**JESUS’ LETTERS TO THE 7 CHURCHES**

1. The letters to the *7* churches have a similar structure. They each feature:
   1. An address to a particular congregation.
   2. An introduction of Jesus.
   3. A statement regarding the *condition* of the church.
   4. A verdict from Jesus regarding the *condition* of the church.
   5. A command from Jesus to the church.
   6. A general exhortation to all Christians.
   7. *A promise of reward*.
   8. We can see the state of each of these 7 churches — and the state of our own walk with Jesus by looking at what Jesus has to say to each church.
2. **Jesus’ letter to the church at *Ephesus*. (The Loveless Church)**
   1. [**Revelation 2:1a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/1/s_1169001) **“To the *angel* of the church of Ephesus write,**
   2. **To the *angel***: As discussed in [**Revelation 1:20**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/20/s_1168020), this **angel** may be the *pastor* of the church at Ephesus, or an *angel* looking in on the workings of the church at Ephesus. In some way, this **angel** represents this church; but the letter *isn’t* just written to the representative, but to the *whole church*.
   3. (Clarke) “I consider what is spoken to this angel as spoken to the whole Church;
   4. **Ephesus**: This was a famous city in the ancient world, with an equally famous church.
      1. Paul ministered in Ephesus for approximately 3 years, they say that he taught for 2 ½ years in one place from 11:00am to 4:00pm every day
      2. [**Acts 20:31**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/act/20/31/s_1038031)Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.
   5. **Ephesus**: This great city was also world-famous as a *religious*, cultural, and economic center of the region.
      1. Ephesus had the notable temple of Diana, a fertility goddess worshipped with immoral sex.
      2. This tremendous temple to Diana in Ephesus was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
      3. It was supported by 127 pillars, each pillar 59 feet tall, over 8 feet at the base and it was adorned with great sculptures.
      4. (Longenecker in his commentary on Acts said) “The Temple of Diana (Artemis) was also a major treasury and bank of the ancient world, where merchants, kings, and even cities made deposits, and where their money could be kept safe under the protection of deity.”
      5. (Longenecker) “Ephesus was a stronghold of Satan.
      6. Here many evil things both *satanic* and *superstitions* were practiced. Books containing *methods for sorcery* and other *ungodly* and *forbidden* *arts* were plentiful in that city.”
3. **Jesus describes Himself to the church at Ephesus.**
   1. [**Revelation 2:1b**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/1/s_1169001) **‘These things says He who holds the *seven* stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the *seven* golden lampstands:**
   2. This scripture shows the *authority* of Jesus in the Church
      1. **He holds the seven stars** - He is presence in the Church
      2. **He walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands**. This stresses that Jesus is central to the church, and should be recognized as in the midst of the church.
   3. **Holds**: This is the ancient Greek word *kratein*, and is a forceful and complete word.
      1. Jesus has these churches, and **holds** them securely.
      2. The churches belong to Jesus, not to the leaders of the churches or to the people of the churches. *He* **holds** them.
4. **What Jesus knows about the Christians of Ephesus.**
   1. [**Revelation 2:2-3**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/2-3/s_1169002) **“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.**
   2. **I know your works**: Jesus looked at His church, and He knew its condition. It was no mystery to Him.
      1. There may be sin or corruption hidden in a congregation, but it *isn’t* hidden from Jesus.
      2. He would say the same thing to us today, both as individuals and as a congregation: **I know your works**.
      3. (Spurgeon) “There are also working Christians who do not approach to laboring; yet a lifetime of such work as theirs would not exhaust a butterfly. Now, when a man works for Christ, he should work with *all his might*.”
   3. **Your works, your labor, your patience**: Jesus knew what this church did *right*. They worked hard for the Lord and they had godly endurance.
      1. **Patience** is the great ancient Greek word *hupomone*, which means “steadfast endurance.” In this sense, the church in Ephesus was *rock-solid*.
   4. **You cannot bear those who are evil**: The Ephesian church pursued doctrinal purity.
      1. Paul warned the Ephesians in [Acts 20:29-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/act/20/29-31/s_1038029) *For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*
      2. From this commendation of Jesus, we know that the Ephesians took Paul’s warning seriously.
   5. The church today, like the Ephesian church then, must vigorously test those who claim to be messengers from God, especially **those who say they are apostles**, because deceivers will speak well of themselves. The greater the evil, the more deceptive its cloak. (Wolf in Sheep’s clothing)
      1. (Spurgeon) “This was grand of them: it showed a backbone of truth. I wish some of the churches of this age had a little of this holy decision about them; for nowadays, if a man be clever; he may preach the vilest lie that was ever vomited from the mouth of hell, and it will go down with some.”
   6. **You have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary**: Also, the Ephesian church *continued* doing these things without becoming **weary**.
      1. They showed a godly determination that we should imitate.
      2. By all outward appearances, this was a solid church that worked hard, had great outreach, and protected the integrity of the gospel.
5. **What Jesus has *against* the church at Ephesus**
   1. [**Revelation 2:4**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/4/s_1169004) **Nevertheless I have *this against you*, that you have *left* your first love.**
   2. **Nevertheless I have this against you**:
      1. Jesus used a sobering word — **nevertheless**, which means “*despite all that.*”
      2. Jesus took into full account *all the good* in the Ephesian church, yet *despite all that*, He had something **against** them.
      3. **You have left your first love**: Despite all the good in the Ephesian church, there is something seriously wrong.
      4. They **have left** — ***not lost*** — their **first love**.
      5. They had a **love** that they didn’t have anymore.
      6. The distinction between *leaving* and *losing* is important. Something can be lost quite by accident, but *leaving* is a deliberate act, though it may not happen suddenly.
      7. When we ***lose*** something, we don’t know where to find it; but when we ***leave*** something, *we know exactly where to find it*
      8. Even though they had ***left*** their ***first love***, *everything looked great on the* ***outside***.
      9. If you would have attended a service of the church at Ephesus, you might have thought, “*This is a happening church*”. They are doing so much.”
      10. At the same time, you might have had a vague, uneasy feeling — but it would probably be hard to pin down.
      11. It wasn’t hard for Jesus to see the problem, even though everything probably looked wonderful to the *human eye*.
   3. The problem was serious. Without love, all is vain. No wonder Jesus said, “**Nevertheless I have this against you**.”
      1. (Spurgeon) “A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. **Lose love, lose all**.”
