

## Revelation 2

### The Church in Ephesus

v. 2-3 The church in Ephesus is complimented by the Lord

4- The Lord's complaint: "You have forsaken your first love."

It is possible to serve and yet not really love.

Only those who love Christ fervently can serve Him faithfully.

5- Remember and Repent

In spite of its privileged position the church in Ephesus was in danger of losing its light.

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

6- Nicolaitans

A tradition having the support of some of the early church fathers identifies the Nicolaitans with the followers of Nicolas, who was one of the seven men selected to serve the church in Acts 6:5, but later became a heretical teacher. Whoever the Nicolaitans may have been, their teaching is compared, in verse 15, with that of Balaam, who advocated sinful license in idolatrous practices and sexual immorality. Jesus shared the Ephesian church's hatred for this movement, which also had some advocates in the church of Pergamos (v. 15).<sup>1</sup>

2:7 makes it clear that individual believers within the church may be true to the Lord, no matter what others may do.

Each letter contains a promise to the believer who overcomes. Though it is not specified precisely what is to be overcome, John's other writings speak of both Jesus and the believer overcoming "the world" (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4-5). This implies the continued successful resistance of the world's corrupt moral and spiritual influence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gregg, S. (1997). *Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary* (pp. 64-65). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Gregg, S. (1997). *Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary* (p. 65). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.

### The Church in Smyrna

2:9- "Synagogue of Satan" because of their persecution of Christians.

10- 'ten days' may simply communicate short duration of time.

11- 'second death' is identified as the Lake of Fire in Rev. 20:14

No criticism is mentioned for the Church in Smyrna.

### The Church in Pergamum

The city was noted for many things. It had the second largest library in the world—containing 200,000 volumes—exceeded only by the library at Alexandria, Egypt. Besides being the oldest city of Asia, Pergamos was the first to erect temples to Caesar Augustus, to Zeus, and to the serpent-god Asclepius. The reference to Satan's throne (v. 13) may allude either to the Roman authority seated in Pergamos or to the other demonic, idolatrous practices occurring there. The church at Pergamos is the only one of the seven known to have had a martyr—**Antipas ... who was killed among you** (v. 13), about whom nothing more is known. His death did not deter the faithful of the church from their loyalty to Christ. In referring to Antipas as **My faithful martyr**, Jesus dignifies him with the same eulogy as is used of Jesus himself in Revelation 1:5 (where the word "martyr" is translated "witness" in most versions).<sup>3</sup>

EXTRA INFO- Asclepius was the Greek god of healing, whose insignia was the entwined serpent on the staff. This is still a medical symbol today.

The Emperor Cult

Trade guilds

2:17- Much speculation has attended the interpretation of a **white stone** (v. 17). In one view, it is a token of vindication or acquittal, referring to the practice of a judge handing an accused criminal either a black stone signifying condemnation or a white stone indicating acquittal. The message then would be that, though the Christians may stand condemned in the Roman courts, they will be justified at the bar of eternal justice.

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<sup>3</sup> Gregg, S. (1997). *Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary* (p. 68). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.

Another view is that the white stone was a token given to contestants in the Greek games as they completed their race, to be traded in later for their actual awards.

Perhaps the prevailing view among commentators holds that a white stone with a person's name written upon it served as a sort of pass for admission to certain functions, like the feasts in the idol temples. If this view is correct, the meaning here would be that those who do not compromise themselves with idols will receive "a pass" admitting them into the messianic feast of the kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

### The Church in Thyatira

18- There arose in the church a self-professed prophetess, symbolically called **Jezebel** (v. 20) due to the similarity of her influence upon the church to that of the original Jezebel upon Israel. This woman apparently taught that idolatrous practices were permissible, encouraged fornication, and indulged in the same herself with members of the church. This error in the church was similar to the "doctrine of Balaam" in the church at Pergamos, the difference being that, in Thyatira, the doctrine was promoted by a woman and there were men committing fornication with her (v. 22). It is possible that the prophetess was representing her insights as "the deep things of God" (comp. 1 Cor. 2:10), that is, as reflecting a superior enlightenment concerning the exercise of grace. If this is so, there is a deliberate irony in Christ's categorizing these teachings as the depths (or the "deep things") of Satan (v. 24).<sup>5</sup>

When we contrast the message to Ephesus with the one to Thyatira we see:

- The church in Ephesus was weakening in its love, yet faithful to judge false teachers.
- The church in Thyatira was growing in their love, but too tolerant of false doctrine.

"Speaking the truth in love" is the biblical balance (Eph. 4:15). Unloving orthodoxy and loving compromise are both hateful to God. Warren Wiersbe


26- 'I will give authority over the nations' This probably refers to the fact that God's people will live and reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4).

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<sup>4</sup> Gregg, S. (1997). *Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary* (pp. 69–70). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> Gregg, S. (1997). *Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary* (p. 71). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.

28- I will give him the morning star (v. 28). In a later chapter, Jesus identifies himself as the Bright and Morning Star (22:16). Thus as He is the “hidden manna” promised to the overcomers of Pergamos (v. 17), so is He the “morning star” that will be given to the overcomers of Thyatira. The promise may convey the idea that those who continue to hold forth their lamp in the present night, they will live to see the dawning of a new day.<sup>6</sup>

 <b>THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE APOCALYPSE (1:20)</b>				
	Commendation	Criticism	Instruction	Promise
<b>Ephesus</b> (2:1-7)	Rejects evil, perseveres, has patience	Love for Christ no longer fervent	Do the works you did at first	The tree of life
<b>Smyrna</b> (2:8-11)	Gracefully bears suffering	None	Be faithful until death	The crown of life
<b>Pergamos</b> (2:12-17)	Keeps the faith of Christ	Tolerates immorality, idolatry, and heresies	Repent	Hidden manna and a stone with a new name
<b>Thyatira</b> (2:18-29)	Love, service, faith, patience is greater than at first	Tolerates cult of idolatry and immorality	Judgment coming; keep the faith	Rule over nations and receive morning star
<b>Sardis</b> (3:1-6)	Some have kept the faith	A dead church	Repent; strengthen what remains	Faithful honored and clothed in white
<b>Philadelphia</b> (3:7-13)	Perseveres in the faith	None	Keep the faith	A place in God's presence, a new name, and the New Jerusalem
<b>Laodicea</b> (3:14-22)	None	Indifferent	Be zealous and repent	Share Christ's throne

<sup>6</sup> Gregg, S. (1997). *Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary* (p. 72). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers.