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Revelation 2

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Learn the Bible at Home

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Revelation 2.

Topics

- The angel of the church in Ephesus.
 - The angel of the church in Smyrna.
 - The angel of the church in Pergamum.
 - The angel of the church in Thyatira.
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INTRODUCTION: my goal in this study is to give greater insight into the beauty of Bible prophecy and inspire the reader to expand upon what I have shared. Whether Christian or non-Christian I am sure the reader's knowledge will be enhanced and that these studies will give greater insight into the following three things:

1. Future things to come upon earth.
 2. The wonder of Bible prophecy and the beauty of Scripture.
 3. The path to God's love, His grace and to eternal life.
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A personal note: though I have always loved reading and studying the Scriptures and have now walked with Christ and in God's grace for around fifty years the following studies should not be taken to be dogmatic, inflexible or the final word on the matter since I am fully aware that my mind is limited by mortality and that greater understanding of God's revelation is continually becoming clearer before our eyes as we move closer to the time of Christ's glorious return in glory.

The previous chapter: began with God sending His angel to John, to show him the things that must soon take place so that he could then testify and make the revelations revealed in the visions that he saw known to all God's servants. John is told to write what he sees in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. He then has a vision of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. The chapter ended with John being told to write the things that he had already seen, the things that are present and the things that are yet to come to pass.

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

REVELATION 2:1

Him who Holds Seven Stars and Walks Among Seven Lampstands.

- **Revelation 2:1:** "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

NOTE: when reading these seven letters it should be kept in mind that in some of these cities there would have been more than one Christian church, which means that each letter is probably addressed to the head or most dominant church of the city or that all who were Christians in the city were regarded as members of one church, but for convenience met

for worship in different places. Whichever it may be the seven messages can be applied to any church in any city of any generation that has comparable circumstances and is in similar surroundings.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus: (v1) the English word angel in the Old Testament is from the Hebrew word mal'ak. In the New Testament, the English word angel is from the Greek word aggelos. The word mal'ak in the Old Testament and the word aggelos in the New Testament have sometimes been translated to the English word messenger or messengers while at other times mal'ak and aggelos are translated angel or angels.

Malak: means to dispatch as a deputy, a messenger, an ambassador or a representative it can apply to and angel of God, a king, a prophet, a priest or teacher. The same word is used for the supernatural angels of God and for human messengers which means it can apply to God's supernatural angels or human men who are sent as messengers.

Aggelos: means a messenger or envoy sent from God to bring tidings. Aggelos is used all of the time in the New Testament for the supernatural angels of God (except for Luke chapter twenty), but it is also used for human men (i.e., pastors, ministers and such like) which means aggelos can apply to God's supernatural angels or human messengers.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

The angel refers to the minister of the church. Ministers are referred to as angels, because they proclaim God's word, bring light into darkness and oversee His people and by doing so are doing heavenly work. However, the message is not limited to the minister, but applies to all those in the church who are of the same character as the minister or in a church of similar circumstances. The English Standard Bible says, "the words of him," whereas the King James Bible says, "these things saith he," the English Standard Bible implies that it is the angel speaking the words of the one holding the seven stars, meaning it is not Jesus speaking, but his angel speaking for him. In contrast to this the King James Bible clearly states that it is Jesus himself speaking. The following verses shine a light upon who is speaking:

- The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place (shortly come to pass in KJV). He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John. (Rev. 1:1)
- These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. (shortly be done in KJV). (Rev. 22:6).

Though some Bibles have the words spoken to the seven churches written in red, it is not Jesus speaking, but an angel, however these angels are speaking:

- The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands (Rev. 2:1).
- The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. (Rev. 2:8).
- The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. (Rev. 2:12).
- The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. (Rev. 3:1).
- The words of him the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. (Rev. 3:7).
- The words of him the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. (Revelation 3:14).

These verses clearly show that the angel is speaking the words of Jesus, which means that it is right and proper to have them written in red.

Ephesus: under the Romans it was a city of great wealth, riches and trade and the capital not only of Ionia, but of the entire province of Asia, but much if it was given to idolatry and superstition. It was mostly famous for the gigantic and magnificent temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world, even today ruins of its richly-sculptured columns can be seen in the British Museum. It is perhaps mentioned first since it was the capital of Asia Minor; the most important city of the seven; the place where John had preached; the nearest to Patmos and the most famous city that Paul preached in for three years. (Acts 19:10) (Acts 20:31). The large and flourishing church that Paul had established is now destroyed. Some theologians teach that Ephesus represents the waning period of the apostolic age. It lies about forty-six miles from Smyrna.

Ephesus religion: the Ephesians were fanatical believers led by a superstitious priesthood that promoted the worship of Diana. The Roman idol Diana was known to the pagan Greeks as Artemis. The idol's most extravagant temple at Ephesus, became one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was constructed of pure marble and built, over two hundred and twenty years. It measured 345 feet long (105 meters), by 165 feet wide (50 meters) and was supported by massive columns each 55 feet high (17 meters). Inside was a bizarre statue of the fertility idol, believed to be originally carved from a meteorite that had fallen from heaven. (Acts 19:35)

The riot in Ephesus: the cult of Diana (or Artemis) was so powerful and widespread (religiously and economically) in the first century that it caused a very dangerous environment in some places for those who preached the Gospel. Demetrius a silversmith and the craftsmen whose business was to make silver shines and idols of the goddess greatly profited and became rich and wealthy by their trade. These workmen feared if the Gospel spread the great temple of the goddess Artemis would count for nothing, and that she would lose her magnificence and if this happened their profits they made by selling their idols would be greatly diminished, especially since Paul taught that gods made by the hands of men were no gods. The craftsmen motivated by money and profit stirred up the crowd against those preaching the Gospel to cry out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" So, the city filled with hostile confusion rioted against those proclaiming the Gospel, until the town clerk came and calmed the crowd down and dismissed them. (Acts 19:20-41).

Ephesus spiritual opportunities: Paul proclaimed the Gospel for three years at Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Apollos with captivating and convincing eloquence taught the Scriptures. (Acts 18:24). Aquila and Priscilla persistently laboured in the Lords service (Acts 18:26). The beloved and faithful, Tychicus had been minister there (Ephes. 6:21) and Timothy was its chief pastor.

The seven stars: (v1) stars bring light to darkness, in this context they are emblems of the ministers of the seven churches who Christ upheld and directed and to who John was ordered to write. They refer to ministers filled with the Spirit of Christ who under his authority and by his authority bring his light into this world of darkness. The stars by extension also embrace the churches themselves. Being held in Christ's right hand signifies they are kept by him for salvation and are submitted to his authority and by his authority and Gospel they bring his light into this world of darkness.

In his right hand: (v1) the right hand speaks of power, authority, favour and intimacy and of the ministers and the church being under the watchful eye of the Lord for judgment or reward, praise or rebuke.

The seven golden lampstands: (v1) (golden candlesticks in KJV) in the Old Testament there is a literal reference of this lampstand standing in the Temple of the LORD (called the Menorah by Jews). It was very large, approximately 1.62 metres high (5.3ft) with a main central gold stem that had a lamp at its top, and on each-side it had three gold branches curving outwards and upwards with a lamp at the top of each branch so that there

were seven lamps in all. It stood in the Holy Place, the first room in the tent of the tabernacle and later in Solomon's temple where the table of showbread and the golden altar of incense was. The priests would daily fill these lamps with fresh olive oil of the purest quality to keep them continually burning. They were the only source of light in the Holy Place that allowed the priests to see and that shone upon the table of showbread and the altar of incense which enabled the priests to fellowship with God and intercede on behalf of His people. Just as the lampstand was placed in God's dwelling place so that the priests could see and approach and serve Him. Jesus, the true light that gives light to everyone (John 1:9) came into the world so that all could see God and not live in spiritual darkness anymore. Jesus said:

- I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12).
- I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. (John 12:46).

Jesus is represented by the main branch of the lampstand, while believers are represented by the six branches that extend from it. The main stem and the branches signify Jesus relationship to us in that once we were in darkness, but now being connected to him, the true light, we walk in his light as children of light. (Ephes. 5:8). Just as the lampstand shone light into the darkness of the Holy Place so his priests could serve him, Jesus calls his people to be the light of the world and to let our light shine before others, that they may see our good works and give glory our Father in heaven (Matt. 5: 14-16).

Who walked in the midst: signifies Christ by his Spirit, his word, his love, his joy and his grace being amongst the churches.

Summary of verse one: in this verse, we have a picture of Jesus forever being present amongst his churches.

REVELATION 2:2

I Know You Cannot Bear Who Call Themselves Apostles.

- **Revelation 2:2:** I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

All seven letters in this chapter and chapter three:

- Begin with, "I know your works."
- Contain a promise from Christ, "To him that overcomes."
- Ends with, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
- Each, has a threat or a promise (most have both).
- The title of the Lord in each harmonises with the nature of the address and is mainly taken from the imagery used in John's vision of Christ in chapter one (Rev. 1:12-16).

I know your works: (v2) the words, "I know," highlight the truth that Jesus knows all the good and all the bad that his servants do, nothing is hidden from his eyes. This truth, one day, will be good news to the righteous, but fearful news to the wicked. It expresses the way in which all actions are naked and open before the eyes of the Lord and is why he is fully qualified to give out commendation and reward or administer judgment and condemnation. Works that bring commendation and reward are:

- Outward works that stem from the Spirit, love and faith and from a genuine loyalty to the Lord.
- Endeavours to promote the Gospel and the glory of God and faithful service in Christ's service, especially against correcting error and opposing false doctrines.
- Patiently enduring persecution, opposition, and various sorrows, hardships and trials for Christ's name.
- Spreading and sharing the knowledge of Christ and the message of the bloodstained cross of Calvary and the Gospel.
- Endeavouring to live a lifestyle that brings honour to God and a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Works that bring judgment and condemnation:

- Good works that lack an inward passion and love for Christ and are solely performed from a formal faith or an effort to earn righteousness that leads to salvation.
- Works (especially religious) that outwardly appear good, but are done for one's own selfish gain, and advantage.
- Religious works that appear godly but are acts of hypocrisy and pretence.

The head of the church: the words, "To the angel of the church in Ephesus," (v1) show that the words, "I know your works" (v2) are addressed to the head minister of the church, however, the message would apply to all who are in the same circumstance and have the same attitude. To understand why the minister is called and angel see the title, "To the angel of the church in Ephesus," following (Rev. 2:1) (above).

I know your patience: (v2) in standing up against the efforts of false prophets and teachers who through skilful oratory and misinterpretation of Scripture proclaim error for their own advantage and distort the Gospel for their own gain, or because they themselves believe what they teach, but are deceived. It matters not which it is since both scenarios not only result in seekers of God being led away from simple faith in Christ, but also causes them to walk on a crooked path.

I know how you cannot not bear them which are evil: (v2) means that the minister could not endure or tolerate those who taught false doctrines and had no fellowship with them. The focus here is not the secular wicked, but those who claim to be apostles and by extension pastors and ministers that claim to be servants of Christ but are not.

Has found them liars: (v2) the head of the church tested the character of the self-appointed apostles and their teaching and discovered their claims to be unfounded and their teachings to be false. To claim to be an apostle when one is not, is a great abomination and evil before God, this is the character of these teachers, Jesus calls them liars and the apostle Paul calls them:

- False apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:13).

And John in his letter warns the faithful saying:

- Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1).

The minister of the Ephesian church strove to have a truthful ministry in his church, to achieve this he rightly and carefully examined the boast of those claiming to be Christ's ministers and found them to be pretenders who distorted the Gospel, and because of this he refused to recognize them as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have tried them: (v2) embraces the following:

- Those who make false claims to God's call and who by skilful oratory and motivational speeches that appeals to self, ego, pride and the desires of the flesh impose their errors on others.
- Those who minister under the pretence of apostolical authority and who lie and deceive by cleverly lifting Scriptures out of context and build new doctrines that sound good but are false.
- Those who entice their followers back under the law and ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions to maintain their salvation, rather than trust in Christ's righteousness and God's grace.

The Lord commends the church for:

- Not enduring those who do evil which means that they had not lost the power of hating evil, (no-one can truly love God without hating evil).
- Testing those who confessed to be ministers of Christ and finding them to be liars and false teachers, which means they still had a zeal for the true Gospel of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know your zeal: (v2) for maintaining the true word of God and the Gospel, and for the establishing Christ's Kingdom.

Those who call themselves apostles: (v2) could refer to any of the following three:

1. Those that claim they had been called to the office of an apostle after the Saviour ascended, as Paul was.
2. Those that claimed the honour due to the name and office of an apostle or were elected to it, by their followers.
3. Those that claimed to be the successors of the apostles, and to have their authority.

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The only true apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ are the original twelve who he chose and Matthias, who was chosen in the place of Judas (Acts 1:26) and Paul, who was specially called to the office by the Saviour after his resurrection. To be a true apostle one had to fulfil the following three qualifications:

- Must have accompanied the original twelve apostles from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up. (Acts 1:21-26).
- Have, to have a witnessed Jesus resurrection. (Acts 1:22).
- Needed to have been appointed by the Lord Jesus himself (1:24-25).

While the first two requirements are easy to understand, the third is not, since some question the wisdom of the Christians' use of lots to decide between Justus and Matthias. (Acts 1:23-26). However, both men were suited for the work of an apostle and both men were accepted by the people, so either way the lot fell would have been a good result since both men were equally qualified to replace Judas and because of this it was acceptable to use lots to make the choice, since there could be no bad result no matter which way the lot fell. The Christians were led by the eleven to pray to the Lord Jesus that he would reveal to them the apostle he had already chosen (Acts 1:25), so with all these facts in mind, it could be rightly said that, just as Jesus had personally appointed the other apostles (Matt. 3:13-19), he also appointed Matthias. (Acts 1:26). The self-appointed apostles in this chapter were most likely Jews of great religious authority that were trying to bring those Paul had established in the Gospel back under the Jewish religious law to be saved and maintain salvation. Paul said to the elders of the Ephesian church:

- I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30).

Though the minister of the church was doing most things right, it seems that he was doing everything from a sense of legalist duty and formalism and not from the passion he had for the Lord and the zeal he had to serve him, that he had when he was first appointed to the ministry. It is unlikely he had completely lost his love for the Lord, but he had certainly lost his passion and zeal for doing the work involved in maintaining a growing healthy church.

This principle is especially true of young ministers that are promoted to the service of the Lord, not because they are patient and spiritually mature, but because of their passion and zeal. When this happens, it is not uncommon for these youthful ministers after listening to the struggles, hardships and sorrows of those under his care and taking care of the daily duties of the church overtime that they fall into doing things from habit and duty rather than passion and zeal.

Naturally this is not limited to the youthful but can also happen to mature men who have been in the ministry for many years.

REVELATION 2:3

I know You are Enduring Patiently.

- **Revelation 2:3:** I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

The minister of the church had laboured until he was weary and tired, this is no doubt one of the reasons his first passion and zeal had waned, he perhaps like many ministers was overworked. Even though he was wearied he had not given way to murmuring, complaints and opposition, and had maintained his integrity and not abandoned the truth of the Lord's word, but patiently endured these things, not for himself, but for Christ's name sake, for his Gospel's sake, for righteousness sake and for the sake of the faithful.

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REVELATION 2:4

I have this Against You, that You Have Abandoned Your First Love.

- **Revelation 2:4:** But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love (left thy first love in KJV) you had at first.

When love is lacking, all other works are as nothing, since the spirit underpinning the Christian faith is love. The apostle Paul said:

- If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

However, in this ministers' case it is unlikely he had lost all love for Christ, otherwise there would not be so much that the Lord commended him for, but he had certainly lost the love for his ministry and the passion and zeal he had when he first served the Lord. It could be likened to the sorrowful cry of a bridegroom, recalling the early days of love and passion his bride had for him when she said, "Yes," to his marriage proposal.

- Thus says the LORD, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. (Jer. 2:2).

There is a danger in all churches of falling into a mechanical type of faith or falling backward to trust in dead works of the past (i.e., the practise of adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions). Reminding the minister that his Saviour not only holds him and his church in his right hand and walks among the church but is also the light of his church (Rev. 2:1), is a very apt introduction to inspire him to revive his first love and passion.

REVELATION 2:5

Do the Works You did at First or I will Remove Your Lampstand.

- **Revelation 2:5:** Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you (come unto thee quickly in KJV) and remove your lampstand (candlestick in KJV) from its place, unless you repent.

The word quickly comes from the Greek word (*tachus*) it means shortly, without delay, soon, or suddenly by surprise. By implication it carries the idea of being ready. The best interpretation of it in this verse is that when the Lord does come, he will come suddenly so therefore always be ready or make yourself ready for when he does come. The head minister (and by extension all others that are of similar character) is being called to remember the renown and reputation he once had for his passion and love toward the Lord and his zeal to serve him. He is to look, into his mind and heart and see how greatly his passion has declined and remember how much happiness he had serving the Lord. When a husband's love for his wife declines one of the ways to revive it is to recall to his mind the good times they had together when courting and the overwhelming joy he had when he led her to the altar and to pursue through photos of their happy times together. Recalling these things and meditating upon them stirs up the love a person once had. Likewise, remembering our joy when we first came to the Lord and all the good times we had being united to him in love and serving him will stir up a love that may have declined, especially as we meditate upon the bloodstained cross of Calvary and the great price God paid to save us and the enormous agony Jesus suffered to redeem us.

Repent, and do the works you did at first: (v5) repentance involves a change of the heart and a change, of mind, of attitude, of purposes and of actions and behaviour. There must be a deep conviction and sorrow over being luke-warm and over the decline of the love and passion he had at the beginning of his ministry evidenced by bringing forth fruits fitting of his repentance. In this way, he would recover his first passion and gratitude for the high price his Redeemer paid to save him. When we lose our gratitude toward Christ for the salvation and grace, he achieved for us on the bloodstained cross of Calvary we should not expect to sense his presence or his love. Nor should any minister expect his congregation to be zealous and passionate for Christ if he is not passionate and zealous for the Lord himself. This, is why the Lord is rebuking him and calling him to repent.

NOTICE: in this verse Christ, does not say, "Feel your first feelings," but, "Do the first works," Repentance involves both an inward change of heart and attitude and an outward change of behaviour. Outward behaviour fitting for repentance evidences the inward change of heart and mind. It is not enough for this minister to only emotionally feel his first love, he must also accompany it with works flowing from that love.

I will come to you and remove your lampstand (candlestick in KJV) from its place: (v5), the words the Lord will come to the minister of the Ephesian church could mean:

- He will come in a spiritual way and remove his love altogether.
- He will come in a judicial way to inflict punishment on him.

- He will come in a providential way to rebuke and chastise him.
- He will come and remove his church from him.

We are not told in what way Christ would remove the lampstand or whether it would come by some sudden judgment or by a gradual process that would lead to his light being removed from his heart and from the church. The lampstand in this context could apply to any of the following three:

1. To the light of the Gospel and the remaining love of Christ he had dwelling in his heart.
2. To his church as being a light to the city of Ephesus.
3. To the light of God's word, the presence of the Lord and his joy amongst the congregation.

If we lose our devotion, passion and love for Christ we must expect that he will withdraw his presence and his favour. Even today, if a minister who has lost his love for serving the Lord and is just performing his responsibilities from habit and duty does not change his attitude and renew his love his church will eventually die. It could be likened to batteries in a lamp, if they are not recharged, they die and the light of the lamp slowly fades, until it gives no light at all. Though removing the lampstand can embrace all three of the above ideas, the best way of expressing all three is to say that removing the lampstand carries the idea that the church would cease to exist.

NOTICE: many of the things referred to in these letters pertain to the heart, the feelings and the state of the mind, which shines a spotlight upon the truth that the Saviour has an intimate acquaintance with the heart of man.

REVELATION 2:6

You Hate the Works of the Nicolaitans, which I also Hate.

- **Revelation 2:6:** Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

The word Nicolaitans comes from the Greek word (*Nikolaos*) it refers to a Nicolaïte (i.e., an adherent of Nicolaus a heretic) while the Greek word (*nikos*) means, victorious over the people. Amongst theologians there are different ideas as to who the Nicolaitans were, following are the three most common thoughts:

1. **Nicolas the Deacon:** some believe that the name Nicolaitans was, derived from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons mentioned in the following verse.
 - What they (the twelve) said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. (Acts 6:5)

Those that hold this belief assume that the name Nicolaitans was given to them because Nicolaus the deacon became apostate and was the founder of the sect, while others believe this religious sect assumed his name, in, order to give them greater credit to their church and their doctrines. But, there is no proof whatever that Nicolaus ever apostatized from the faith, and became the founder of a sect. Added to this Nicolaus was one of the faithful seven, full of the Spirit and wisdom that the disciples picked out from amongst them and who the apostles laid hands on for the ministry of looking after the widows that were being neglected (Acts 6:1-5) so it is highly unlikely such a godly man would give birth to a religious group

the Lord hates. Besides this common sense tells us that if a religious group was going to adopt a name to give their sect greater credibility and influence it is much more probable that they would adopt the name of an apostle or of some other prominent man rather than the name of a deacon of Antioch.

2. **Balaam:** many other commentators suppose that the name Nicolaitans is used symbolically to signify those who resembled the same self-serving faith as Balaam did. Following is a brief overview of the story of Balaam: Balak the king of the Moabites desired to destroy the people of Israel, to achieve this Balaam a prophet (for the kings' reward) advised him to allow the Moabite women to mix with the Israelite men. Balak heeded Balaam's advice and the men of Israel were not only seduced by the Moabite woman to commit fornication, but also lead away from God to join the women in idolatrous worship. They liken the Nicolaitans to Balaam, because they like Balaam brought about the corruption of God's people.

Those who believe this also suppose that the word Nicolaitans is used symbolically in the same manner that the word Jezebel is used in verse twenty of this chapter, to denote corrupters and seducers of God's people. They suppose that the Nicolaitans, like Balaam and Jezebel were a religious sect who introduced into the church a false freedom, seducing Christians from Paul's doctrine of God's grace by distorting and perverting it in such a manner that it allowed for immorality and sensual sins. Those who embrace this idea liken the Nicolaitans to those spoken of in the following verses:

- Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing. (2 Peter 2:15-16).
 - Certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:4).
 - Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. (Jude 1:11).
3. An unknown person: the most likely opinion is that some person now unknown, of the name Nicolas (or Nicolaus), was the leader of the Nicolaitans, and laid the foundation of the sect. This scenario seems to be the most fitting since it was not uncommon for prideful ambitious men to rise-up and form their own religious sect, during the time of the early church, its growth and the spread of the Gospel.

Though any of these three may apply everything in, regard to the origin of the sect of the Nicolaitans, and the reason for the name and the doctrines that they taught, is clouded in great obscurity. However, it is generally agreed they were involved in gross social indulgences and this is all that needs to be known regarding the Nicolaitan sect mentioned in the letters to the church of Ephesus (v6) and the church in Pergamos (v15) and explains the strong language of hatred and condemnation used by the Saviour concerning them. Nothing can be more contrary to the good character of the Saviour, or to his Gospel than gross social indulgences, corrupt doctrines and wicked deeds.

- For a fourth view concerning the teachings of the Nicolaitans see the notes after the title, "You have Some Who Hold the Teaching of the Nicolaitans," following (v15) (below).

Which also I hate: (v6) since all sin is contrary to the Father's nature and to his own nature and character, and to his will and his Gospel all sin is hateful to him. Whatever, is hateful and offensive to him should also be hateful and offensive to his people whether it is in them or in others. All who have a deep love for Christ will find they have within their spirit a

natural loathing and hatred toward the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations dwelling within their own nature and toward their sinful outward behaviour and the sins of others, but this does not mean that they should have a loathing and hatred toward themselves or toward others, especially since we are all sinners saved, not by works or our own self-righteousness, but by Christ's righteousness and God's grace.

REVELATION 2:7

To the One Who Conquers I will Grant to Eat of the Tree of Life.

- **Revelation 2:7:** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers (overcomes in KJV) I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.¹ (in, the midst of the paradise of God in KJV). (Rev. 2:7).

The expression, "he who has an ear let him hear," carries the idea of having a humble attitude and a mind that is open to listen and believe as they read or hear the word of the Lord, the Gospel message or God's prophetic truths. Without these qualities, the spiritual truths of Christ word cannot be discerned or received. The statement, "he who has an ear let him hear," is used at the close of each of the seven letters to draw attention to what is about to be said, and to denote that it is of special importance and worthy of attention. The statement, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," could also be expressed in the following way, "let him hear what Christ says to the churches."

What the Spirit says to the churches: (v7) the Spirit speaking in this chapter can refer to God's Spirit speaking, Jesus speaking, Jesus angel speaking or the Holy Spirit speaking and by extension the Spirit speaking God's word through faithful pastors and ministers and all who share the Gospel with others. In all cases, it is the same Spirit of inspiration, and in each case, no matter who is speaking, it is right and proper to say, "listen to what the Spirit says to the churches," because in all cases the voice is speaking God's word and the word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

11

To him that overcomes: (v7) (or conquers) this expression would be applicable to those who triumph in any of the following respects:

- Victory over one's own troubling sins.
- Victory over the world and its temptations.
- Victory over error and false doctrines and the hardships and trials of life.

Life in general, and especially the Christian life, may be regarded as a warfare against worldly temptations, sinful pleasures, distorted doctrine, conflicts, difficulties, suffering and hardships, but the primary application of the expression, "to him that overcomes," refers to those who endure in faith regardless of what joys or sorrows life brings across their path. All in God's Kingdom at various times suffer sorrow and grief and fall into conflict, difficulties and temptations, but those who maintain their faith will be received by the Lord himself as conquerors and overcomers in the end.

I give will grant to eat of the tree of life: (v7) to be permitted to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, is an expression that implies the promise of everlasting life and of eternal happiness. In Genesis chapter two we are told God planted a garden and, in this garden, He planted many fruit trees and amongst these trees two trees called, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Adam and Eve could eat of all the trees in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eating the fruit of this tree brought death whereas eating of the fruit of the tree of life allowed them to live perpetually. Nothing is known of the nature of these two trees. They may have been literal trees or emblems of life since man's destiny depended on whether he ate from one or the other. They could freely eat of the fruit of all other trees without it affecting their

condition. (Gen. 2:8-17) (Gen. 3:22-24). The tree of life is an allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ himself, he is symbolically referred to as the tree of life, because he is the Saviour of life. The meaning of the expression, "I will grant to eat of the tree of life," is that the reward of overcoming, which is admittance into heaven and eternal life.

- Through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22:2).
- Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. (Rev. 22:14).
- If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Revelation 22:19).

In, the midst of the paradise of God: (v7) signifies all the eternal splendour, wonder and glory of the future world to come. It carries the idea that those who endure in faith to the end, will have a place in the middle (signifying the most glorious place) in this eternal future world of everlasting beauty, peace, enjoyment and eternal happiness.

THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

REVELATION 2:8

The Words of the First and the Last, who Died and came to Life.

- **Revelation 2:8:** And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.'

To the reader: if the explanations of the previous church has been read, this section may be skipped as the comments are the same.

12

NOTE: when reading these seven letters it should be kept in mind that in some of these cities there would have been more than one Christian church, which means that each letter is probably addressed to the head or most dominant church of the city or that all who were Christians in the city were regarded as members of one church, but for convenience met for worship in different places. Whichever it may be the seven messages can be applied to any church in any city of any generation that has comparable circumstances and is in similar surroundings.

To the angel of the church in Smyrna: (v1) the English word angel in the Old Testament is from the Hebrew word mal'ak. In the New Testament, the English word angel is from the Greek word aggelos. The word mal'ak in the Old Testament and the word aggelos in the New Testament have sometimes been translated to the English word messenger or messengers while at other times mal'ak and aggelos are translated angel or angels.

Malak: means to dispatch as a deputy, a messenger, an ambassador or a representative it can apply to and angel of God, a king, a prophet, a priest or teacher. The same word is used for the supernatural angels of God and for human messengers which means it can apply to God's supernatural angels or human men who are sent as messengers.

Aggelos: means a messenger or envoy sent from God to bring tidings. Aggelos is used all, of the time in the New Testament for the supernatural angels of God (except for Luke chapter twenty) but it is also used for human men (i.e., pastors, ministers and such like) which means aggelos can apply to God's supernatural angels or human messengers.

The angel refers to the minister of the church. Ministers are referred to as angels, because they proclaim God's word, bring light into darkness and oversee His people and by doing so are doing heavenly work. However, the message is not limited to the minister, but applies to all those in the church who are of the same character as the minister.

Smyrna: was a sea-port city famous for wealth, its commerce and its trade. In one of their temples there is an inscription that declares Nero the last emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty to be "the Saviour of the whole human race." The city was especially famous for Dionysus, the son of Zeus and Semele worshipped as the god of fertility and wine. He was not only a god to be worshipped but was also present within his followers and became one of the most important gods in everyday life. The festival for Dionysus became one of the most important events of the year. Today Smyrna has a population of about one hundred and fifty thousand and has always been considered one of the most beautiful cities in Asia. The Turks have fifteen mosques, and the Jews several synagogues and amongst these the Christian faith also flourishes in some degree. The city of Smyrna lies about forty-six miles from Ephesus and sixty-four miles from Pergamos and was exposed to brutal persecutions, cruel sufferings and death.

The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life: (v8) this refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is true that others were raised before him, but they were all raised to mortal life not eternal life, whereas Jesus was raised to eternal life.

- Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles. (Acts 26:23).

If Jesus is not the first to be raised to heaven and eternal life, then the apostle Paul would be making a false statement. Some may ask, "What about Elijah being taken to heaven?" To discover how this can be harmonised with Jesus being the first to be raised click or tap [Various Topics](#) and select the title: Elijah Taken into Heaven

REVELATION 2:9

Those who Say they are Jews but are a Synagogue of Satan.

- **Revelation 2:9:** I know your tribulation (works in KJV) and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander (blasphemy in KJV) of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

The introduction, "I know thy works," is standard introduction to all seven letters, it implies that the Lord has a most intimate acquaintance with all that pertained to each church. Since poverty is not mentioned in any of the letters to the other churches it, would appear that this church was exceptionally poor. No reason is given why they were particularly poor and though it was not uncommon of early Christians to be poor, the most likely reason this church was so poor was because of the aggressive tribulations and persecutions they suffered.

Many who are outwardly rich with this, worlds goods are spiritually poor as to the next world; and many who are poor outwardly in this world, are inwardly rich. Where there is spiritual richness it is not uncommon to see, outward poverty accompanying it. When God's people are made poor for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, he makes it up to them in spiritual riches. If persecution brings poverty upon those holding fast to their faith, it at the same time brings into their view the true riches of God.

- We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:3-5).

- Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4).

The spiritual riches of God embrace:

- Gods salvation in Christ and his forgiveness, love, grace and favour and acceptance into his Kingdom here on earth.
- The blessing of being crowned immortal kings and priests to God in the eternal Kingdom to come and being forever in fellowship with Christ in everlasting glory.

Smyrna is the only church of the seven that has survived, so perhaps in the end their worldly poverty was no disadvantage.

NOTE: it should be mentioned here, this does not mean that to be rich in God one must be poor in the world. Poverty is no hindrance to God's favour, in fact financial wealth can be a great advantage to the promotion of God's Kingdom and the poor when it is in the hands of those with a right heart attitude toward God.

I know the blasphemy: (v9) those blaspheming refers to the Jews who though they were descended from Abraham were not worthy to be called his children. Their blasphemy was against faithful Christians, so the word blasphemy would include blasphemy against faithful believers and against the Lord Jesus Christ. They endured this blasphemy, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These blasphemies would have included, harsh ridicule, degrading mocking and scorn against themselves and demeaning insults and slander against the good name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The synagogue of Satan: refers to Jews hostile toward the Christians. Though they were of Jewish decent and professed to be Jews, they were not true Jews. The apostle Paul wrote:

- Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. " ⁸This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. (Rom. 9:6-7).

The Jews of the synagogue of Satan refers to those Jews that were hostile toward the Christian faith. Their intimidating slander against the good name of Jesus and their hostile aggressive persecution of those who followed him clearly showed that they did not have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. Though they were of Jewish origin, they were not worthy of the name. These Jews blasphemy against Christ and their hostility toward the Christian faith was so extreme that they were regarded as being in the service of Satan, who, like them, is a liar and murderer from the beginning, of these types of Jews Jesus said:

- You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44).

REVELATION 2:10

You will be Tested, and for Ten Days and have Tribulation.

- **Revelation 2:10:** Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

There is today a gospel being proclaimed in some churches that teaches that those in Christ who attain to certain keys of faith can attain prosperity, health and a charmed life, but this is not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following verses show that Jesus never concealed the difficulties or dangers of his service:

- I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).
- I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. (Matt. 10:16-18).
- For I will show him (Paul) how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. (Acts 9:16).

The words, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer," (v10) addressed to the Smyrna church most likely refers to the persecution of hostile Jews and the tribulation of the Romans. Jesus never promised freedom from suffering, but he does encourage those who are suffering to look to the crown of life that he himself will crown all those who are faithful unto death with. It is a great comfort during times of great persecution and suffering if we can hear the voice of our Redeemer encouraging us and assuring us that in a little while he will grant us the crown of eternal life and everlasting happiness.

Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison: (v10) the word, behold, implies that the affliction of the devil is near. The devil in this context refers to the inward spirit in the human heart that is hostile against Christ and his people. At the time of John, it was outwardly manifested by the hostility of the Jews and the Romans toward Christians. They are personified as the devil and spoken of as doing the work of Satan, because of their extreme hostility and malice toward those devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. The motivation for such hostility arises from the evil and antichrist spirit dwelling within the heart of these murderous Jews and Romans. The Smyrna church has just been told that their persecutors were of the synagogue of Satan and are now told that the devil (another name of the same being) is about to throw them into prison. This could literally be done by the hands of the Jews attending the synagogue of Satan, or by the hands of the Romans who at, this time are also hostile toward Christians, especially since it is very likely that this persecution was also raging in the surrounding regions.

15

NOTE: although there were times when Christians were persecuted for their refusal to worship the Roman emperor, the primary reason for the general dislike for Christians arose from their refusal to worship the gods of Rome and take part in sacrifice to them. This was expected of all citizens living in the Roman Empire, because it was Rome's belief that their success in battle and prosperity greatly depended upon the favour of the gods they believed in, therefore it was important to pay homage to these gods for the well-being of Rome.

That you may be tested: (v10) the intention of the adversary (i.e., the devil, symbolising hostile Jews and Rome) was that those in the Smyrna church would be tempted to forsake their faith in Christ, but exactly the opposite occurred since they endured their suffering and came forth tried and tested and approved.

- Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. (1 Peter 4:12).
- If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:14).

To be subjected to persecutions during the era of the Smyrna church was common for churches, their faithful endurance and stand against these persecutions proved to the world the reality of their faith and testified that it was genuine.

NOTE: A trial from the devil, can at the same time be seen as a test from God. The devil uses trials, hardships and suffering to destroy us, while God uses them to test us. It's not that God does not know beforehand

whether our faith is genuine or not since He knows the beginning and the end, it is more that hardships reveal to ourselves and others the sincerity of our faith. The devil does all he can to destroy the faith and hope of Christians so that nothing of heavenly worth is found in them, while God through the same trial finds only heavenly gold in those who endure. For further information concerning the devil, click or tap [Satan and his Family](#) and select the title: Devil.

You may be tested, and for ten days: (v10) amongst theologians there has been different ideas as to what these ten days refer to and what space of time is meant, following are some of the most common ideas:

- It applies to the different periods of persecution, or to a literal ten days or to a long persecution of ten years.
- It expresses a completeness of time or a considerable period or is mentioned to show that the period of this trial was limited.
- The test would be thorough and complete, or it symbolises that it would be but, a little while when compared with the everlasting life that they would be crowned with.

If we suppose this letter only concerns the church of Smyrna it may will signify one of these, but if we understand it to be prophetically applying to, all churches until Christian persecution ended, (which was more than two hundred and forty years) then ten days may signify the following ten Roman Emperors not only known for their fame, but also for their extreme persecution of Christians.

1. The first was under Nero, in the year 64 or 66.
2. The second was under Domitian, about the year 93.
3. The third was under Trojan, in the year 104.
4. The fourth was under Hadrian, in the year 125.
5. The fifth was under Marcus Antoninus, in the year 151.
6. The sixth was under Septimius Severus, in the year 197.
7. The seventh was under Maximinus, in the years 235, 236, 237.
8. The eighth was under Decius, in the year 250.
9. The ninth was under Valerianus, in the year 257.
10. The tenth was under Dioclesian, in the year 303.

This tenth and final persecution under Emperor Dioclesian lasted around ten years, it was the greatest persecution that the early church ever endured and though there were many other persecutions none of them lasted ten years. Since it is not uncommon in prophetic writings, and in the book of the Revelation, to put days for years, it would not be wrong to accept that the ten days the Smyrna church was about to suffer to be prophetically referring to the ten years of this last Roman persecution of Christians. This could be especially so, since the following church in focus after Smyrna is Pergamos and it was around this time (many believe) that Constantine ended persecution of Christians. It is interesting to note that ten is the number of world powers hostile to the church (i.e., the ten horns of the beast). (Rev. 13:1).

Though we cannot know with absolute certainty how long the trial of ten days lasted, we can be certain that Christ himself will grant to all who overcome the crown of life. It is this truth that we should allow to dominate our mind and thoughts to comfort us during our days of suffering as it was be faithful believers of Smyrna's comfort during their days of suffering.

Be faithful unto death: (v10) this emphatic statement implies that the death of many of them is imminent and that their death will come about, because of their faith in Christ.

I will give you the crown of life: (v10) the word crown in this verse comes from the Greek word *stephanos* and refers to a victor's wreath as the reward given to a winner of the Olympic Games, but it can also embrace a diadem (as bound about the head) and worn as a crown. When the Olympian Games were held at Smyrna a crown was given to the victor, however, the crown could also refer to a crown of royalty. It is pointless to debate over which it might be since both are apt. Those who do endure will be crowned as victorious and royally exalted alongside Christ their King. It is very apt that the life worn out in the Lord's service and laid down in his work will be rewarded with a far better life, which will be eternal, when the Lord returns in glory to gather those who overcome to himself. The following verses show that there is a crown of life, a crown of glory and a crown of righteousness, these are all different names for the same crown.

- Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown (*Greek stephanos*) of life, which God has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12).

The word crown in this verse comes from the Greek word (*stephanos*) and means to twine or wreath. It refers to a chaplet (as a badge of royalty), a prize in the public games or a symbol of honour. These wreathes are prominent and elaborately woven.

- Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown (*Greek stephanos*) of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:8).
- When the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown (*Greek stephanos*) of glory. (1 Peter 5:4).

I will give you a crown of life is the same as Christ saying, "I will give you eternal life from my own hand." It symbolises a much better life which will of course be a life lived with the Lord Jesus Christ in everlasting glory and eternal happiness and peace.

REVELATION 2:11

The One Who Conquers Will Not be Hurt by the Second Death.

- **Revelation 2:11:** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death. (Rev. 2:11).

The expression, "he who has an ear let him hear," carries the idea of having a humble attitude and a mind that is open to listen and believe as they read or hear the word of the Lord, the Gospel message or God's prophetic truths. Without these qualities, the spiritual truths of Christ word cannot be discerned or received. The statement, "he who has an ear let him hear," is used at the close of each of the seven letters to draw attention to what is about to be said, and to denote that it is of special importance and worthy of attention. The statement, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," could also be expressed in the following way, "let him hear what Christ says to the churches." The Christian faith does not promise that we will not die, but it does assure us that the Redeemer will accompany us through the dark valley and that death to the faithful will be a calm and peaceful rest, until they awake in the morning of the resurrection and are raised up again with bodies incorruptible and immortal. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians wrote:

- O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

It is these promises that that comfort the faithful and allows them to face death with calmness and peace. Smyrna's faithfulness is rewarded by its lampstand not being removed out of its place (Rev. 2:5). Christianity has never fully left Smyrna and because of this the Turks call it, Infidel Smyrna. Christian historians that make these seven letters prophetic say, that the church of Smyrna was a type of all the Christian churches to the year AD 325, (when Constantine overcame the Roman Emperor and gave rest and peace to the churches of Christ. The years prior to this was a time of severe persecution under the Roman Emperors, who to the time of Emperor Constantine were all heathens. Christ blames this church with nothing, showing that the faithful of God will always hold fast their faith and integrity in the fire.

The one who conquers: (v11) the one who conquers (overcomes in the KJV) refers to all who hold fast to their faith to the end regardless of what troubles and sorrows may come their way.

Will not be hurt by the second death: (v11) the easiest way to understand what the second death refers to, is to look at the following eight events mentioned in Revelation chapter twenty:

1. The resurrection of the faithful takes place and they reign with Christ for a thousand years (symbolic of a long duration of time) this is the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4).
2. The rest of the dead do not come to life until Christ's glorious millennial reign (the thousand years) on earth are ended (Rev. 20:5).
3. The second death has no power over those who attain to the first resurrection they will be priests of God and of Christ during Jesus glorious millennial reign for a thousand years.

In Revelation chapter one we are told that, "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father and that Christ is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth" (Rev. 1:5-7). Revelation chapter five tells us, "Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).

4. At the end of the thousand years Satan deceives the nations of the earth and gathers them for battle against God's beloved city they surround Jerusalem, but before any battle begins God from heaven destroys them. (Rev. 20:7-9).
5. After this, God Himself descends from heaven on a great White Throne (Revelation 20:11).
6. The sea, death and hades (the grave) give up all the dead who were in them and they are judged, according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:13).
7. While they are standing before the Throne of God the Book of Life and some other heavenly books are opened and those standing before God are judged according, to what is written in the books according, to what they had done. (Revelation 20:12-13).
8. Death, Hades and whoever's name was not found in the Book of Life are thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total-destruction and extinction) (Rev. 20:14-15). After all these events God is All in All and eternity begins in all is majestic fullness and everlasting glory. For further information concerning the second death see the following title:

- [The Book of Life and the Lake of Fire.](#)

REVELATION 2:12

The Words of Him Who Has the Sharp Two-Edged Sword.

- **Revelation 2:12:** "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.'

To the reader: if the explanations of the previous churches have been read, this section may be skipped as the comments are the same.

NOTE: when reading these seven letters it should be kept in mind that in some of these cities there would have been more than one Christian church, which means that each letter is probably addressed to the head or most dominant church of the city or that all who were Christians in the city were regarded as members of one church, but for convenience met for worship in different places. Whichever it may be the seven messages can be applied to any church in any city of any generation that has comparable circumstances and is in similar surroundings.

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Aggelos: means a messenger or envoy sent from God to bring tidings. Aggelos is used all, of the time in the New Testament for the supernatural angels of God (except for Luke chapter twenty) but it is also used for human men (i.e., pastors, ministers and such like) which means aggelos can apply to God's supernatural angels or human messengers.

INTRODUCTION**To the angel of the church in Pergamum**

The angel refers to the minister of the church. Ministers are referred to as angels, because they proclaim God's word, bring light into darkness and oversee His people and by doing so are doing heavenly work. However, the message is not limited to the minister, but applies to all those in the church who are of the same character as the minister.

Pergamos: was a city of Mysia, situated by the river Caicus. During the era of Eumenes II surnamed Soter (meaning, Savior) rule of Pergamon, the city was rich in public buildings, temples, art galleries, and a library that rivalled that of Alexandria. It was also famous for the magnificent temple of Asclepius, who in ancient Greek religion and mythology was a hero and god of medicine. Pergamos has been described as a city of temples with pagan cathedrals, universities and a royal residence. Many theologians suppose that the Pergamos church represents the church from the time of Constantine, and onward, rising-up and at its peak enjoying great power, riches, and honour, but from the time of Constantine onward spiritually decreased. Today there are some good buildings, but mostly ruins, nearly all the city is occupied by the Turks with very few Christian families dwelling amongst them. It lies almost sixty-four miles from Smyrna and forty-eight from Thyatira.

A sharp sword with two edges: (v12) this introduction is taken from John's vision of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev 1:12-16). It is highly unlikely the Saviour in the vision appeared with a real sword coming out of his mouth. It is far more likely that John uses the expression, "a two-edged sword," to magnify power of the Lord's word to achieve the following:

- To penetrate and pierce deep into the mind and the heart and to express their potency to cut deep into the true motives of the inner most being of all mankind.
- To wound and pierce the unbelieving and disobedient and bring them to the footstool of God's mercy for forgiveness and salvation.
- To show that the only weapon the church and its ministers and members have, to defend themselves against growing corruptions is the word of God, the Gospel and Scriptural truth.
- To show that God's word is twofold, it not only has the power to spiritually reward and save to eternal life, but also the power to convict, condemn and punish.
- To show that it is able, to slay both sin and sinners, and the power to make one righteous and worthy.

When a person reads the word of God with a humble heart and right attitude it acts like a spiritual sword cutting away what is false and leaving only what is true. Though the Lord's sword turns and cuts in every way, no believer who endures with overcoming faith need have any fear of it, the only words they will hear from the Lord who wields the sword is,

- Well done good and faithful servant. (Matt. 25:21, 23).

REVELATION 2:13

You Dwell where Satan's Throne is, Yet You Did Not Deny My Faith.

- **Revelation 2:13:** I know your works where you dwell, where Satan's throne is (Satan's seat is, in KJV). Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

The statement, "I know your works and where you dwell," means the Lord knows and understands:

- The difficult situation and circumstances of the city where they live and worship.
- That they were opposed to the growing corruptions of the antichrist spirit in the city.
- He understands the temptations and allurements to sin that they were exposed to and surrounded with.
- That they had not denied their faith to avoid the persecution of those who were aggressively hostile toward them.

The ministers of these seven churches are commended for what is good, or rebuked for what is not, because the spiritual state of their church members is greatly influenced by them. The expression, "I know your works and where you dwell," highlights the fact that before judging a person or giving them credit it is important to know something of their life. This is because in some circumstances it is far easier to live for Christ than in other circumstances, which means before we judge a person or determine how much credit is due to them it is important to understand how much they have been called to resist; how many temptations they

have had to encounter; how much they have had to give up; what addictive habits they are struggling with; what destructive thoughts plague their mind and how much error they have been indoctrinated with. Without having some insight into these things, we can be led to judge far more harshly than our Saviour would. Since Christ sees the heart of us all, his judgment may often be far less severe than ours. Likewise, where we might tend to greatly commend another, his commendation maybe far less. It is possible that in some we might judge harshly there is more to commend (because of their struggle against evil) than there is in those who we do commend where their walk, in Christ has never had to confront such evil or been conflicted with overwhelming difficulties and temptations.

It is very likely that the rewards and judgments of God on the Great Day of Judgment may be quite different to how we might have made judgments and granted rewards. This, is why Jesus is the perfect Judge, he not only knows every detail our living conditions and our works, but also knows the true motives of our heart.

You dwell where Satan's throne is: (v13) (Satan's seat is, in KJV), some translators have translated this as Satan's throne while other have translated it Satan's seat. The translators of the King James Bible translated it as Satan's seat, a possible reason for this maybe, that they did not feel it right to give such an evil entity a royal status. In contrast to this, the English Standard Bible (and others) have translated it as Satan's throne, perhaps with the idea that Satan, in irreverent imitation of God's heavenly throne (Rev. 4:2-8) set up his own throne on earth. (Revelation 4:2).

Where the throne of Satan is: (13) it is difficult to know for absolute certain why this pre-eminence of evil is assigned to Pergamos, following are some common suggestions:

- They dwelt in, the midst of idolatry, superstition, occult practises and mystical arts were practised and lying wonders were claimed.
- The dominating character of the city, and its customs were so corrupt and its vast idol worship was totally contrary to the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- Hostile and aggressive persecution against Christians that lead to death was common throughout the region.
- The location of the church of Pergamos was in Rome during a time when its Caesars, princes, kings and emperors were set upon destroying the Christian church.
- Asclepius who was originally a mortal and later became the god of medicine and healing, (according, to Greeks mythology) was worshipped as the "Preserver," or "Saviour." Antoninus the Roman Emperor and people from different parts of the world would go to the temple of Asclepius to be healed and Aesculapius was worshipped under the serpent idol and because of this the symbol of the serpent must have been prominent among the objects of adoration in the city. Remains Asclepius temples can be seen today.
- The power of the supreme office and the collective authority of the rulers in the city of Pergamos was hostile against Christians to such an extent that they had Antipas put to death, because of his preaching the Gospel of Christ and no-doubt for his stand against the heathen religion of Pergamos.

With all this in mind it is very fitting to refer to Pergamos as the place were Satan's seat or throne is, not only because it had been the seat of the Roman Emperors, but also because it was from this seat that aggressive hostility and malice flowed out toward Christians. Added to this Pergamos was a pagan city given to idolatry and occult practises. All these evils and its influence of gross wickedness and extreme persecution

is most likely why Satan is personified as being enthroned there, which carries the idea of it being his head-quarters and as such is a fitting emblem of the idolatrous church of Rome.

You hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith: (13) the entire Christian religion is founded upon the name of Christ and faith, so Jesus name and faith are often put forth for the entire Christian religion. Despite the fact, they were in danger of being persecuted even to death as Antipas was, they proclaimed the Lord's name and faithfully adhered to him. Proclaiming the Lord's name embraces Jesus words, the Gospel and the message of the bloodstained cross of Calvary. The name Christian was originally given in honour of Christ, to highlight the fact that a person was one of his disciples and were not ashamed to be known as such, but it was also this name that subjected the early Christians to extreme reproach and persecution.

- If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:14).

Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you: (13) it is possible that even though persecution raged in the city of Pergamos only one person had been put to death. Antipas death may not have stemmed from Roman or government persecution, but from an excited hostile crowd as Stephens death was when he proclaimed the word of God to the Jews (Acts 7) and as the Jews stoned Paul at Lystra for proclaiming the Gospel until it was supposed he was dead. (Acts 14:19). However, since Jews and the Romans were violently hostile toward the Christian faith it is also just as likely that Antipas is the only one mentioned, because he publicly spoke out for Christ and was the most prominent that spoke openly against the occult religion of Pergamos. Though the Eastern Orthodox Christian church has many traditional stories concerning Antipas and there are Greek writings in books concerning him, many are full of fables and fiction which were added to the story at a later age. These are all speculations, since nothing is known of him from respected historical sources. What we do know for sure is that his faithful witnessing and eventual martyrdom for his unshakable faith in Christ Jesus are what earned him mention in the pages of God's Holy Scriptures.

REVELATION 2:14

The Teaching of Balaam, which Stumbled Israel.

- **Revelation 2:14:** I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

There are some amongst the faithful in the church or churches of Pergamos that hold to the teaching of the prophet of Balaam, the faithful instead of standing up against this false doctrine that promotes immoral sensual behaviour tolerated it. This does not necessary mean that they taught exactly, the same doctrine as Balaam did, but that what they did teach brought about the same corruption to God's people as Balaam's doctrine did. What that doctrine was is stated in the following part of the verse which states, "who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel," (v14). The words stumbling-block literally refers to anything over which one falls or stumbles, and in this context, anything that may cause a person to fall into sin. The meaning is, that it was through the counsel of Balaam that Balak learned the way by which the Israelites could be led into sin, and by doing so bring God's judgment upon themselves.

The story of Balaam: when the children of Israel approached the borders of Balak the king of Moab he feared such a vast number of people (Num. 22:1-6), so he sent for the prophet Balaam that he might curse that people to guarantee their destruction (in ancient times it was believed by pagans that prophets had the power of afflicting anything by their

curse). God forbid Balaam to speak a curse over Israel so sometime later Balaam (desiring the kings' silver and gold) counselled Balak to make use of the charms of the females of Moab, that through their sensual influence the Hebrews might be drawn into licentiousness (extravagance and immorality). This was done and the abominations of idolatry spread through the camp of Israel; licentiousness everywhere prevailed, and God sent a plague upon them to punish them. (Num. 25:1-9).

The following verse shows that this wickedness was planned and instigated by Balaam:

- Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD. (Num. 31:16).

Balaam greatly desired the kings reward (silver and Gold and being esteemed) and because of this worldly desire he was willing to do what he knew was wrong and which was forbidden by God. But God prevented him from doing what he wished to do, by restraining him from cursing the people of Israel. Later, Balaam still craving the kings reward sought another way in which he might bring a curse upon Israel and finally by wicked counsel caused them to bring God's curse upon themselves. This is what often occurs in the plans and purposes of those who claim to be Christians, but crave worldly riches, importance and fame more than they desire to do what is right before the LORD. In the Pergamos church there were men who desired worldly riches and loved being exalted and esteemed by their followers more than they loved God and therefore like Balaam lead the people astray (i.e., into immorality extravagance and idolatry) to achieve their own desires, ambitions and goals and in this way put a stumbling block before the Lord's people and by doing so substantially taught the same thing that Balaam did.

The majority of the church in general was such that the Saviour could approve it, but he could not approve of their tolerating those who held to wicked doctrine of Balaam especially since they had the potential to corrupt the very foundation of the church and its morals.

To eat food sacrificed to idols: (v14) the food spoken of here offered to idols, is the same type which Paul speaks of in the following verses:

- Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons (devils in KJV). ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (devils in KJV). You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (devils in KJV). ²²Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (1 Cor. 10:14-22).

It is not a sin to eat meat set aside for idols, since it is just meat, but when it is eaten in a memorial feast to a pagan god, as Christians eat bread and drink wine as a memorial to Christ it becomes a sin. The sin is not in the eating, but in the mind, being set upon pagan gods (called in these verses demons or devils) while eating it, because those eating it in this manner become spiritual participants with the god, in the same way that those eating of the Lord's supper become spiritual participants with Christ.

NOTE: today our supermarkets are stocked with halal meat and foods that adheres to Islamic law, as defined in the Koran. It is not a sin for a Christian to eat these foods, since they are just food, but if eaten, for any religious reason or as a spiritual memorial to Muhammad or some other Islamic prophet, as we eat the Lords supper, as a spiritual memorial to Christ, it would not only be a sin, but a gross abomination before the Lord.

You have Some Who Hold the Teaching of the Nicolaitans.

- **Revelation 2:15:** So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

A common view concerning the teaching of the Nicolaitans, refers to the supremacy and control and dominion over people as explained in the following:

- When a church or religious organisation has a hierarchy of Bishops, ministers, pastors and elders that hold supremacy over the people and controls them.
- When a church or religious organisation has one supreme authoritarian religious leader who not only dominates the people, but also dominates the entire government of the church or the religious organisation.

Those who establish such systems believe they can by domination and unify the people into one religious' system with the same beliefs and doctrines that they themselves adhere to. This type of system transforms people into slaves, so that the supreme leader and the hierarchy are, able to live by the slaves who give to them and work for their religious system. The teaching of the Nicolaitans in this context basically refers to religious leaders who rule by dominion over others., this is something God hates because man was always to be ruled by its creator only. However, such leaders cannot carry all the blame as they only survive, because we allow them too, by giving them dominion over us, rather than submitting ourselves fully to Christ and letting him be the ruler of our life and guide us by his word, rather than man.

These types of teachers offer their followers things that God does not offer, such as:

- Status in their society. (i.e., stand with us and be a part of our church and we will make you a great and important person).
- Wealth and money.
- Rulership. (i.e., a position in the church to rule over others).

The only thing that their followers have to do, is just listen to what they tell them to do, regardless of what God tells them from the Scriptures. It is true God does establish ministers, pastors, elders and deacons in the church, but God does not place them there to dominate the people, but to serve the people and to teach and guild them. God did not create a government to rule by domination over the church. The rulership and the power to rule over man and woman is only for the One who laid his life down for the church and ascended to heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether evangelist or prophet or deacon or religious leader, all are servants of God, so they have, to work as servants to the people, not as superior to them. They are called to serve the people from a humble attitude, not from a superior one. If they rule from an attitude of superiority and dominion, they then become a Nicolaitan, which the Lord hates.

The apostle Paul wrote:

- The Lord gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12).

The role of all the apostles and all the others are for equipping the faithful, by encouragement and teaching to bring them to spiritual maturity and prepare them for the Lords return. Just prior to going to the cross Jesus got up from the table of his last meal with his disciples on earth and:

- Washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?" ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. (John 13:12-13)

This does not mean that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers should be literally washing each other's feet or the feet of their followers, but it does mean that they should see themselves in their minds-eye as servants to them and not as dominant superior masters. The whole purpose of having apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is to support, guide and teach those seeking God is so that they can:

- Attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephes. 4:13-16).
- For further insight into who the Nicolaitans were and three other views concerning their teachings see the notes after the title, "You Hate the Works of the Nicolaitans, which I also Hate," following (v6) (above).

NOTE: during the era of Jesus it was a common custom and courtesy to wash one's feet before entering a person's home. There were no footpaths as we have today which meant walking on the dusty and dry or wet ground one's feet would get very dirty so the polite thing to do was wash them before entering the house. If the home owner came to the door and washed his guests' feet it was an act of courtesy and of submission and an act that showed their great respect for the honoured guest.

REVELATION 2:16

If You Do Not Repent, I will come with the Sword of My Mouth.

- Revelation 2:16: Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon (quickly in KJV) and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The expression, "the sword of my mouth," is taken from John's vision of Christ glorified. (Rev. 1:12-16). Though the Lord recognises and acknowledges all the good the faithful do have, he calls them to repent of their indifference toward those in their midst who:

- Hold to the teaching of Balaam. (v14).
- Hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. (v15).

To tolerate those who hold to doctrines that are so extremely contrary to the Gospel, is not only a great offense to the Lord, but also have the potential to lead others astray. This, is why they should repent of their indifference and lack of upholding the true word of the Lord. It should be noticed that Christ does not say, "I will fight against you," the faithful members of the church, for he does not fight against his people, but rather says, "I will fight against them," referring to those who hold to the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. However, if the Lord does bring his judgment and punishment upon those that hold to these wicked doctrines, the faithful will be affected.

For further information concerning the words, "soon" and "quickly," click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#) and select the title: Things that must soon take place.

I will war against them: (v16) (fight against them in KJV) meaning he would come against those who hold to the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. The Lord is warning the faithful if they do not separate themselves from such evil doctrines within their midst they will be afflicted and suffer along with those who are punished for holding to the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. It should be highlighted here that it is in the power of the church to bring God's favour or His judgment upon it. The expression, "I will war against them," (fight against them in KJV) could carry any of the following ideas:

- He would remove their joy, peace and contentment and by doing so convict them of their indifference.
- He would bring some type of punishment upon them or raise up a nation or an army of persecutors against them.
- He would raise up faithful teachers to preach his true word against them.

The Lord could use any of these methods to pierce their conscience (like a sword pierces the body) for, the purpose of bringing them to repentance and changing their ways. Notice, the Lord is calling all to repent, it is a principal of repentance, that all who sin individually should repent individually before the Lord, while those who sin together as a group or a church, should, were possible repent together before the Lord.

With the sword of my mouth: (v16) a sharp two-edged sword (v12). The word of God is symbolised as a sharp two-edged sword, because in the same way that a sword turns and cuts in every direction and has the power to destroy enemies and deliver others, the word of God turns and cuts in every way to wound or slay to death both sin and sinners and deliver others from death. It is the great spiritual power that Christ fights against, wounds, and overcomes all antichristian powers. The expression, "with the sword of my mouth," carries the idea that he would give the order, and they would be cut as if by a sword. We are not told in what way this would be done, it could be by persecution or by heavy judgments. Those who separate themselves from evil and remain faithful to the end should rest in the comfort that they need have no fear of this sword since the Lord will not use it against them, but to protect and keep them for salvation and eternal life. For further insight concerning the sword of the Lord's mouth, see the notes after the title, "A sharp sword with two edges," following (v12) (above).

REVELATION 2:17

The Hidden Manna, the White Stone and the New Name.

- **Revelation 2:17:** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers (overcomes in KJV) I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

The expression, "he who has an ear let him hear," carries the idea of having a humble attitude and a mind that is open to listen and believe as they read or hear the word of the Lord, the Gospel message or God's prophetic truths. Without these qualities, the spiritual truths of Christ word cannot be discerned or received. The statement, "he who has an ear let him hear," is used at the close of each of the seven letters to draw attention to what is about to be said, and to denote that it is of special importance and worthy of attention. The statement, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," could also be expressed in the following way, "let him hear what Christ says to the churches."

To the one who conquers I will give to eat of the hidden manna: (v17) this expression can signify the following five things:

1. To the Lord Jesus Christ, the true manna from heaven. Israel ate manna in the wilderness, and it sustained their mortal life, and now Jesus is the true Bread of Life as the following verses show:

- I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (John 6:35).
- I am the bread of life. (John 6:48).
- As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. (John 6:57).

This bread embraces the Gospel and spiritual truths and the love and grace of God that are hidden in the heart and mind of every faithful believer that the world knows not of.

- You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3).

It is called manna, because it refers to the true spiritual food, the food that nourishes the mind, the heart and the inner most being. The idea is, that those who overcome will be nourished with the spiritual food that Christ has laid up for the people of God by which they will be nourished with forever. It is referred to as being hidden, for the following two reasons, firstly, because it refers to that life of Christ that dwells within the innermost being of the faithful and signifies the presence of God. Secondly, because not one of us knows the spiritual struggles, conflicts and growth of character and God's word love and grace that is working and achieving its purposes within another. It is only those experiencing these things and the Lord's perceiving eyes that these things are visible to. It carries the idea that those who overcome will be spiritually nourished through this life as if by that hidden manna, meaning that they will be supplied through the wilderness of this world by that food from the presence of God which the mind and heart require for a happy life. Jesus said to non-believers:

- I have food to eat that you do not know about. (John 4:32).

This food signifies Christ, who is the true manna (i.e., bread) that came down from heaven.

- Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6:32-33).

The manna signifies Christ himself, with all the influences of his grace, his love and his comfort.

2. To the manna that was placed in the golden urn and laid up in the Ark (Heb. 9:4), which was place beneath the Shekinah glory of God, in the Most Holy Place behind the curtain. This idea is held, because there is a Jewish tradition that the Ark and its contents, which disappeared after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the first temple, was buried by the prophet Jeremiah somewhere on the sacred soil and will only be found when the Messiah returns in glory.
3. To the omer of manna that was put in a golden urn and placed in the Ark of the Covenant (Heb. 9:4) which was placed in the Most Holy Place behind the veil were only the high priest could go. The symbolism of the hidden manna in this scenario refers to the Lord Jesus Christ granting those who overcome entry into the heavenly and Holy Throne Room of God to eat of the Lord's table.
4. To the spiritual influences of love grace forgiveness and comfort of the Spirit of Christ, that comes down from heaven into the heart and mind of every faithful believer for their encouragement and support, this influence is referred to as hidden manna, because it brings and sustains life and is unseen to the rest of the world.

