

**MARCH 13, 2016**

**SUNDAY NIGHT**

**MESSAGE: "THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS, SMYRNA AND PERGAMOS"**

**TEXT REVELATION 2:1-18**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**I. THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS: (2:1-7)**

- 1. The recipients (v.1).**
- 2. The speaker—Jesus (v.1).**
- 3. The commendation (v.2-3).**
- 4. The complaint: they had left their first love (v.4).**
- 5. The counsel: remember—repent—do (v.5).**
- 6. The warning (v.5-6).**
- 7. The promise: to overcomers (v.7).**

**II. THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA: (2:8-11)**

- 1. The recipients (v.8).**
- 2. The speaker—Jesus (v.8).**

- 3. The commendation (v.9).**
- 4. The counsel (v.10).**
- 5. The promise: to overcomers (v.10-11).**

### **III. THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS: (2:12-17**

- 1. The recipients (v.12).**
- 2. The speaker—Jesus (v.12).**
- 3. The commendation (v.13).**
- 4. The complaint: false doctrine and worldliness (v.14-15).**
- 5. The counsel: repent (v.16).**
- 6. The warning: God will come, oppose, and fight against (v.16).**
- 7. The promise: to the overcomers (v.17).**

**CONCLUSION:**

# The Message to Ephesus: The Orthodox Church, But a Church Without Love, [2:1-7](#)

[\(2:1-7\)](#) **Introduction:** this passage begins the great message of Christ to the seven churches of Asia. But note a significant point: verse one says that Jesus Christ is addressing the church at Ephesus, but He is in the midst of all the churches. This means a most wonderful thing: the Revelation is for all the Lord's servants and followers. He gave the Revelation so that all believers could know the things that are to take place in the end time. But note: if Jesus Christ was making the Revelation to all of His servants, why is the letter addressed to only seven churches in Asia? Why was it not addressed to all the churches down through the centuries? The following chart clearly shows what we are asking:

Revelation was addressed to these churches <i>in Asia</i>	Revelation was not addressed to these churches <i>in Asia</i>
⇒ Ephesus	⇒ Troas ( <a href="#">Acts 20:5</a> ; <a href="#">2 Cor. 2:12</a> )
⇒ Smyrna	⇒ Miletus ( <a href="#">Acts 20:17</a> )
⇒ Pergamos	⇒ Colosse ( <a href="#">Col. 1:2</a> )
⇒ Thyatira	⇒ Hierapolis ( <a href="#">Col. 4:12</a> )
⇒ Sardis	
⇒ Philadelphia	
⇒ Laodicea	

Church history even tells us that there were other churches in Asia beyond these eleven. John certainly knew of them all. Why then address the Revelation to only seven of the churches? There has to be a reason, for Jesus Christ was giving the Revelation so that all of His servants would know about the events of the end time ([Rev. 2:1](#)). What is the reason? Note that John does not say. He does not even give a hint. But two things tell us.

- ⇒ Thinking about the matter leads to one clear conclusion. The seven churches must be *representative of other churches*. The characteristics that are found in these churches must be the same kind of characteristics that are found in other churches. Each of these churches must represent a certain type or kind of church. In speaking to the seven churches, Jesus Christ expects every church to identify itself and to heed the exhortation given to each. He wants all followers to heed the truths of Revelation; therefore, He has selected seven churches that are representative of all churches.
- ⇒ The *characteristics* of the churches clearly show that the churches are *representative of other churches*. The conditions that existed in each of the seven churches differed, and as we study the different types of churches in society and throughout history, we clearly see that there are seven types of churches. Therefore, in addressing the seven churches, Jesus Christ was addressing all the churches of the earth. Each church, no matter its condition, can discover what kind of church it is by honestly taking inventory of its major traits and checking those traits against these seven churches. This is clearly seen as we study the messages to the churches.

The point is this: the messages to the seven churches were given for personal application. Jesus Christ expects us—all churches and all believers—to apply the messages to our own situation. Jesus Christ expects us to search our hearts and to heed the messages given to these churches. The first message is to Ephesus, an orthodox church, a church that was faithful to Christ and to the Word of God, but it was a church without love.

- [1. The recipients \(v.1\).](#)
- [2. The speaker—Jesus \(v.1\).](#)
- [3. The commendation \(v.2-3\).](#)
- [4. The complaint: they had left their first love \(v.4\).](#)
- [5. The counsel: remember—repent—do \(v.5\).](#)
- [6. The warning \(v.5-6\).](#)
- [7. The promise: to overcomers \(v.7\).](#)

**1. (2:1) Church—Minister:** there are the recipients of this letter. The letter is addressed to the minister of the church as well as to the church. This is striking, for it means that the Lord holds the minister responsible for the church and its welfare. Christ expects the minister to study and heed the message himself and to lead the believers to heed the message.