      2. ***Left* your first love**: What **love** did they leave? As Christians, we are told to love God *and* to love one another. Did they leave their love for God? Did they leave their love for one another? Probably *both* are in mind, because the two loves go together. You can’t say you love God and not love His family, and you can’t really love His family without loving Him first.
   4. The Ephesian church was a *working* church.
      1. Sometimes our focus on *working* for Jesus will obscure or love and relationship with Him.
   5. **First love**: There is a definite, difference in their relationship with Jesus.
      1. Things aren’t as they used to be.
      2. It isn’t that we expect that we should have the exact same excitement we had when everything was brand new in the Christian life,
      3. but the newness should transition into a depth that makes the **first love** even stronger.
      4. A couple that has been married for a long time doesn’t always have the same thrill of excitement they had when they first dated.
      5. That is to be expected, and is fine, if that excitement has matured into a *depth* of love that makes it even *better* than the **first love**.
   6. There is nothing *wrong* with that initial excitement, or wanting it to remain or be restored.
   7. (Spurgeon) “When we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ; now how little will we do. Some of the actions which we performed when we were young Christians, but just converted, when we look back upon them, seem to have been wild and like idle tales.”
6. **What Jesus wants the church at Ephesus to do.** 
   1. [**Revelation 2:5-6**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/5-6/s_1169005) **Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**
   2. **Remember therefore from where you have fallen**: The first step in restoration for the Ephesian church is for them to **remember**.
   3. They need to remember from where they have fallen.
   4. This means remembering *where they used to be in their love for the Lord and for one another*.
   5. When the *Prodigal Son* was in the pigpen, the first step in his restoration was **remembering** what life was like back in his father’s home.
   6. This is always the 1st step in getting back to where we should be with the Lord.
7. **Repent**: It is an “urgent appeal for instant change of attitude and conduct, before it is too late.”
   1. It means to change your *direction*, to go a different way.
8. **Do the first works**: This means that they must go back to the basics, to the very 1st things we did when we first *fell in love* with Jesus.
9. What are **the first works**?
   1. Remember how you used to spend time in His Word?
   2. Remember how you used to pray?
   3. Remember the joy, being with other Christians?
   4. Remember how excited you were *telling others* about Jesus?
10. **Or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place**:
    1. Jesus gave them a stern warning.
    2. **Unless** they **repent**, He will remove *their light* and *His presence*.
    3. When their **lampstand** was removed, they could continue as an *organization*, a *gathering place* but no longer as a church with Glory of God.
    4. It would be a church of ***Ichabod***, where the glory has departed.
    5. Some historians say the Ephesians heeded this warning.
11. **But this you have, that you *hate the deeds* of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate**:
    1. They were complimented because they *hated* **the deeds of the Nicolaitans**
       1. *Jesus didn’t hate them he hated their deeds*!
    2. But who were the **Nicolaitans** and what were their **deeds**?
    3. Some historians describe them as “The Nicolaitans are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate (office of deacon) by the apostles, and many believe that he gave into the pagan beliefs.
    4. It is said that they lead lives of *unrestrained indulgence*. The character of these men is plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrifice to idols.”
12. They were a people who used Christian liberty as an occasion for the flesh, against such Paul warned ([Gal 5:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal%205:13) For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.)
    1. The enticement to such a course of action was the pagan society in which Christians lived where eating meat offered to idols was common.
    2. Sex relations outside marriage were completely acceptable in such a society.
    3. The Nicolaitans attempted to establish a ***compromise*** with the pagan society of the Graeco-Roman world that surrounded them.
    4. It may be that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was *dualistic*. They probably reasoned that the human body was evil anyway and only the spirit was good.
    5. A Christian, therefore, could do whatever he desired with his body because it had no importance.
    6. The spirit, on the other hand, was the recipient of grace which meant that grace and forgiveness were his no matter what he did.
    7. They were those ready to compromise with the world.
    8. They were judged by the author of Revelation to be most dangerous because the result of their teaching would have conformed Christianity to the world rather than have Christianity change the world.
    9. The **Nicolaitans**, like all deceivers that *come from the body of Christ*, probably claimed “that they were not destroying Christianity, but that they were presenting an *improved* and *modernized* version of it.” (Note 4 d) 1))
13. **Which I also hate**: These are powerful words; in that they came from our Savior who is so rich in love.
    1. Whoever exactly the Nicolaitans were, and whatever exactly they did and taught, we learn something from Jesus’ opinion of them.
    2. We learn that the God of love *hates sin*, and wants His people to also hate sin.
14. [**Revelation 2:7a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/7/s_1169007) **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the *churches*.**
    1. **He who has an ear**: This qualifies everyone or at least everyone who will *listen*.
    2. This letter was not only written to the church at Ephesus in the Apostle John’s Day. It is written to us, and to all Christians throughout the centuries.
    3. **Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**: Each one of these seven letters apply to all churches. We must hear what the Spirit says **to the churches** not just to *one church*. These letters each of them were meant to speak to *you*, if you will only have an **ear** to **hear what the Spirit says**.
15. [**Revelation 2:7b**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/7/s_1169007) **To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”’**
    1. **To him who overcomes**: Jesus made this promise **to him who overcomes** — but what does this overcomer overcome?
    2. Here Jesus seems to speak of overcoming of their *coldness of heart* and *lack of love* marked by *leaving* their first love.
    3. **I will give to eat from the tree of life**: The promise for these overcomers was a return to Eden, a restoration, and eternal life. This was meant first in the eternal sense of making it to heaven, which was no small promise to a church threatened with the removal of Jesus’ presence. It is also meant in the sense of seeing the effects of the curse rolled back in our own lives though walking in Jesus’ redeeming love.
    4. **In the midst of the Paradise of God**: Originally, the word **Paradise** meant “a garden of delight.” Eventually, it came to mean “the place where God lives.” Where God is, that is **Paradise**!
16. **Jesus’ letter to the church at *Smyrna*. (The Persecuted Church)**