5. The full manifestation of this will be when the Lord returns in glory and those who conquer (overcome in the KJV) are gathered to him at the resurrection and granted an immortal body and everlasting life and invited to sit at his banquet table and eat at his spiritual feast. Though this world changing, and breath-taking day will not be hidden to the world the present hope, joy and reality of it that dwells in the heart of the faithful is. A feast always followed a victory, so Christ promises victorious Christians who overcome the spiritual fight, to feast with him.

I will give him a white stone: (v17) the white stone can refer to the following two things:

1. Tradition has it that during this era jury members would use white and black stones to give their votes in judgments. At the end of a trial each person in the jury would place a stone upon a table or in a bag. The black stone meant the person being judged was condemned, while the white stone meant they were innocent and to be set free. On occasions when white or black stones were not available, they would write the words, guilty and innocent on small smooth stones and use them in the same way. The white stone the Lord will give to the overcomer may be an allusion to this custom with the white stone symbolising complete innocence and victory.
2. A white stone was regarded as a token of favour, prosperity and success and as such would signify that the Christian who was to be given the white stone would receive the favour, approval and honour of the Redeemer.

I will give him a new name: (v17) Christ is the giver of this name, those who are found worthy of this new heavenly name are those who overcome and while still wearing their old earthly name, it can be truly said:

- They are a new creation in Christ, the old has passed away and the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Some suggest that the new name may signify, a renowned and prominent name full of honour much like God gave Jacob the honoured name Israel after his victory wrestling with the LORD'S angel. (Gen. 32:24-28). Even after Jacobs hip socket was put out of joint and the angel said, "Let me go," Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." This is the attitude of those who overcome, no matter how tough their walk maybe, they will never let their Saviour go. Jacobs new name, Israel signified that there had been a dramatic elevation and change in the self, in the personality, in the heart, in the mind and in the character and that he had by these changes been taken into a higher life.

Entering, into this higher life was a direct result of Jacobs overcoming and enduring faith and the new name that the Redeemer gave him sums up these changes and his overcoming faithfulness and life. Likewise, all who hold fast to their faith with the same attitude that Jacob had and overcome to the end will enter, into a new relationship, a new hope and new status in life and be granted a name that carries the same high honour.

The name written on the stone: (v17) when a person engraves a name on a signet ring, a piece of jewellery or carves it on a tree or paints it on a stone it is a symbol of endearing love and friendship to the person who receives it. Likewise, this unknown name written on the white stone signifies Christs love and friendship to those who he gives this stone to.

Which no man knows: we are clearly told that no one can know this new name except those who receive it, which means that not one of us can know what this name maybe until we are given it. Until then every suggestion we might make are simply speculations. Only those who have endured in faith and overcome persecution, hardships, troubles, sorrows and grief as they walked with their Saviour through the spiritual darkness

of this world, will understand and comprehend the enormous and overwhelming value and worth of the new name their Redeemer honours them with.

THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

REVELATION 2:18

Eyes like Flames and Feet like Burnished Bronze.

- **Revelation 2:18:** "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.'

To the reader: if the explanations of the previous churches have been read, this section may be skipped as the comments are the same.

NOTE: when reading these seven letters it should be kept in mind that in some of these cities there would have been more than one Christian church, which means that each letter is probably addressed to the head or most dominant church of the city or that all who were Christians in the city were regarded as members of one church, but for convenience met for worship in different places. Whichever it may be the seven messages can be applied to any church in any city of any generation that has comparable circumstances and is in similar surroundings.

To the angel of the church in Thyatira: (v18) the English word angel in the Old Testament is from the Hebrew word mal'ak. In the New Testament, the English word angel is from the Greek word aggelos. The word mal'ak in the Old Testament and the word aggelos in the New Testament have sometimes been translated to the English word messenger or messengers while at other times mal'ak and aggelos are translated angel or angels.

Malak: means to dispatch as a deputy, a messenger, an ambassador or a representative it can apply to an angel of God, a king, a prophet, a priest or teacher. The same word is used for the supernatural angels of God and for human messengers which means it can apply to God's supernatural angels or human men who are sent as messengers.

Aggelos: means a messenger or envoy sent from God to bring tidings. Aggelos is used all the time in the New Testament for the supernatural angels of God (except for Luke chapter twenty) but it is also used for human men (i.e., pastors, ministers and such like) which means aggelos can apply to God's supernatural angels or human messengers.

29

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA

The angel refers to the minister of the church. Ministers are referred to as angels, because they proclaim God's word, bring light into darkness and oversee His people and by doing so are doing heavenly work. However, the message is not limited to the minister, but applies to all those in the church who are of the same character as the minister.

Thyatira: was situated between Pergamos and Sardis, a little off the main road which connected these two cities. The church was abounding in works, love, service, and faith, yet allowed a false prophetess to seduce many. Today, the city is called Akhisar by the Turks, or The White Castle, because of the great quantities of white marble that abounds there. The divine judgments, pronounced in this letter have been so poured out that only one ancient edifice is left standing, the rest, even the churches, are so destroyed, that no remnants of them are to be found. Today, the principal inhabitants are Turks, who have eight mosques there, but there is not one Christian church or place of worship to be found in it. Thyatira lies about forty-eight miles from Pergamos and thirty-three from Sardis.

The words of the Son of God: (v18) this is the first time, in these seven letters, that the name of the speaker is referred to. In all other letters, there is only some attribute of the Saviour mentioned. This maybe because of the severity of the rebuke that is directed at this church. It is not a reference to him as the "Son of man" which is the common title he gave to himself when on earth, but the Son of God, most likely to convey his heavenly authority and power and to gain the attention of the church and highlight the fact that what he is about to say is extremely important. The severity of the rebuke maybe another reason that there is a more powerful reference to the authority of the speaker; and the reason why he is introduced as the Son of God. The introduction here is taken from chapter one:

- The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. (Rev. 1:14-15)

Eyes like a flame of fire: (v18) this expression carry the following ideas:

- The Lords searching eyes penetrate the depths of the inner most being piercing through all pretence and falsehood and seeing the true motives of the heart.
- The Lord sees through the darkness dwelling within every individual and every church, discovering and exposing all the wickedness done in the dark.
- The Lord's all-seeing wrath sees all kinds of evil and will judge accordingly.
- The Lord is, able to pierce even the hardest of hearts, nothing can be hidden or concealed from his view, no secret thought, hidden action or motive of the heart can be kept secret from him.

Feet are like burnished bronze: (v18) this expression carries the idea that:

- The Lord has immense strength and in all his ways is gloriously holy.
- The Lord is just and powerful in all his judgments.
- The Lord is exalted in power to tread down his enemies and consume them.
- The Lord is, able to judge with perfect judgment and will not let the guilty, the wicked and the corrupt go free.

REVELATION 2:19

I know Your Works, Love, Faith, Service and Patient Endurance.

- **Revelation 2:19:** I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

Their latter works exceed their first works, means that their current works were greater than when they first began. This means that they have continually progressed in good works and acts of charity, so far this is a great commendation. The works that the Lord commends them for would embrace:

- Their service in diligent and honest administration in their duties of the Lord's service.
- Their adherence to Christ, their preaching of the Gospel and growing in the fruits of the Spirit.

- Their acts of charity to Christians that were in distress and for helping the poor.
- Their faith and patient endurance during the troubles, hardships and the sorrows of life while holding fast to their faith.

These outward works manifest the love of Christ dwelling within.

REVELATION 2:20

You Tolerate Jezebel, who calls Herself a Prophetess.

- **Revelation 2:20:** But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

This rebuke is directed at the entire church and by extension applies to all who follow the teachings of Jezebel. It is not known who the woman referred to by the name Jezebel was, it is possible that it was her real name, but it is more likely used to symbolically express her proud, self-appointed authority, her evil character, her wicked influence, her boasting claims of superior self-righteousness and higher knowledge, and her total disregard for God's moral laws.

Jezebel of the Old Testament: was the wife of Ahab king of Israel, she lived about nine-hundred and eighteen years before Christ. She was an idolater and extremely ambitious and persuasive in the accomplishment of her purposes. By her vast evil influence over her husband she persuaded him to worship her idols and by all the means of his kingly power extended her unscrupulous evil plans and established the worship of idols instead of the worship of the true God. She was swift to shed blood and may have been a self-appointed priestess and prophetess of Baal.

- As if it had been a light thing for him (Ahab king of Israel) to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. ³²He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. ³³And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1 Kings 16:31).
- There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. (1 Kings 21:25).

The kind of character that the name Jezebel signifies is of an extremely corrupt person dominated by evil religious error and deceptive doctrines that is skilled in the art of persuasion and has a vast influence over others and will use whatever means available to accomplishing their unscrupulous plans and establish their abominable religious empire of idolatry and error.

Jezebel of Thyatira: it seems that she was a self-styled and self-appointed prophetess and leader of a religious cult in the city who was most likely regarded by her followers as a prophetess and great woman of God proclaiming a real message from Him. By her oratory and superstitious teachings, she was, able to powerfully influence her followers for evil as Jezebel of the Old Testament did to her husband Ahab king of Israel.

You tolerate that woman Jezebel: (v20) the sins alleged against Jezebel were false doctrines, eating things sacrificed to idols and openly following immorality. Thought the church of Thyatira had much to be commended for, it appears they were indifferent to this occult group that was flourishing in their city.

Though it is not the call of Christians to use physical force or go to war to change what is wrong in the world, it is their duty to speak against false prophets and religious teachers that teach false doctrines, especially when they lead to wicked practices and behaviour.

I have this against you: (v20) even when the Lord knows the works of Thyatira were done in love, faith, zeal, and patience; and had much to be commended for and grew better, he cannot fully praise them when his eyes which as a flame of fire, sees them allowing this evil, woman to practise her craft amongst them and seduce those who followed her teachings to behave in corrupt and immoral ways. It, would seem that the Thyatira church had the authority and power to do something, but chose not to do so, perhaps from fear of the consequences that might have followed or fear the leaders of the city would remove some of their privileges had they openly taught against the Jezebel cult. Whatever the reason it is clear they did nothing to hinder her wicked teaching and corrupt practices from flourishing in the city.

Who teaches sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols: (v20) it was a common practice that festivals celebrating idols led to sexual immorality, which appealed to those whose fleshy sensual nature dominated their lives, since there was nowhere else they could go that would have such unlimited toleration for the indulgence of their lustful passions.

REVELATION 2:21

Jezebel Refused to Repent of Her Sexual Immorality.