### **DEEPER STUDY #1 (2:1) Ephesus**

**(2:1) Ephesus:** at its height Ephesus was the most important city along the coast of Asia Minor. Two hundred and thirty cities dotted the coast line of Asia Minor. Many had ideal harbors, but Ephesus was the queen among these coast communities. The city had been founded to command one of the main highways of Asia Minor. Its attraction was not only its natural harbor, but the rich, fertile land that covered the inland area.

Ephesus was, of course, a great commercial city. Its natural harbor and strategic location on one of the main roads of the world made it such. However, in the middle of the first century, the harbor had silted up so badly that trade had declined dramatically from the days of Ephesian glory. There had been attempts to drag the silt out, but the efforts were half-hearted and finally abandoned. The people's hearts were just not in the effort. Part of the reason for this attitude was the successful and profitable trade Ephesus enjoyed from its religious cult. The great temple of Diana, or Artemis, was there. Diana was the goddess who had a grotesque head and many breasts and focused upon the sensual pleasure of the flesh. The worshipping pilgrims found their satisfaction in prostitution with a host of priestesses who plied the cult of the goddess. A great trade of silversmiths had developed over the years, and tourist commercialism boomed year-round. This accounts for the guild of silversmiths finding the crowds an easy mark for arousing opposition against Paul ([Acts 19:24](#)). As the years went by, the great harbor silted up more and more, and the Ephesians depended more and more upon the trade that came from their religion and superstition. The natural harbor of Smyrna, which lay close by, became a more suitable port and began to take away more and more of the commercial traffic of Ephesus. As a result Ephesus became a dying city, living on its past reputation as a religious and philosophical center. The great city of Ephesus had a disease, the disease of sensual unrighteousness, and the disease did its work: it corrupted the people. The people, sensual and self-centered, lost their will and willingness to ply a commendable trade. Thus, the disease of Ephesus proved mortal. The "lampstand" of Ephesus crumbled, and the light of Ephesus died out (see [Rev. 2:1-7](#), esp. [Rev. 2:5](#)).

The church in Ephesus had a small beginning. When Paul visited Ephesus, he found only twelve believers in the city. They had been won to the Lord by the immature but impressive preacher Apollos. As a result they had been misinformed on the presence of the Holy Spirit; they seemed to lack a consciousness of the Spirit in the life of the believer and the awareness that He had already been sent into the world ([Acts 19:1-7](#)). After Paul's instruction to these twelve, he began to teach in the synagogue. He taught for three months. But the Jews were hardened and refused to believe. They murmured against the message. Therefore, Paul moved the church into the school of a philosopher, Tyrannus. There he preached Christ for two whole years. During this time it is said that the church was instrumental in sounding forth the Word throughout all Asia: "So all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks ([Acts 19:10](#)).

The Lord worked special miracles by Paul in Ephesus and the church witnessed some amazing things. From all evidence, the spectacular was necessary in order to get through to the people. As always, God did everything He could to reach a people. These experiences show the great love and movement of God

toward man (see [Acts 19:11-20](#)). In viewing these accounts, we must keep the background of the city in mind. Ephesus was a hot bed of Oriental magic and superstition. The people were an emotional and sensual lot, easily moved to feelings. They were a devoted people, an expressive people, a loving people, and equally a lovable people ([Rev. 2:1-7](#), esp. [Rev. 2:4](#)).

As Paul preached and God worked miracles, many believed and the church grew mightily. The believers gave great evidence of changed lives by living for Christ right in the middle of an immoral and pagan society. On one occasion, the church demonstrated its new found faith by building a great bonfire and setting aflame all of its pagan and magical literature.

**2. (2:1) Jesus Christ— Church:** there is the speaker, Jesus Christ Himself. Note two significant facts.

1. Jesus Christ is the One who holds the ministers of the churches in His hands. This means that the minister...

- is chosen and picked out of the world by the hand of Christ.
- is nourished and nurtured by the hand of Christ.
- is placed where he is by the hand of Christ.
- is cared for, secured, and protected by the hand of Christ.
- is given a very special closeness to Christ by being held in His hand.
- is expected to be an instrument in the hand of Christ.
- is responsible to the hand of Christ.
- is to be held accountable by the hand of Christ.