[**Revelation 2:8a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/8/s_1169008) **“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,**

* 1. **Smyrna**: This was a large, beautiful, and proud city.
  2. It was a center of learning and culture, and was proud of its standing as a city.
  3. “Smyrna was an outstandingly beautiful city. It claimed to be the ‘*Glory of Asia.’”*
  4. **Smyrna**: This was a *rich* city. “Smyrna was a great trade city… Smyrna stood at the end of the road which served the valley of the river Hermus, and all the trade of that valley flowed into its markets and found an outlet through its harbor.
  5. It had a particularly rich trade in wines. Smyrna, like Ephesus, was a city of wealth and commercial greatness.”
  6. **Smyrna**: We also know from history that it was a city *deeply committed* to *idolatry* and the *worship* of the Roman Emperor.
  7. On one famous street in Smyrna, called the “Golden Street,” stood magnificent temples to Cybele (Mother Goddess), Apollo (has been recognized as a god of archery, music and dance, truth and prophecy, healing and diseases, the [Sun](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun) and light, poetry, and more.), Asklepios (the god of medicine.), Aphrodite (was the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation.), and a great temple to Zeus (the Olympian god of the sky and the thunder, the king of all other gods and men)
  8. In 196 BC, **Smyrna** built the first temple to *Dea Roma* — the goddess of Rome, the spiritual symbol of the Roman Empire. Once the “spirit” of Rome was worshipped, it wasn’t much of a step to worship the dead Emperors of Rome. Then it was only another small step to worship the living Emperors, and then to demand such worship as a evidence of political allegiance and civic pride.
  9. In AD 23 Smyrna won the privilege (over 11 other cities) to build the first temple to worship the Emperor Tiberius Caesar. **Smyrna** was a leading city in the Roman cult of Emperor worship.

1. The Roman Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) was the first to *demand* worship under the title “Lord” from the people of the Roman Empire as a test of political loyalty. According to ancient church history, it was under the reign of Domitian that John was banished to the Island of Patmos where he received this vision.
   1. (Barclay) “Emperor worship had begun as a spontaneous demonstration of gratitude to Rome; but toward the end of the first century, in the days of Domitian, the final step was taken and *Caesar worship became* ***compulsory***. Once a year the Roman citizen must burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar; and having done so, he was *given a certificate* to guarantee that he had performed his religious duty.”
   2. All the Christians had to do was to burn that pinch of incense, **say**, ‘*Caesar is Lord*,’ *receive their certificate*, and go away and worship as they pleased.
2. **Jesus describes Himself to the church at Smyrna**

[**Revelation 2:8b**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/8/s_1169008) **‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:**

* 1. **The First and the Last**: Jesus chose this title from His initial appearance to John ([Revelation 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/11/s_1168011), [1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/17/s_1168017)) to speak of His eternal character.
  2. **The First and the Last** are titles that ***only*** belong to the LORD, Yahweh, according to [Isaiah 41:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/41/4/s_720004), [44:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/44/6/s_723006), and [48:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/48/12/s_727012).
  3. **Who was dead, and came to life**: Jesus chose this title from His initial appearance to John ([Revelation 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/18/s_1168018)) to remind the Christians in Smyrna that they served the *risen Lord*, *victorious over death*.
  4. Death could not hold Jesus, and it cannot hold His people.
  5. The association with death and the victory of resurrection is throughout this letter. The name *Smyrna* comes from the word *myrrh*, a sweet-smelling perfume used in embalming dead bodies.

1. **What Jesus knows about the Christians in Smyrna.**
   1. [**Revelation 2:9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/9/s_1169009) **“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know the* blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan.**
   2. **I know your works**: Jesus knew the works of the church in Ephesus also ([Revelation 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/2/s_1169002)). In Smyrna, Jesus also knew their **works, tribulation, and poverty**. He knows these hardships both in the sense that He saw what happened to them, and in the sense that He knew their hardships by His personal experience.
   3. **Poverty**: According to history, Smyrna was a prosperous city. Yet the Christians there were poor. (Walvoord) “The word used for ‘poverty’ is the word for abject poverty. They were miserably poor.”
   4. The Christians of Smyrna knew **poverty** because they were robbed and fired from jobs in persecution for the gospel.
   5. Early Christians *joyfully accepted the plundering of their goods, knowing that you have an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven* {[Hebrews 10:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/heb/10/34/s_1143034) You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.}
   6. **I know the blasphemy**: Jesus knew the abuse these Christians endured at the hands of “religious” men, **those who say they are Jews and are not**.
   7. **I know**: I know your works, I know your tribulation, andI know your poverty, Jesus knows ***EVERYTHING*** about us
   8. In midst of this kind of affliction, it is easy to think God has forgotten — but Jesus knows. **(but you are rich)**
   9. Why did Jesus say that the Christians in Smyrna were really **rich** even though they were really **poor**?

**LUKE 21:8** **He replied, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and saying, ‘The time has come!’ But don’t believe them.**

1. **What Jesus wants the Christians in Smyrna to do.**

[**Revelation 2:10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/10/s_1169010) **Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some of y*ou into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

* 1. **Do not fear**: Literally, this is better translated “***stop being afraid.*”**
  2. The Christians in Smyrna suffered under persecution, and they were afraid.
  3. Sometimes we think that Christians who endure persecution are almost super-human, and we sometimes don’t appreciate the depths of **fear** they struggle with.
  4. There were **things which** they were **about to suffer,** and Jesus wanted them ready to stand against **those things**.
  5. **The devil is about to throw some of you into prison**: Here, Jesus described the nature of the persecution that would come against the Christians in Smyrna.
  6. Apparently, they would be imprisoned, and for a specific period of time (**you will have tribulation ten days**).
  7. According to Jesus, the persecution about to come against the Christians of Smyrna was from **the devil**.
     1. At the same time it was measured and limited by God.
     2. Surely, **the devil** wanted to imprison them for a longer time, but God limited the **tribulation** to **ten days**.
  8. **You will have tribulation ten days**: Commentators on the Book of Revelation have long debated the meaning of these **ten days**.
     1. Some think that Jesus really meant **ten** *years* of persecution.
     2. Others think that Jesus really meant persecution over the reign of **ten** *Roman Emperors*.
        1. 1st under Nero, ad 54
        2. 2nd under Domitian, ad 81
        3. 3rd under Trajan, ad 98
        4. 4th under Adrian [Hadrian], ad 117
        5. 5th under Septimus Severus, ad 193
        6. 6th under Maximin, ad 235
        7. 7th under Decius, ad 249
        8. *8th* under Valerian, ad 254
        9. *9th* under Aurelian, ad 270
        10. *10th* under Diocletian, ad 284
     3. Others say that **ten days** is simply an expression of speech: “The expression *10 days* is not to be taken literally; it is the normal Greek expression for a *short time*.”
  9. **That you may be tested**: God had a purpose in their suffering, and so He allowed it.
     1. God uses suffering to purify
        1. [**1 Peter 1:6-7**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/1/6-7/s_1152006) So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.
        2. [**Romans 8:17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rom/8/17/s_1054017) And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

1. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**: What Jesus said to this church is important, but what He *didn’t say* is also important. Jesus didn’t have a single word of rebuke or correction for the Christians in Smyrna.
   1. What he did have was the promise of a **crown** and the encouragement to **be faithful until death**.
   2. There are two different words for **crown** in the ancient Greek language. One described the kind of crown a *king* would wear, a crown of royalty. The other kind of **crown** — the *stephanos*, used here is given as a trophy to a winning athlete.
   3. Jesus looks at the Christians of Smyrna, and says to them: “You are My winners. You deserve a trophy.”
   4. In Smyrna, worshippers of pagan gods wore crowns. In that culture, good citizens and winning athletes received crowns.
2. **A general exhortation to all whom will hear.**

[**Revelation 2:11a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/11/s_1169011) **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

* 1. **He who has an ear**: Though **the Spirit** has something to say to us through every one of **the churches**, this letter to the Christians in Smyrna may apply least of all to modern, western Christians. To this point, we simply don’t face the kind of persecution the Christians in Smyrna experienced.

1. **Polycarp** was a remarkable example of both the persecution and the courage of early Christians.
   1. The year after Polycarp returned from Rome, a great persecution came upon the Christians of Smyrna. His congregation urged him to leave the city until the threat blew over. So, believing that God wanted him to be around a few more years, Polycarp left the city and hid out on a farm belonging to some Christian friends. One day on the farm, as he prayed in his room, Polycarp had a vision of his pillow engulfed in flames. He knew what God said to him, and calmly told his companions, “I see that I must be burnt at the stake.”
   2. Meanwhile, a warrant for his arrest was issued. They seized one of Polycarp’s servants and tortured him until he told them where his master was. Towards evening, the police chief and a band of soldiers came to the old farmhouse. When the soldiers found him, they were embarrassed to see that they had come to arrest such an old, frail man. They reluctantly put him on a donkey and walked him back to the city of Smyrna.
   3. On the way to the city, the police chief and other government officials tried to persuade Polycarp to offer a pinch of incense before a statue of Caesar and simply say “Caesar is Lord.” *That’s all he had to do*, and he would be off the hook. They pleaded with him to do it, and escape the dreadful penalties. At first Polycarp was silent, but then he calmly gave them his firm answer: **no**. They became angry. Annoyed with the old man, they pushed him out of his carriage and onto the ground. Polycarp, bruised but unyielding, got up and walked the rest of the way to the arena.
   4. The games at the arena had already begun in earnest and a large, bloodthirsty mob gathered to see Christians tortured and killed. One Christian named Quintis boldly proclaimed himself a follower of Jesus and said he was willing to be martyred, but when he saw the vicious animals in the arena, he lost courage and agreed to burn the pinch of incense to Caesar as Lord. Another young man named Germanicus didn’t back down. He marched out and faced the lions and died an agonizing death for his Lord Jesus. Ten other Christians gave their lives that day, but the mob was unsatisfied. They cried out, “Away with the atheists who do not worship our gods!” To them, Christians were atheists because they did not recognize the traditional gods of Rome and Greece. Finally, the crowd started chanting “Bring out Polycarp.”
   5. When Polycarp brought his tired body into the arena, he and the other Christians heard a voice from heaven. It said, “Be strong, Polycarp, play the man.” As he stood before the proconsul, they tried one more time to get him to renounce Jesus. The proconsul told Polycarp to agree with the crowd and shout out “Away with the atheists!” Polycarp looked sternly at the bloodthirsty mob, waved his hand towards them and said, “Away with those atheists!” The proconsul persisted. “Take the oath and revile Christ and I’ll set you free!” Polycarp answered, “For eighty-six years I’ve served Jesus; how dare I now revile my King?” The proconsul finally gave up, and announced to the crowd the crime of the accused: “Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian.”
   6. The crowd shouted, “Let the lions loose!” but the animals had already been put away. The crowd then demanded that Polycarp be burnt. The old man remembered the dream about the burning pillow, and took courage in God. He said to his executioners, “It is well. I fear not the fire that burns for a season and after a while is quenched. Why do you delay? Come, do your will.”
   7. They arranged a great pile of wood and set up a pole in the middle. As they tied Polycarp to the pole, he prayed: “I thank You that You have graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Your Christ.” After he prayed and gave thanks to God, they set the wood ablaze. A great wall of flame shot up to the sky, but it never touched Polycarp. God set a hedge of protection between him and the fire. Seeing that he would not burn, the executioner, in a furious rage, stabbed the old man with a long spear. Immediately, streams of blood gushed from his body and seemed to extinguish the fire. When this happened, witnesses said they saw a dove fly up from the smoke into heaven. At the very same moment, a church leader in Rome named Iraenus, said he heard God say to him, “Polycarp is dead.” God called his servant home.
   8. However, the day of martyrs is definitely not past. All over the world, Christians face persecution, especially in Asia, Eastern Europe, and in the Muslim world. Some people estimate that more Christians have suffered and died for their faith in the 20th Century than in all previous centuries combined.
2. **The promise of a reward..**