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

The Lord gave these people a long time to consider the sinfulness of their conduct, and to reform it, but they had sunk so deep in depravity and wickedness, that they showed no signs of change. Though repentance is the gift of God, we are left free to refuse it, God will not force us. The Lord rebuked Thyatira for allowing Jezebel to flourish in her deceptive craft, for being indifferent to her spiritual pretensions and failing to speak against her mystical teachings arising up from the depths of Satan. The LORD'S judgment is often delayed after a crime is committed and in this way the sinner is given sufficient time for repentance, but true repentance is a repentance that is evidenced by the forsaking of sin. The Lord showed great patience toward the Jezebel cult, he did not cut them off immediately, but they were so controlled by their fleshy passions that they did not want to forsake their wicked ways, so they bought the Lord's judgment upon themselves.

This same principal applies to God's impending judgment to come upon the world. It could be said that at this present time we are living in the long day of death and the long day of grace. God desires that all would come to repentance and be saved, so He is patient and longsuffering, but a day will come, as it did for Thyatira when the worlds cup of iniquity is overflowing, and the inhabitants of earth bring God's judgment upon themselves.

REVELATION 2:22-23

I will Throw Her and those who Commit Adultery into Great Tribulation.

- **Revelation 2:22-23:** Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

How apt are the words, "I will throw her onto a sickbed," they were used to a bed of luxury and ease and of immoral pleasure and now the Lord tells them that he will throw them into a bed, not of pleasure, but of pain and tribulation. The place of their sin shall be the place of their punishment.

I will throw her into great tribulation: (v22) could refer to any of the following:

- Diseases of the body and great suffering or mental unrest of the mind and torments of the conscience.
- A great pestilence that destroys crops, vegetation and livestock of the land.
- Persecution and afflictions from the hands of men.

Sooner or later, corrupt behaviour, adultery and immoral practises bring sorrow to those who indulge themselves in them. This judgment is not limited to Jezebel the head of the cult but will come upon all who follow her teachings and corrupt and wicked ways.

Unless they repent of their works: (v22) the only way they can avoid this impending judgment that is about to come upon them is to humble themselves and repent and turn from their evil ways. Repentance is God's way of escape.

I will strike her children dead: (v22) meaning he will judge and condemn all who follow her evil teachings and practises.

REVELATION 2:24-25

Do Not Hold the Teaching, that some call the Deep things of Satan.

- **Revelation 2:24-25:** But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come.

It was claimed by some that this woman who claimed to be a prophetess, had deeper insights into the mysteries and the deep things of God, which can refer to:

- Delusions of deceit pretensions and error that bring in all sorts of corruption.
- Doctrines that lead to fleshy immoral behaviour and give loose rein to fleshy lusts.
- Sins done in darkness or secret and are hidden from view.

I do not lay on you any other burden: (v24) the only burden the Lord calls the faithful in the church to, is that the pastor and his followers hold fast to the purity of truth that they already have received through the Gospel and continue doing good works and hold fast their faith, love and obedience, until he comes.

- If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:3).

Holding fast to what they have, is referred to as a burden, because many of these teachings (especially to those who were weak in their faith) would have been tempting to the flesh, and appealing to self, ego and pride.

REVELATION 2:26

The One Who Conquers I will Give Authority Over the Nations.

- **Revelation 2:26:** The one who conquers (overcomes in KJV) and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority (power in the KJV) over the nations. (Rev. 2:26).

The one who conquers: (v26) (overcomes in KJV) refers to those who:

- Have victory over their own troubling sins and over the world and its temptations.
- Keep a good conscience and faithfully follows the Lord and hold fast to their faith.
- Have kept themselves free from error and false doctrines and held fast to their faith during the hardships and trials of life.

Life in general, and especially the Christian life, may be regarded as a warfare against worldly temptations, sinful pleasures, distorted doctrine, conflicts, difficulties, suffering and hardships, but the primary application of the expression, "to him that overcomes," refers to those who endure in faith regardless of what joys or sorrows life brings across their path. All in God's Kingdom at various times suffer sorrow and grief and fall into conflict, difficulties and temptations, but those who maintain their faith will be received by the Lord himself as conquerors and overcomers in the end.

I will give authority over the nations: (v26) (power in the KJV) the promise here is of sharing in the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. Those who, like their Master, refuse to win power, fame and worldly riches by following or doing what is wrong as Jesus did (Matt. 4:8-10) will share in Christ's rule over the nations during his millennial reign on earth. All New Testament teaching climaxes upon one truth, Christ who came to die will come again to reign. Jesus will sit on the central throne and all the faithful will sit on thrones with him. The Bride will be crowned with all the wealth, possessions and glory of her Bridegroom and will share in the same authority that he received from his Father (Rev. 2:27).

- Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:8-9).

The rod of his iron signifies Christ's authority and power over those who do not submit to his royal and sovereign rule. This verse prophetically speaks of Christ's final triumph over his enemies in the last day, when he crushes them all to utter ruin, and when all the faithful are raised from the dead and clothed with robes of glory and he sits down with them on his throne.

- Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matt. 9:28).
- Everyone who is a child of God are heirs of God and if then heirs, then heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided they suffer with him in order that they may also be glorified with him. (Rom. 8:17).
- Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? (1 Cor. 6:2).

REVELATION 2:27

The One Who Conquers Will Rule the Nations with a Rod of Iron.

- **Revelation 2:27:** and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, (as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers in KJV): even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

The expression, "he will rule them with a rod of iron," (a sceptre of iron in some Bibles) is an allusion to the following verse:

- You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:9).

The allusion in this Psalm is to the Messiah reigning triumphant over the nations and subduing them under his rule. Now in this verse we see that the redeemed will join him in his sovereign rule. Christ will not rule as a harsh tyrannical self-serving dictator, since he is not coming to serve himself, but to establish his heavenly Fathers Kingdom on earth and will do what is just and right for all people. The expression, "he will rule them with a rod of iron," also carries the idea that his government will not only be one of great strength that cannot be successfully opposed or conquered but will also be invincible and everlasting.

As when earthen pots are broken in pieces: (v27) (as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers in KJV). The rod speaks of power and authority, when Christ returns in glory, he will return not as the Lamb to be slain, but as the King to rule and will come with all the wisdom and supernatural power of God. Once a clay pot is shattered into fragments it cannot be put together again. The idea here is that once Christ has conquered the rebellious nations they will never again rise. This will take place when the Lord comes to judge the world, he will show mercy to some and judgment on others; destroying his enemies and reigning in love over the rest.

REVELATION 2:28-29

I will Give Him the Morning Star.

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

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Throughout Scripture a star is often a symbol of royal dominion, however, the star in this verse that is set forth as a symbolical reward of the victor's triumph is the morning star, not the stars that blaze in the heavens. Amongst commentators there are various ideas of what the expression: "I will give him the morning star," refers to. Following are the most common:

- In the last chapter of the Revelation the Lord is described as the bright and morning star (Rev. 22:16), based upon this it is suggested that the statement, "I will give him the morning star," means that Jesus will give the overcomer himself.
- The morning star signifies the beginning of a new day, so in this verse the expression, "I will give you the morning star," not only signifies the beginning of the new glorious age that Christ who is called the bright morning star will establish when he returns, but also carries the idea that Christ will receive those who overcome into the bright new age that is to come.
- Since the morning star is the first bright light that appears as the darkness of the night fades, the expression, "I will give you the morning star," is poetic language expressing the wonder and glory Christ will crown those who overcome with at the dawning of the new age to come, and that they will shine as the brightness of stars for ever.

NOTE: as spectators look up, they see the bright light and glory of the shining stars, likewise in the new glorious future age to come their eyes will behold the shining light of the perfected resurrected immortal faithful brothers and sisters of Christ. Christ the valiant King after having conquered the stubborn nations keeps his words to the faithful and give them the morning-star, signifying unspeakable glory, brightness, and peaceable dominion with him over the nations.

The morning star in Peters letter: Peter speaks about paying attention to prophecy until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19). Peter here has the bright star that at certain periods of the year begins the day in the most magnificent brilliance. Figuratively the star is Christ and the reference is to that glorious day when he returns in the full revelation of his glory and the splendour of his Kingdom and his light shines its beams deep into our hearts and that hidden, but glorious light and love that dwells within the heart of every brother and sister in Christ rises in breathtaking and uncontrollable excitement and joy at the sight of seeing their risen Saviour.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches: (v29) carries the idea of having a humble attitude and a mind that is open to listen and believe as they read or hear the word of the Lord, the Gospel message or God's prophetic truths. Without these qualities, the spiritual truths of Christ word cannot be discerned or received. The statement, "he who has an ear let him hear," is used at the close of each of the seven letters to draw attention to what is about to be said, and to denote that it is of special importance and worthy of attention. The statement, "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," could also be expressed in the following way, "let him hear what Christ says to the churches."

JEZEBEL AND THE CHURCH OF ROME

Many commentators feel that Jezebel the wife of Ahab king of Israel is comparable to the apostate church of Rome for the following nine reasons:

1. Jezebel was the daughter of a heathen, likewise Papal Rome is the daughter of pagan Rome.
2. Jezebel was the wife of king Ahab, and therefore a queen, likewise the whore of Babylon calls herself Queen.
 - She glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.' (Rev. 18:7).
3. Jezebel was exalted by her followers as a great prophetess and spiritual teacher, likewise the Popes of the church of Rome are exalted for their pretentious religion and holiness.
4. Jezebel was remarkable for her persuasiveness to spread her teaching of idolatry amongst the people of God, likewise, the church of Rome has been remarkable in spreading its false teaching amongst the global body of Christ.
5. Jezebel was swift to shed blood if it advanced the expansion of her religious empire, likewise, the Papal church cruelly shed the innocent blood of those who rejected her abominable doctrines.
6. Jezebel embraced the idolatrous worship of images, likewise, the church of Rome is filled with all types of gold images
7. Jezebel stirred up the king against good and faithful men, likewise the Papal Church has stirred up the secular powers, emperors, kings, and princes, against the true followers of Christ.
8. Jezebel seduced those who called themselves the servants of Christ, and draw them into spiritual fornication, which is idolatry; likewise, the Papal Church seduces its followers to partake of the idolatrous worship of the Mass, and worship of images and saints that have died.
9. There was scarcely anything left of Jezebel's at her end.

- When they went to bury her, (Jezebel) they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. ³⁶When they came back and told him, he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, 'In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel, ³⁷and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, "This is Jezebel." (2 Kings 9:35-37).

Likewise, the great prostitute woman drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus and full of blasphemous names and abominations sitting on a scarlet coloured beast with seven heads and ten-horns with a name written on its head, mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." (Rev. 17:1-6), will be bought to utter ruin.

- The kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. ¹⁰They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come." (Revelation 18:9-10).
- Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more." (Revelation 18:21).

For further information concerning: the great prostitute woman, click or tap [Topics in Revelation](#), and select the title: "The Great Prostitute Woman and Mystery Babylon."

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.