2. Jesus Christ is the One who walks in the midst of the churches or the golden candlesticks. This means...

- that Christ is present in the very midst of the church.
- that Christ sees and knows all about the church.
- that Christ is present to teach and grow the church.
- that Christ is present to provide and protect the church.
- that Christ is present to guide and direct the church.
- that Christ is present as the Light of the world to give light to the church.

Note also that Christ is in the midst of *all* the churches. He has no favorites; He shows no partiality whatsoever. There are no denominations and no barriers with Christ. If a body of believers truly follows Christ, He is in their midst, right there with them.

**3. (2:2-3) Church— Believers:** there is the commendation. The church is commended for five significant things.

1. The church *worked and labored* for Christ. The Greek (*kopon* <sup>PWS: 2287</sup>) means to labor to the point of weariness, sweat, and exhaustion; to work and labor to the limit of one's ability. The church was a working church, a laboring church, a church committed to serve Christ and to serve Him to the fullest.

**Thought 1.** There is no room for laziness or lethargy in the church of Christ. Christ expects every believer to labor for Him, to labor to the point of exhaustion. Note that Christ keeps an account of our work and labor. The idea is that He keeps a daily account: He knows every ounce of energy that we expend. He knows when we become tired and exhausted and can go no more. He also knows when we should be working and do not.

"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" ([Matthew 25:35-36](#)).

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" ([Matthew 5:16](#)).

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate [give]" ([1 Tim. 6:18](#)).

"But to do good and to communicate [give] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" ([Hebrews 13:16](#)).

2. The church *patiently endured*. The word means to persevere and to be steadfast in serving Christ and in standing against all the temptations and trials of life. The church was steadfast in studying and proclaiming the gospel and in ministering to the needs of the needy.

"Therefore, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" ([1 Cor. 15:58](#)).

"In your patience possess ye your souls" ([Luke 21:19](#)).

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" ([Hebrews 10:36](#)).

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" ([James 1:2-4](#)).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" ([James 1:12](#)).

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" ([James 5:7](#)).

3. The church could not bear those who were evil. This refers to sin and evil, men who were corrupt and polluted and who lived for the world instead of living for God. The church could not tolerate the sin and shame, dirt and pollution, filth and destruction of evil.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" ([Matthew 5:8](#)).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" ([2 Cor. 6:17-18](#)).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" ([2 Cor. 7:1](#)).

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" ([Ephes. 5:11](#)).

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" ([2 Thes. 3:6](#)).

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" ([2 Tim. 3:17](#)).

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" ([Hebrews 12:14](#)).

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [behavior] and godliness" ([2 Peter 3:11](#)).

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" ([Psalm 101:3](#)).

**"Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" ([Psalm 119:104](#)).**

**"For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips" ([Proverbs 8:7](#)).**

**"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" ([Proverbs 8:13](#)).**

4. The church tested all the preachers and teachers of the church and rejected the false. If a teacher confessed that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had come in the flesh, he was accepted and allowed to teach. If he denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, he was not allowed to teach. The church could not tolerate false teachers and stood against all false teaching. They were loyal to Christ. They did just what Scripture exhorts: they tested the spirits of the teachers.

**"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" ([1 John 4:1-3](#); cp. [1 John 2:22-23](#); [Matthew 7:15-20](#)).**

5. The church bore up under all for the sake of Christ's name. This is a descriptive verse, a description that touches the heart of tender believers: the church...

- bore up
- patiently endured
- labored
- did not faint

Why? For Christ's name sake. They did it all and bore so much for Christ's sake.

⇒ They worked and toiled to the point of exhaustion.

⇒ They patiently endured.

⇒ They did not bear or put up with evil.

⇒ They tested and rejected false teachers.

This is a meaningful picture of a true church, a church that has surrendered itself to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the picture of a church that is loyal and devoted to Christ, that is orthodox through and through. It is the picture of just what a church should be. But there is one thing lacking, one devastating and destructive thing that looms ever so large in the life of the church. This is the discussion of the next note.

**"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" ([Matthew 10:22](#)).**

**"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" ([Matthew 10:39](#)).**

**"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" ([Matthew 19:29](#)).**

**"For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" ([Acts 9:16](#)).**

**"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised" ([1 Cor. 4:10](#)).**

**"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not...For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" ([2 Cor. 4:1, 16](#)).**

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" ([2 Cor. 4:11](#)).

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" ([2 Cor. 12:10](#)).

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" ([1 Tim. 6:11-12](#)).

"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity" ([Titus 2:7](#)).

"And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted" ([Rev. 2:3](#)).

**4. (2:4) Church— Love— Backsliding:** there is the complaint. The church had lost its first love. This probably means two things.

1. The church and its believers had lost their feelings for Christ. The Greek says, "your love the first [love]." Believers had left their first love. Christ was no longer *first* in their lives. They were putting themselves and their own affairs first, and they were putting the church first—the programs, services, ministries, and fellowship of the church. They had become more attached to the church than they were to Christ.

- ⇒ They had lost their feelings of warmth and tenderness for Christ.
- ⇒ They had lost their sensitivity to Christ, their fervor, spark, and unction.
- ⇒ They were not fellowshiping and communing nor praying and sharing with Christ—not like they did when they were first converted.
- ⇒ They were not walking in a consciousness and awareness of Christ's presence, joying and rejoicing in Him throughout the day.

Simply stated, they were not having personal fellowship with Christ, walking and sharing with Him like they once did. They were not as attached to Christ as they had been. They were more attached to other things and other involvements of life. They loved their church and they had the right beliefs, and they were even ready to fight for the truth of Christ. But they did not love Christ, not in a personal and intimate way, not to the degree that they walked and shared with Him, fellowshiped and communed with Him all throughout the day, not in the sense that they took blocks of time and got alone with Him and prayed and shared with Him.

**Thought 1.** Picture a young man who falls in love with a young lady. He wants to spend time with her and share with her. He wants to become attached to her and make her first in his life. This should always be our desire with Christ.

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" ([Matthew 24:12](#)).

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" ([John 14:23](#)).

"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" ([John 16:27](#)).

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" ([Ephes. 6:24](#)).

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" ([1 Peter 1:8](#)).



**"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" ([Rev. 2:4](#)).**

**"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me" ([Rev. 3:20](#)).**

**"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" ([Jeremiah 2:2](#)).**

2. The church had lost its love for people. The church saw a rupture take place in its fellowship and in its love for one another. When the church was first founded, a deep love existed among the members (cp. [Acts 20:17-38](#)). The church had a loving heart and a helping hand—a readiness to labor together even through persecution. But something happened. What? There is no explanation. So all the negative things that rupture a fellowship or erase love are applicable: criticism, grumbling, jealousy, a selfish mind.

**"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" ([John 13:34-35](#)).**

**"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" ([John 15:12](#)).**

**"Let love be without dissimulation [hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" ([Romans 12:9](#)).**

**"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" ([1 Cor. 1:10](#)).**

**"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" ([1 Cor. 3:3](#)).**

**"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" ([1 Peter 1:22](#)).**

**5. (2:5) Repentance—Remember:** there is the counsel. The Lord counsels the church to return to him. When a church or a believer goes astray, the Lord issues the very same call that He issues here: return. Three steps are involved in returning.

1. First, remember from where you have fallen. Think back over your former love for the Lord. Remember His presence:

- ⇒ the feelings of warmth and tenderness
- ⇒ the fervor, spark, and unction
- ⇒ the fellowship and communion with Him
- ⇒ the prayer and sharing
- ⇒ the consciousness and awareness of His presence
- ⇒ the joy and rejoicing of His presence that filled your heart

Again, remember the Lord's presence, the love that existed between you and Him.

2. Second, repent: turn away from whatever has pulled you away from Christ and turn back to Christ. Something has drawn you away from Christ. You are attached to something more than you are to Christ. Something is consuming your thoughts and energies and keeping your mind from focusing upon Christ and fellowshiping and communing with Him. You are not flickering your mind to Him in prayer as you walk throughout the day. You are not sharing and communing with Him like you did. Something has replaced Him in your thoughts and attention. And you are more attached to that thing than you are to Christ. Repent—turn away from that attachment and turn back to Christ.

**"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matthew 3:2](#)).**

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" ([Matthew 5:4](#)).

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" ([Luke 13:3](#)).

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" ([Acts 2:38](#)).

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" ([Acts 3:19](#)).

"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" ([Acts 8:22](#)).

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" ([Acts 17:30](#)).

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" ([2 Chron. 7:14](#)).

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" ([Isaiah 55:7](#)).

3. Third, do the first works that you did.

⇒ Begin now to flicker your mind to Christ and to take just a moment to pray. Do this all day long every so often. Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will direct your paths ([Proverbs 3:6](#)).

⇒ Take set times to get alone with Christ and study His Word and pray ([2 Tim. 2:15](#); [2 Tim. 3:16](#); [Ephes. 6:18](#)).

⇒ Begin to walk just as Christ would walk if He were walking by your side—step by step and hour by hour. Do this from the moment you awaken in the morning to the moment you go to sleep at night.

**6. (2:5-6) Warning:** there is the warning. Christ warns the church that loses its love for Him. The warning is twofold.

1. There is the warning that Christ will remove the church (the candlestick) from its place. What does this mean? It means that Christ will remove the church...

- from being a true church.
- from being a true representative of Christ upon earth.
- from being a church of God's true kingdom.
- from being in touch and in union with God.
- from being a true light and witness to the world.
- from being a church of the gospel of God.
- from His presence, from the light of His presence.

This is a terrible judgment. Just how terrible can be seen by looking at the opposite of the above. If a church has been removed by Christ then it means that the church...

- is not a true church; it is a false church.
- is not a part of God's kingdom; it is a part of the world's kingdom.
- is not in touch and union with Christ; it is only in touch and union with the world.
- is not a true light and witness to the world; it is a false light and witness to the world.
- is not in the presence of Christ and His light; it is in the darkness of this world.
- is not a church of the gospel; it is a church with a false gospel.

**Thought 1.** How many churches have been removed by Christ? How many churches...

- are lifeless?
- are dull?
- are mechanical?
- are nothing more than form?
- lack the presence of Christ in the services?
- lack the light and witness of Christ and His power?

2. There is warning that doctrinal purity is not enough. This warning is going to be shattering to some when Christ returns. Why? Because many are doctrinally sound, but they have lost their first love for Christ. Note how doctrinally sound the Ephesian believers were.

They had stood ever so strongly against the Nicolaitans. Just who the Nicolaitans were is not known. It is thought that they stressed two things:

- ⇒ that Christ had done away with the law of the Old Testament and had instituted the law of Christian liberty.
- ⇒ that the soul and spirit of man was far more important than his body.

The results of this doctrine are clearly seen. If there is no law to govern us, then we can do what we like just so we profess to believe in Christ. And if the spirit is what really matters, then I can do what I like with my body just so I take care of my spirit.

- ⇒ Think how many people feel that they can live like they want just so they attend and support the church. If they attend church, they feel they can live like they want during the week.
- ⇒ Think how many people believe they are eternally secure because they believe in Christ, have been baptized, and belong to a church. Yet, they live like they want during the week. They continue to seek the pleasures and possessions of the world, banking and hoarding and neglecting the spread of the gospel and a world of desperate needs. There is no evidence whatsoever of repentance and of a changed and holy life—no evidence of self-denial, of the sacrifice of *all one is and has*.

The point is this: the Ephesian church had preached and taught against the error of the Nicolaitans. They had refused to allow the error to enter the church. They were doctrinally sound; they stood staunchly for the truth of Christ and the Word of God. But they lacked the main thing: love for Christ. They had lost their love for Christ.

**Thought 1.** Note two things.

- 1) Christ did not do away with the law; He fulfilled it. He filled it up. That is, Jesus Christ embraces the law and so much more. He is now our ideal and standard. We no longer follow the law; we follow Christ. But remember: Christ embraces the law and much more. Therefore in following Christ, we end up keeping the law and walking in far more purity and holiness than what the law demands. (See [Deeper Study #2—Matthew 5:17](#); [Deeper Study #2—Romans 8:3](#).)

**"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" ([Matthew 5:17](#)).**

**"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" ([Romans 8:3](#)).**

2) The soul and spirit are important, but so is the body. We are to take care of our whole person: spirit, soul, and body. We are to keep both body and spirit pure and holy.

**"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).**

**"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" ([1 Cor. 3:16-17](#)).**

**"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" ([1 Cor. 6:19-20](#)).**

**7. (2:7) Promise—Overcomers—Victory:** there is the promise to the overcomers. The word *overcomer* has the idea of conflict and struggle. The *overcomer* is a person who overcomes and conquers and gains the victory. He is the victor and conqueror. What is it that he is to overcome? Everything that pulls his heart and love away from Christ and attaches it to the world. Whatever possessions, whatever pleasures, whatever it is that has dampened the believer's first love for Christ—it is that thing that the believer must overcome.

Note that the promise is made to individual believers; therefore, all believers are to hear the messages to the churches. A church as a whole may go astray, but it is the believer who must personally overcome. How? Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says, and let him heed and do what the Spirit says. If he does then he will be an overcomer.

Here are the glorious promises to the overcomer.

1. The overcomer shall be allowed to eat of the tree of life. This is the tree of God, the tree that gives life, both the fulness of life and eternal life.

The tree of life is first seen in the Garden of Eden. Adam lost his right to eat of it because of his sin and disobedience to God. Thus, he was banished from the garden and cut off from eating of the tree ([Genesis 2:9, 16-17](#); [Genesis 3:22-24](#)). Now, the tree of life is given to the faithful and victorious follower of Christ, but it is not guaranteed. Only some have a right to it ([Rev. 22:14](#)), and the tree may be taken away ([Rev. 22:19](#)).

**"And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" ([Genesis 2:9](#)).**

**"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" ([Genesis 3:22](#)).**

**"She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her" ([Proverbs 3:18](#)).**

**"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" ([Proverbs 11:30](#)).**

**"Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were many trees on the one side and on the other....And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat [food], and the leaf thereof for medicine" ([Ezekiel 47:7, 12](#)).**

**"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" ([Rev. 2:7](#)).**

**"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" ([Rev. 22:2](#)).**

**"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" ([John 6:51](#)).**

**"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" ([Isaiah 55:2](#)).**

2. The overcomer shall become a citizen of the paradise of God. Paradise is heaven, the very dwelling place of God, the place...

- of eternal bliss and ecstasy
- of eternal perfection and life
- of eternal fulfillment and completeness
- of eternal love and joy
- of eternal peace and control
- of eternal work and pleasure
- of eternal duty and honor
- of eternal service and satisfaction

On and on the list could go. All that life is and was ever meant to be—that is what will be in the paradise of heaven. This is the glorious promise to the overcomer. (See [Deeper Study #3, Paradise—Luke 16:23](#); [Deeper Study #2—2 Cor. 12:4](#) for more discussion.)

**"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" ([Luke 23:43](#)).**

**"How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" ([2 Cor. 12:4](#)).**

**"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" ([Rev. 2:7](#)).**

**Thought 1.** The promises to the overcomer throughout this passage are meaningful. They are a dynamic challenge, a challenge to conquer whatever it is that keeps us from living for Christ.

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Revelation.

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## **The Message to Smyrna: The Persecuted Church, [2:8-11](#)**

**([2:8-11](#)) Introduction:** the church is sometimes called upon to suffer terrible persecution. This has always been true down through history, and it was certainly true in Smyrna. The church was under heavy attack from both the community and city officials. And there was even more horrible persecution lying over the horizon ([Rev. 2:10](#)). But note: the church was faithful to Christ and His mission. The church was standing fast for the truth against all attacks. It was a church in which nothing was wrong, that is, nothing of any major significance. Therefore, it was one of the few churches that Christ did not have to warn. Smyrna is the picture of just what a church should be: a dynamic witness for Jesus Christ through all circumstances no matter the trial or temptation. It is the picture of a church that loves the Lord enough to stand up for Him even when the community attacks its witness.

[1. The recipients \(v.8\).](#)

[2. The speaker—Jesus \(v.8\).](#)

[3. The commendation \(v.9\).](#)

[4. The counsel \(v.10\).](#)

[5. The promise: to overcomers \(v.10-11\).](#)

**1. (2:8) Church— Minister:** there are the recipients of the letter. The letter is addressed to the minister of the church. Remember: the Greek word for angel (*aggelos*) means both angel and messenger, that is, it can mean an earthly messenger. In the case of the church the meaning is the messenger or minister of the church. This is significant, for it means that the minister is held responsible for the church. In Smyrna's case—in the case of the persecuted church—the minister is to take the lead in standing fast against persecution.

⇒ He is to stand forth for Christ and lead his people to stand for Christ.

⇒ He is not to buckle under and deny Christ; he is to lead his people not to buckle under and deny Christ.

No matter how severe the persecution may be, the minister of the church is to lead his people to hold the banner of Christ high. Even if it means martyrdom, the minister and his people are to do what Christ says to do in this letter.

### **DEEPER STUDY #1 (2:8) Smyrna**

**(2:8) Smyrna:** there are three historical facts that seem to have a bearing upon the message to the church.

1. Smyrna means bitter. It received its name from myrrh, one of its chief commercial products. Myrrh was a gum-like resin taken from a shrub and was very bitter. It was used in making perfume ([Psalm 45:8](#)), oil ([Exodus 30:23](#)), for embalming ([John 19:39](#)), for purification of women ([Esther 2:12](#)), and for relieving and dulling pain ([Mark 15:23](#)). It should be noted that this church was experiencing what its name said: bitter sorrow, affliction, and persecution ([Rev. 2:9-10](#)).

2. Smyrna was a proud city—proud of its culture, its beauty, its commercial wealth, its social life. Its citizens called it the *first city* in Asia. There was a municipal vanity among the people. Everyone tried to climb the social ladder a step further than his neighbor. Everyone wanted the first place, the highest seat, the most recognition. To these, Christ proclaims loudly and clearly, "I am the first and last" ([Rev. 2:8](#)); "I am the one who has the crown of life" ([Rev. 2:10](#)).