[**Revelation 2:11b**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/11/s_1169011) **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**

* 1. **He who overcomes**: This was a promise for *overcomers*. This promise is for those who overcome the threat of persecution, and the presence of persecution.
  2. We might say that we overcome by our close association with Jesus, who is the ultimate overcomer.
     1. As Jesus said, [**John 16:33**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jhn/16/33/s_1013033)**B** **In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world**
  3. **Shall not be hurt by the second death**: Those who overcome in Jesus will never **be hurt by the second death**.
  4. What is the 2nd, Death?
     1. Death is a fact of life on this side of Jesus’ return, but one day, [death will be no more](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=revelation+21:4). Those [redeemed by Jesus’ death on the cross](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=john+3:16) will pass through death once to live forever. Those who haven’t accepted Jesus will face [the second death](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=revelation+21:8) .
     2. For a concept as permanent and sobering as the 2nd death, we spend very little time discussing what it is and what it means.
     3. We will all encounter physical death (except the generation alive when Jesus returns). It entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned, choosing their way over obedience to God’s way.
     4. We **don’t**, have to die a [*second death*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/second-death/)*,* which is ***eternal*** *separation from God*.
     5. The good news is that we don’t have to work at avoiding it or putting it off. Jesus has done *all the work necessary* to spare us from experiencing this second death. He is our salvation.
  5. The second death, [**Revelation 20:14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/20/14/s_1187014) **Then Death and Hades were cast into the *lake of fire*. This is the *second death*.**
  6. **Revelation** [**21:8**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/21/8/s_1188008) **But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**
  7. **Sulphur**; a hard, brittle, inflammable substance, of a lemon-yellow color, which has no smell, unless heated, and which becomes negatively electric by heat and friction.
  8. Though Satan threatened and attacked their life, Jesus promises His overcomers that death is conquered for them.
  9. As a Christian we do *NOT* have to fear death!

1. **Jesus’ letter to the church at *Pergamos*. (The Compromising Church)**

[**Revelation 2:12a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/12/s_1169012) **“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,**

* 1. **Pergamos**: This was the political capital of the Roman Province of Asia the Less. When John wrote Revelation, Pergamos had been the capital city of the region for more than three hundred years. The city was a noted center for culture and education, having one of the great libraries of the ancient world, with more than 200,000 volumes.
  2. **Pergamos**: This was also an extremely religious city. It had temples to the Greek and Roman gods Dionysus, Athena, Demeter, and Zeus. It also had three temples dedicated to the worship of the Roman Emperor.
  3. Some 50 years before Smyrna won the honor of building the first temple to Tiberius, the city of Pergamos won the right to build the first temple to worship Caesar Augustus in the province of Asia.
  4. **Pergamos**: This city was especially known as a center for the worship of the deity known as Asclepios. Represented by a serpent, Asclepios was the god of healing and knowledge.
  5. There was a medical school at his temple. Because of the famous temple to the Roman god of healing, sick and diseased people from all over the Roman Empire flocked to Pergamos for relief.
  6. (Barclay) “Sufferers were allowed to spend the night in the darkness of the temple. In the temple there were tame snakes. In the night the sufferer might be touched by one of these tame and harmless snakes as it glided over the ground on which he lay. The touch of the snake was held to be the touch of the god himself, and the touch was held to bring health and healing.”

1. **Jesus describes Himself to the church at Pergamos.**

[**Revelation 2:12b**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/12/s_1169012) **‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:**

* 1. **He who has the sharp two-edged sword**: In [**Revelation 1:16**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/16/s_1168016), John witnessed that a *sharp two-edged sword* came *out of* Jesus’s *mouth*. Now, Jesus is “showing” this two-edged sword to the Christians in Pergamos.
  2. The description of the sword in [**Revelation 1:18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/18/s_1168018) helps us to associate it with the *mouth* of Jesus. Jesus will confront this church with His word, and they will feel the **sharp** edges.
  3. **Sharp two-edged sword**: This reminds us of the passage in [**Hebrews 4:12**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/heb/4/12/s_1137012)**-13:** ***For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.***
  4. Jesus would use this **sharp two-edged sword** to make some separation among the Christians in Pergamos.

