness is the enemy of love. When being right matters more than someone’s relationship with Jesus, when rules replace caring and nurturing, when judging replaces grace, and form outweighs relationship, we are in great danger.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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For all their spirituality or seeming spirituality, they had no true spiritual health. The church was sick, not from a lack of theology and sound doctrine, but because they had lost their first love.

In the Greek, “lost your first love” could also be rendered “left your first love” and it denotes a willful leaving, not a simple mistake or decay over time.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Ephesus was no longer concerned about loving God and thereby it was no longer concerned with loving others. The two are inseparable. (Matthew 22:36-39)

“The Ephesian church, as a whole, took more delight in being right doctrinally than they did in the Righteous One who dies and rose again for them”. – Mark Barnard and Kenneth Quick

“They transferred their steadfast commitment and love from Christ Himself to the right teaching about Christ.” - Mark Barnard and Kenneth Quick

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Nicolaitans taught that the spirit was inherently good and the flesh inherently evil, but since the soul/spirit is good it didn't really matter what you did in the flesh. It was a form of Gnosticism. That is, what you did in the flesh didn't affect the spirit. They believed spiritual freedom gave people a license to sin.

Galatians 5:13 - For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Jesus' Hope and Blessing: "Remember how far you have fallen". They fell and it was not a small fall either. Their fall was not finished either and, either they would repent and be caught and restored by Jesus or they, as a church, would crash and burn.

"The devil doesn't fill us with hatred for God, but with forgetfulness of God" – Bonhoeffer

"Repent and do..."

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Works grow out of love; love grows out of a relationship with Jesus. The church in Ephesus may have had head knowledge, but they did not have a heart relationship with Jesus.

# Ephesus – Verses 1-7

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Promise: “To him who overcomes...” – It denotes a victorious conqueror who keeps on conquering – Stanley Horton

Full restoration of what was lost in the Garden of Eden; perfect and continual fellowship with Jesus.

7 He who has an ear, let him hear and heed what the Spirit says to the churches. (AMP)

# Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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A seaport city on the Aegean Sea. It is one of two cities that are still in existence today, although it is now called Izmir.

Smyrna was the center of the Imperial Cult of Rome, a group that worshipped the emperors as gods. It was the center in the region for the worship of Zeus and it also had a large Jewish population that opposed Christianity. It also had temples dedicated to Apollo, Diana, and Aphrodite.

Smyrna means myrrh and myrrh denotes death and suffering.

## Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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Jesus' Introduction: Jesus reminds the church in Smyrna that there was no one before Him and will be no one after Him, He is the Eternal God.

Jesus also reminds the church that He alone holds the keys to death and the grave. That He was dead and now is alive forevermore. (Rev. 1:18 - 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.)

## Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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Smyrna is the first of two churches in which Jesus has no complaint, only encouragement.

When Jesus tells the church in Smyrna “I know”, He is revealing Himself as the same God who met Hagar along the road before there was even a nation of Israel. He is El Roi, the God who sees me.

Smyrna was being persecuted and it was about to get worse.

## Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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Those who see this as different eras of The Church Age, see this as happening between mid-sixties AD through 313 AD when Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration.

Through this era there are ten distinct times of immense persecution starting with Nero and continuing to Diocletian.

## Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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Notice, that Jesus says, “the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you”.

“If the devil is afflicting your church, it is because he has asked for and received permission to afflict you”. – Mark Barnard and Kenneth Quick

Luke 22:31-32 - 31 And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”

# Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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“The true character of a church reveals itself under pressure and pain”  
- Mark Barnard and Kenneth Quick

Jesus, in verse 10, gives the church a command, “Don’t be afraid”.

Later in verse 10, Jesus gives us another command, “Be Faithful”.

Trials, troubles, and persecutions will either refine our faith or ruin it.

## Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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1 Peter 1:6-7 - 6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So, when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

## Smyrna – Verses 8-11

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Jesus' Message of Hope: The message is found at the end of verse 10 and verse 11. If you die here, you will live forever. "You will not be hurt by the second death".

Philippians 1:21-22 - 21 For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. 22 But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So, I really don't know which is better. (NLT)

One final thought on persecution; Love makes trials easier.

## Pergamum Verses 12-17

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Pergamum or Pergamos – It contained temples to Zeus, Athena, Aesculapius (Greek god of medicine) and had an imperial cult as well

Antipas, a faithful Christian, had already been martyred for his faith, yet the church didn't waver

However, there were still problems. While in Smyrna the troubles were outward, in Pergamos they were internal.

# Pergamum Verses 12-17

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**Jesus' Introduction:** In Pergamos, Jesus is the one with a sharp two-edged sword. In Revelation chapter 1, Jesus reveals the sharp two-edged sword is the very word. Same as Paul in Ephesians 6:17 when he tells us the armor of God has the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God

**Hebrews 4:12** - For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

# Pergamum Verses 12-17

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Pergamos had a problem and it was going to require Jesus to do a little surgery, there needed to be some dividing to take place. Here is one of the most important things to remember, especially if we believe Jesus is coming soon and we are in the “last days”; judgment begins in the House of God – 1 Peter 4:17

God is a God of blessings, but those blessings are conditional. – “Though God is faithful to bless us, He is just as faithful to judge us” – Stanley Horton

## Pergamum Verses 12-17

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Jesus' Commendation: They still were working for Christ (I know your works) and they were persevering in persecution.