3. Smyrna was persecuting the church severely. The city had a large number of Jews who were influential in city politics. Jews were, of course, steeped in the Old Testament and the prophecies of the Messiah. Many of the early converts to Christ were Jews. Here in Smyrna, the reaction of the Jews was severe. They reacted severely and did all they could to influence the city officials to stamp out the church. The Christian believer knew God personally and intimately; therefore, he could not worship or participate in the festivals to the god and goddesses of his day. He was marked. In some cases jobs were lost, and in all cases, social life within the city was severed. Mockery, abuse, scorn, and persecution were applied. When Jesus says He is the first and the last, it is a promise that He is with the believer through it all—from the very first to the very last ([Rev. 2:11](#)). He knows what the believer is going through, for He has suffered not only the threat of death, but death itself ([Rev. 2:8](#)).

**2. (2:8) Jesus Christ— Church:** there is the speaker, Jesus Christ Himself. Christ has a very special message for the church that is suffering trouble and persecution, and His message is wrapped up in two titles.

1. Christ says that He is *the first and the last*. He is the One supreme authority and ruler over life. Persecutors—government officials and some citizens who persecute and cause trouble for other people—may think that they hold authority over life, but they do not. They may claim to be the first and the last, to have the final word and authority, but they are deceived. There is only one first and last, only one supreme authority, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself.

a. This means that all persecutors, all those who afflict and cause trouble for others, had better take heed. They shall be judged if they usurp and take the authority over human life into their

own hands. There is only one authority over life, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, all people are to look to Him. Any person who persecutes and causes trouble for other people shall face His judgment.

**"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" ([Hebrews 9:27](#)).**

b. This means that believers always have the presence of Christ with them through all the troubles and persecutions of life. Jesus Christ is the first and the last; He is always there. He is there with the believer...

- when the trouble first begins
- when the trouble is going on
- when the trouble ends

Jesus Christ is the first and the last; He spans time, all the minutes and hours of time. His presence covers all the problems, circumstances, and troubles of human life. Jesus Christ is always in charge of what happens to us. He controls the circumstances and trouble no matter what happens. Therefore, He will work all things out for our good.

**"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" ([John 8:58](#)).**

**"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" ([John 17:24](#)).**

**"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" ([Romans 8:28](#)).**

**"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Romans 8:35, 37-39](#)).**

2. Christ says that He is the One who *was dead* (*hos egeneto nekros*<sup>PWS: 4263</sup>) *and is alive again*. The word "was" (*genomenos*) really means *became*. Christ *became* dead. His death was only a passing phase, an episode He had to go through. He experienced death, but death was only a passing thing for Him. He triumphed over it. *Alive* is aorist tense in the Greek, a once-for-all act. Once it is done, it is done—completed, finished. Jesus *came to life again*. He arose. Therefore, the message to the church at Smyrna is that no matter what they experience, it is a passing episode. Even if they experience death, it has been conquered. Christ has personally been there and triumphed over both pain and death. Therefore, the believer shall live forever even if he is martyred.

**"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)).**

**"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" ([John 5:24](#)).**

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" ([John 6:40](#)).

"There hath no temptation [trial] taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" ([1 Cor. 10:13](#)).

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever" ([2 Tim. 4:18](#)).

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" ([Hebrews 2:14-15](#)).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" ([1 Peter 1:3-4](#)).

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" ([2 Peter 2:9](#)).

### 3. [\(2:9\) Church— Believers](#): there is the commendation. The church is commended for four things.

1. The church bore up under terrible tribulation (*thlipsin*<sup>PWS: 4053</sup>). The word means affliction, the pressure of crushing affliction. This word indicates that the trials and persecution were most severe. But the believers were holding up under the attacks and refusing to deny Christ. They were faithful to Christ despite all the ridicule, mockery, abuse, cursing, loss of property, possible imprisonment and martyrdom.

"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles" ([Matthew 10:17-18](#)).

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" ([Matthew 24:9](#)).

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake" ([Luke 21:12](#)).

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" ([John 15:20-21](#)).

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" ([John 16:2](#)).

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" ([Phil. 1:29](#)).

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" ([2 Tim. 3:12](#)).

"For consider him that endured such contradiction [hostility] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" ([Hebrews 12:3](#)).

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" ([1 Peter 4:12-13](#)).