1. **What Jesus knows about the church at Pergamos.**

[**Revelation 2:13**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/13/s_1169013) **“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne *is. And* you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was My f*aithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.**

* 1. **I know your works**: Jesus said this to each church. It is true of each one of us. He knows each of **our** **works.**
  2. **And where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is**: In many ways, Pergamos was a **stronghold** of Satanic power.
  3. There are many different opinions as to why Pergamos was such a stronghold of Satanic power.
     1. Some believe it is because Pergamos was a center of pagan religion, especially of “*Asclepios (Asclepius).*
     2. Some believe it was because Pergamos had a huge throne-like altar dedicated to the Roman god Zeus.
     3. Others believe it was because Pergamos was the political center of the worship-demanding Roman government.
  4. **And you hold fast to My name**: Despite the fact they lived in such a difficult city, the Christians of Pergamos held fast to their faith in Jesus
  5. **Did not deny My faith**: Jesus praised the Christians of Pergamos because they did not deny *His* faith. It is always important to make sure that the faith we hold on to is the faith that belongs to Jesus.
  6. **Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you**: One specific man among the Christians of Pergamos received the title (**faithful martyr**). **Antipas** was a man who followed Jesus.
  7. **Antipas** Antipas was believed to be the Bishop of the Christian church at Pergamos, and that he was martyred for his faith because of his consistent faithful witnessing in the face of all the satanic evil present there.
     1. When Antipas was advised: **"Antipas, the whole world is against you!",**   
        Antipas reputedly replied: **“Then I am against the whole world!"**
     2. Antipas was supposedly roasted alive in a hollow life-size bull, which had a bonfire under its belly, because Antipas refused to renounce his faith in Christ Jesus.
     3. **This Much Is Known For Sure:**  
        His faithful witnessing and eventual martyrdom for his unshakable faith in Christ Jesus are what earned Antipas mention in the pages of Holy Scripture.
     4. **Antipas** lived **where Satan’s throne** was. Yet he stood against the attacks and the evil around him. He fulfilled the meaning of his name, because **Antipas** means “For All or Against All.”
  8. **Martyr** is the ancient Greek word *martus*.
     1. In classical Greek *martus* never means a *martyr* in our sense of the term. It always means a *witness*.
     2. A *martus* was one who said: ‘This is true, and I know it.’
     3. (Barclay) It is not until New Testament times that *martus* ever means *martyr*.”

1. **What Jesus has *against* the Christians in Pergamos.**

[**Revelation 2:14-15**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/14-15/s_1169014) **But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.**

* 1. **I have a *few* things against you**: The Christians in Pergamos were rightly praised for holding fast to the name of Jesus and keeping his faith. At the same time, their difficult environment did not excuse the **few things** Jesus had **against** them.
  2. **You have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam**: Balaam was a prototype of all corrupt teachers. According to [**Numbers 22-24**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/num/22/1-41/s_139001) **and** [**31**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/num/22/31/s_139031)**,** Balaam combined the sins of *immorality* and *idolatry* to please Balak, the king of Moab, because he could not curse Israel directly.
  3. When Balaam counseled Balak, he **taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel**.
     1. The stumbling block was connected with **idolatry**, (**to eat things sacrificed to idols** and **sexual immorality)**.
     2. If the church in Pergamos had those who did **hold the doctrine of Balaam**, it showed they had tendencies towards both *idolatry* and *immorality*.
     3. Sexual immorality marked the whole culture of the ancient Roman Empire. It was simply taken for granted, and the person who lived by Biblical standards of purity was considered strange.
     4. To paraphrase the Roman statesman Cicero, cited in Barclay: “If there is anyone who thinks that young men should not be allowed the love of many women, he is extremely severe. I am not able to deny the principle he stands on. But he contradicts, not only with the freedom our age allows, but also with the customs and allowances of our ancestors. When indeed was this not done? When did anyone find fault with it? When was such permission denied? When was it that what is now allowed was not allowed?”
     5. To keep from **sexual immorality** in that culture, you really had to swim against the current.
  4. **You also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans**: In [**Revelation 2:6**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/6/s_1169006), Jesus praised the Ephesian Christians because they hated *the deeds of the Nicolaitans*. *But* some among the Christians of Pergamos held the doctrine of the **Nicolaitans**.
     1. What is the doctrine of the **Nicolaitans**? The name *Nikao-laos* literally means “to conquer the people.” According to ancient commentators, the **Nicolaitans** approved of immorality.
  5. **you also have those**: The rebuke was not only against those who **hold the doctrines of Balaam** and **those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans**. The rebuke was also against those who allowed them to continue (***you* have those**).
  6. The Christians of Pergamos were like the Christians of Corinth as Paul wrote to them in [**1 Corinthians 5:1-9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1co/5/1-9/s_1067001). They were too tolerant and accepting of false doctrines and immoral living, and Jesus had to rebuke them.

1. **What Jesus wants the church at Pergamos to do.**

[**Revelation 2:16**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/16/s_1169016) **Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.**

* 1. **Repent**: The simple word **repent** stands out. Five of the seven churches are commanded to repent. **Repent** is a command that applies to Christians, not only to those who first come to Jesus.
  2. **Or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth**: Unless they do **repent**, the Christians of Pergamos would face the Jesus who has the two-edged sword. Judgment will begin at the house of God
     1. [**1 Peter 4:17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/4/17/s_1155017) **For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God’s household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God’s Good News?**
  3. When Jesus came **against** the Christians of Pergamos, He will confront them with His Word.

1. **A general exhortation to all whom will hear.**

[**Revelation 2:17a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/17/s_1169017) **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

* 1. **let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.** The danger of false teaching and immoral conduct still faces the church today. So does the danger of *allowing* false teaching and immorality, as was the problem with the Christians in Pergamos.