They refused to deny their faith

## Pergamum Verses 12-17

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Jesus' Complaint: Now not everyone in the church fell victim to what was going on, but these doctrines were not taught in the pulpit or in Sunday School, but still managed to find their way into the church and the pastors and leaders were not really doing too much to stem the tide of the outside influence.

“Compromise was a big problem in the church. It was caused by a merging of church and state. The church had allied itself with the world” – Daymond Duck

# Pergamum Verses 12-17

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Once the sin got in, it started to spread, especially since no one seemed to correct the errors.

The seemingly most inconsequential thing can lead us down a path we should never walk down

1 Corinthians 5:6 - Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough?

# Pergamum Verses 12-17

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**Jesus' Correction and Warning:** Jesus reflects on His opening salutation with a warning that He, Himself, will fight against those in the church if they do not correct their behavior.

It will only take a word from His mouth. We need to understand that even in the New Testament, some people became sick and died because of their sin.

## Pergamum Verses 12-17

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Jesus' Blessings: "Hidden Manna" – Partaking of Jesus' own nature. We will have a body like Jesus', eternal.

A white stone in John's time was a vote for not guilty in a trial. To the overcomers, they will be declared not guilty, have the blessing of a new body and a new name that Jesus will pick out for them.

# Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Blue collar town and the most remote of the seven churches.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Jesus' Address: 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:.'

Eyes like flames. Those eyes pierce everything, judge the heart and mind.

Nothing escapes Jesus' view of His children or His Church. They are penetrating.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Jeremiah 17:10 - I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

Brass speaks of judgment. Metal refined in the fire. Thyatira, while it had many great qualities, was about to be judged by Jesus. It wasn't in a little bit if you don't repent situation, the time for repenting is over.

# Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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**Jesus' Commendations:** Thyatira is a loving church, faithful church, and a serving church. In fact, they are growing in their acts of love and service.

“Churches must properly assess how well they are doing, whether they are doing more this year than last”. – Mark Barnard and Kenneth Quick

Quantity over quality is never a good thing. Their quality allowed them to have greater quantity.

# Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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## Jesus' Complaint:

With Pergamum, the influence was external. The church was conforming to the world. Thyatira the problem is internal.

Jesus calls this woman Jezebel and there could not be a worse name given.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Jezebel – She wanted to replace the worship of God with Baal and God's true prophets, of which were Elijah and Elisha, with her own false prophets of Baal.

She was ruthless, conniving, domineering and all together anti-God.

For Jesus to label this person Jezebel is about as serious as it can get and yet she not only is in the church, but she also occupies a place of prominence.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Look how Jesus addresses her, “She calls herself a prophetess”.

People who take names or titles for themselves are rarely, if ever, interested in people, but rather the position and perceived power (authority) that the title brings.

Ministry will always be more important than titles.

# Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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What is important to note is Jesus' complaint isn't simply against Jezebel, but those who tolerate it. "Allow it" or "permit it" is used in other translations.

Shall we modify the Truth, in doctrine and in practice to gain adherents or shall we preserve the Truth, in doctrine and in practice and go with God. – Tozer

24 "But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). (NLT).

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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1 Timothy 4:1-3 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup> speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Jude 1:3-4 - <sup>3</sup> Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people. <sup>4</sup> I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Acts 20:29-31 - <sup>29</sup>For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup>Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. <sup>31</sup>Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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Was the church the opposite of Ephesus? Was it so loving that it overlooked doctrinal wrongs? Did it not want to offend this woman or her followers?

Was she too important or influential or did she have deep pockets? Did they fail to realize just how dangerous her teachings were due to a lack of spiritual knowledge and discernment?

# Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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“People who possess the discerning gifts are usually “truth-tellers” and “truth-tellers” are often seen as unkind”. – Mark Barnard and Kenneth Quick

I might also say that they can be seen as judgmental. Discernment is a gift given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:10) and it is not given for judgment, rather it is given for protection.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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2 Timothy 4: 1-4 - I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup> and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables.

## Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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People, including those who call themselves Christian will reject the cross and its suffering. There will be no death to self, no blessed are they that sorrow and mourn for their sins.

No elevation to Christ's standards. No call to holy living. No sacrifice, no tears, no more outward gazing to others but only inward gazing to self.

Even in Christian circles we need to stick out. Not with false piety but with true holiness and true adherence to God's Word.

# Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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## Jesus' Judgment:

23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

“I will kill her children with death” is a Hebraistic way of emphasizing a literal death and not some metaphor.

# Thyatira – Verses 18-29

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## Jesus' Blessings:

They will be able to rule because they are the ones who kept God's Law. Works, in the NKJV, is not a bad translation for to obey God is to work the works of Him who sent His Son to die for us.

Jesus is the Bright and Morning Star. The idea is that our knowledge and relationship with Jesus will grow more intimate in heaven because we are the ones who strove to know Him more intimately here on earth.