1. **The promise of a reward.**

[**Revelation 2:17b**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/17/s_1169017) **To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it.”’***

* 1. **To him who overcomes**: The one who overcomes this spirit of accommodation to false teaching and living will receive **hidden manna**. This is God’s perfect provision, the true bread from heaven ([**John 6:41**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jhn/6/41/s_1003041)).
  2. **And I will give him a white stone**: In the ancient world, the use of **a white stone** had many associations. A **white stone** could be a ticket to a banquet, a sign of friendship, evidence of having been counted, or as a sign of acquittal in a court of law. Jesus may have any one of these meanings in mind, but at the very least we know that it has the assurance of blessing.
  3. Adam Clarke wrote: “Others suppose there is an allusion here to conquerors in the public games, who were not only conducted with great pomp into the city to which they belonged, but had a *white stone* given to them, with *their name inscribed on it*; which badge entitled them, during their whole life, to be maintained at the pubic expense… These were called *tesserae* among the Romans, and of these there were several kinds.” Clarke then gives examples of the different kinds: “*Tesserae conviviales*, which answered exactly to our *cards of invitation*, or tickets of admission to a public feast or banquet; when the person invited produced his *tessera* he was admitted… But the most remarkable of these instruments were the *Tesserae hospitales*, which were given as badges of *friendship* and *alliance*, and on which some device was engraved, as a testimony that a contract of friendship had been made between the parties.”
  4. **And on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it**: What is the meaning of this **new**, secret **name** promised to **him who overcomes**? This is probably the believer’s new name, and the name itself is probably more important than the stone itself.
     1. One idea behind this new, secret name is that it shows what an intimate relationship we have with God. When a couple is close, they often have “pet names” for each other. This could be the same idea.
     2. Another idea associated with the new name is simply the assurance it gives of our heavenly destination. Your name is there, waiting for you. It is as if your “**reservation**” in heaven is made.

1. J**esus’ letter to the church at Thyatira. (The Corrupt Church)**

[**Revelation 2:18a**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/18/s_1169018) **“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,**

* 1. **Thyatira**: In history, we have no record that the Christians of **Thyatira** suffered any significant political or religious persecution.
  2. **Thyatira**: This city was a center of *business* and *trade*. It had many active trade guilds, each having their own patron deity from the Greek and Roman pantheon of gods.
  3. [**Acts 16:14-15**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/act/16/14-15/s_1034014) mentions Lydia of Thyatira, who was a *seller of purple* cloth from the city of Thyatira.
     1. (Walvoord) “Thyatira was famous for the manufacture of a purple dye, and numerous references are found in secular literature of the period to the trade guilds which manufactured cloth.”
  4. (Barclay) “From the inscriptions which have been found in the neighborhood it is clear that Thyatira possessed more trade guilds than any other town of its size in Asia.”

[**Revelation 2:18b**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/18/s_1169018) **‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:**

* 1. **These things says the Son of God**: Jesus first described Himself with a title that emphasized His *deity*. In Jewish thought, to be the *son of* a thing meant you had the nature of that thing. The *sons of the sorceress* ([Isaiah 57:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/isa/57/3/s_736003)) had the nature of the sorceress. The *sons of thunder* ([Mark 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mar/3/17/s_960017)) had a nature like thunder. So the **Son of God** has the divine nature, the nature of **God**.
  2. **Who has eyes like a flame of fire**: Jesus chose this description of Himself from the presentation in [**Revelation 1:14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/14/s_1168014) to emphasize the idea that His **eyes** looked with penetrating judgment.
  3. **His feet like fine brass**: Jesus chose this description of Himself from [**Revelation 1:15**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/1/15/s_1168015) to emphasize His *purity* because **brass** is pure and highly refined in the fire. It also emphasized His *steadfastness*, because **brass** was the strongest known metal in the ancient world, and **feet like fine brass** would be strong and unmovable.

1. **What Jesus knows about the Christians in Thyatira.**

[**Revelation 2:19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/19/s_1169019) **“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as for* your works, the last *are more* than the first.**

* 1. **I know your works**: Thyatira was the least significant city among the seven cities Jesus addressed, yet they were not hidden to Jesus. Like each one of the churches, Jesus said to the church at Thyatira “**I know your works**.”
  2. **Love, service, faith, and your patience**: In many ways, the church at Thyatira was a model church. They had four great essential qualities. They had **love**, both for the Lord and for one another. They knew **service**, and had **faith** and **patience**.
  3. **As for your works, the last are more than the first**: This was another compliment to the church at Thyatira. Although there was a great deal that was wrong in the church at Thyatira, yet Jesus commends them for certain things. He knows everything about their production. A church can do many wonderful things and still be *out of phase* with God.

1. **What Jesus has *against* the church at Thyatira.**

[**Revelation 2:20-21**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/20-21/s_1169020) **Nevertheless I have a *few* things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit *sexual immorality* and *eat things sacrificed to idols*. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.**

* 1. **Nevertheless**: Despite all the good Jesus saw in the church at Thyatira, there were significant problems. The problems were big enough for Jesus to say **nevertheless**, which meant “**Despite all the good**, I have a few things against you.”
  2. **Because you allow *that* woman Jezebel**: The center of the corruption at the church at Thyatira was a woman Jesus called **Jezebel**. This may not have been her literal name, but a title that clearly represented a self-styled **prophetess** within the church, after the pattern of Jezebel in the Old Testament.
  3. The name **Jezebel** had a powerful association, just as if we call someone Judas or Hitler, we know what they mean.
  4. (Walvoord) “She was one of the *evilest* characters of the Old Testament, who attempted to combine the worship of Israel with the worship of the idol ***Baal***… Jezebel herself had a most unenviable record of evil.”
  5. Some ancient Greek manuscripts state the phrase **that woman Jezebel** as *your woman Jezebel* or *your wife Jezebel*. Based on this, some think that **Jezebel** was the pastor’s wife.
  6. **Who calls herself a prophetess**: This “**Jezebel**” at the church of Thyatira wasn’t really a **prophetess**, she only claimed to be one. Yet, it seems the Christians there *received* her as a **prophetess**, and that is why Jesus gave them this warning.
  7. Jesus said this would happen in [**Matthew 24:11**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mat/24/11/s_953011)**:** ***Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.*** Those words were first spoken with a view to the end times, but there have always been those who call themselves prophets in the church, ***but are not***.
  8. **To teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols**: Here, Jesus described the specific *sin* of this woman “**Jezebel**.” Mainly, she was an *immoral* and *ungodly* influence on others, and led others into sin. Jezebel led others into immorality and idolatry.
  9. Because of the strong trade guilds in Thyatira, the **sexual immorality** and the eating of **things sacrificed to idols** was probably connected with the mandatory social occasions of the guilds.
     1. Perhaps a Christian was invited to the monthly meeting of the goldsmith’s guild, and the meeting was held at the temple of Apollo. “Jezebel” would allow or encourage the man to go — perhaps even using a “prophetic” word — and when the man went, he fell into immorality and idolatry.
  10. The draw to the guilds and their meetings was powerful. “No merchant or trader could hope to prosper or make money unless he was a member of his trade guild.”
  11. (Barclay) Nonetheless, Christians were expected to stand in the face of this kind of pressure. One ancient Christian named Tertullian wrote about Christians who made their living in trades connected to pagan idolatry. A painter might find work in pagan temples or a sculptor might be hired to make a statue of a pagan god. They would justify this by saying, “This is my living, and I must live.” Tertullian replied, *Vivere ergo habes?* “*Must you live*?”
  12. **My servants**: This shows how terrible Jezebel’s sin was. She corrupted the **servants** of Jesus, and they belong to Him. [**Mark 9:42**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/mar/9/42/s_966042) Jesus said, *But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.*
  13. **And I gave her time to repent… and she did not repent**: Jesus’ greatest accusation was that this “Jezebel” **did not repent**. She apparently rejected the work of the Holy Spirit in her heart, calling her to repentance.
  14. In these words, we see both the *mercy* and *judgment* of our Lord.
      1. **Time to repent** shows *mercy*. God gives us **time to repent**, we should deal with others the same way.
      2. **And she did not repent** speaks to the *judgment* of God. God gives **time to repent**, but it is not an unlimited time.
  15. **Because you allow**: This shows the sin of the *church* of Thyatira. On the outside, they were a model church, showing *works, love, service, faith,* and *patience*. Nevertheless, there was significant corruption *inside* the church. The sin of the church was that they ***allowed*** this corruption.
      1. It wasn’t necessarily a large group following Jezebel. A little leaven affects a whole lump of dough, and a few in immorality and idolatry will corrupt the whole church — especially if they influence others the way this Jezebel did.

1. **What Jesus wants the church at Thyatira to do.**

[**Revelation 2:22-25**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/22-25/s_1169022) **Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come.**

* 1. **I will cast her into a sickbed**: Before Jesus told the Christians in Thyatira what *they* must do, He first told them what *He* would do. Jesus would chastise this Jezebel, and **cast her into a sickbed**, along with **those who commit adultery with her**.
  2. The reference to **adultery** is important. It speaks of both sexual **adultery** *and* spiritual **adultery**. When these Christians honored other gods, they were *unfaithful* to the Lord who saved them.
  3. For this reason, the figure of **a sickbed** is fitting. They were guilty of adultery, both *sexual* and *spiritual*. It is as if Jesus said, “You love an unclean bed. Here, I will give you one, and **cast** you **into a sickbed**.”
     1. What was the **sickbed**? It could simply be an image of affliction, or it could be literal sickness that Jesus allowed in the lives of Jezebel and her followers as chastisement.
     2. The ancient Greek word used here for **bed** “is also the word for a *banqueting couch*; and if that meaning is taken, the meaning is: (Barclay) ‘I will strike her down as she sits at her forbidden feasts.’”
  4. **Unless they repent of their deeds**: Jesus revealed the *purpose* for this chastening.
     1. First, it was to draw them to **repent of their deeds**. They wouldn’t listen to Jesus before, so He had to speak louder through the **sickbed**.
     2. Second, it was to give an example of holiness to other churches: **and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts**.
  5. **I will kill her children with death**: If it is to be taken figuratively, then it refers to those who had swallowed her doctrines, and who, of course, would suffer in the punishment which would follow from the spread of such doctrines. The reference in the word “*death*” here would seem to be to some heavy judgment, by plague, famine, or sword, by which they would be cut off.
  6. **Hold fast what you have till I come**: There were many faithful, uncompromising Christians in Thyatira. To them, Jesus simply said, “**hold fast**.” *They must not stop doing what is good*.
  7. Jesus also told them *how long* to **hold fast**:
     1. **till I come**. We are to hang in there and stand strong for Jesus until He comes. *It is only then that the battle will be over*.

1. **The promise of a reward.**

[**Revelation 2:26-28**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/26-28/s_1169026) **And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.**

* 1. **He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end**: Even when there is the immoral and idolatrous influence of a Jezebel, Christians can *overcome* and *keep Jesus’ works until the end*. We must not become overly discouraged at immorality and idolatry around us, even among Christians. God’s work will still go on through His overcomers.
  2. **To him I will give power over the nations**: Jesus promised that His people will reign with Him. Here, there is a special promise to those who overcome the threat of immorality and idolatry. To them, Jesus offered a share in His own kingdom.
  3. **He shall rule them with a rod of iron**: Jesus includes this here to give hope to the faithful Christians of Thyatira, who felt overwhelmed by the immorality and idolatry all around them. Jesus reminds them, “You’re on My winning team.”
     1. “The word for ‘rule’ (Gr. *poimanei*) means literally ‘to shepherd.’
  4. **I will give him the morning star**: Jesus offered them a reward greater than the kingdom. He offered them the reward of Himself, because He is the *Morning Star* [**Revelation 22:16**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/22/16/s_1189016).

1. **A general exhortation to all whom will hear.**

[**Revelation 2:29**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/2/29/s_1169029) **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’**

* 1. **He who has an ear**: This is a letter that applies to everyone.
     1. It applies to those who are like Jezebel, who lead others into sin.
     2. It applies to those who follow the teaching of a Jezebel, and follow others into sin.
     3. It applies to those who permit a Jezebel to work in their church.
     4. ***Finally***, it applies to the faithful *who must hold fast*.