2. The church bore up under poverty. The idea is that of having nothing and of being destitute and beggarly. Apparently many were being forced out of their jobs and having their property confiscated as lawbreakers. What happened was this: Rome had instituted a law that said the state had to be the first



loyalty of a citizen. To show that loyalty, the citizen had to proclaim his loyalty once a year. This he did by going before local government officials and making the statement, "Caesar is Lord." Of course, a true believer and follower of Christ could not do this, for there is only one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the reason the church was being attacked so severely and suffering so much. (See [Deeper Study #1, pt.3—Rev. 2:12](#) for more discussion.)

**"And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" ([Matthew 8:20](#)).**

**"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" ([2 Cor. 6:10](#)).**

**"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" ([2 Cor. 8:9](#)).**

3. The church was spiritually wealthy. They were outwardly poor, but inwardly they were rich toward the Lord and His mission. They were faithful to the Lord...

- loving Him and one another and even those who opposed them (*agap* love).
- ministering to all in need.
- studying and teaching the Scriptures.
- living righteous and holy lives.

And because of their faithfulness, they were filled with all the fulness of God's presence. God poured out upon them the riches of His grace and the fruit of His Spirit. As they walked day by day, they were filled with...

- love
- joy
- peace
- longsuffering
- gentleness
- longsuffering
- gentleness
- goodness
- faith
- meekness
- self-control

God flooded them and carried them through all their trials. He strengthened and settled them, empowered and assured them with His presence, the very presence of God Himself.

**"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" ([Matthew 6:20](#)).**

**"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" ([Matthew 19:21](#)).**

**"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" ([Luke 12:33](#)).**

**"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" ([Ephes. 1:18-19](#)).**

**"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" ([Ephes. 2:4-7](#)).**

**"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" ([Phil. 3:8](#)).**

**"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).**

**"And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:14).**

**"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:19).**

**"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).**

**"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5).**

4. The church bore up under all kinds of slander. The slander came especially from the Jews of the city. There was a large community of Jews in Smyrna. We know from historians that they were very prosperous and made large gifts to the arts and to the culture development of the city. As a result they were influential with the city officials and local Roman government. As stated, it was the Jews who were stirring up so much trouble against the church. Note how they went about it: they slandered the believers. They used their tongues to...

- ridicule
- mock
- lie
- spread rumors
- accuse
- backbite
- criticize
- murmur
- talk about
- tear down
- discriminate
- divide

But note what Christ says about the slandering Jews. They may profess to be Jews, but they are not. They are the synagogue of Satan. What does this mean? The Jews were God's appointed people during the Old Testament period of history, before Christ came into the world. They were the people whom God had raised up to be His witnesses upon earth. But many of them had failed to believe and follow God. In fact, they had even killed God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews in Smyrna professed to be Jews, to be followers of God, but they were not. They were persecuting the real followers of God, those who believed and worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself. Therefore they were not worshippers of God—not of the true and living God. On the contrary, they were worshippers of Satan.

**Thought 1.** This is a strong message to every church. We are either an assembly of God, of the true and living God, or of Satan. It all depends upon whether or not we worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a true church if we proclaim and stand up for Christ in the midst of an evil and corrupt world, a world that slanders those who live righteous and godly lives.

**"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever therefore shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).**

**"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).**

**"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:12).**

**"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily [quietly] shall bring in damnable heresies, even**

denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" ([2 Peter 2:1](#)).

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" ([1 John 2:22-23](#)).

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" ([1 John 4:1-3](#)).

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" ([1 John 4:15](#)).

**4. (2:10) Faithful— Church:** there is the counsel. Note: Christ tells the church that more persecution is coming. The devil is going to arouse the unbelievers of the world to attack them for ten days. The idea of ten is that of brevity, for just a short time. Note a significant fact: God was allowing the persecution, and the reason is given—that the believers might be tried. What does this mean? God was allowing them to be tried...

- so that they would draw closer and closer to Him and learn more from Him.
- so that their faith could be strengthened more and more and by such they could be stronger witnesses to the world. When some unbelievers saw the believers suffer for the hope of salvation, the Holy pirit would be able to use their suffering to speak to them. (See note— [1 Peter 4:12](#) and [Deeper Study #1—1 Peter 4:12](#) for more discussion.)

The counsel of Christ is a clear message to the church when it is being persecuted: do not fear but be faithful. Not to fear may seem difficult when one is in the midst of being persecuted. But we must remember who Jesus Christ is:

- ⇒ The first and last: He is in charge of all events and our lives are in His hands. He is with us from the first act of persecution to the last act of persecution (see note 2, [Jesus Christ— Church—Rev. 2:8](#) for more discussion).
- ⇒ The One who was dead and is now alive: He is living and exalted as the Supreme Lord of the universe. He is able to take care of us and make us dynamic witnesses for Him even in the midst of terrible persecution. He will comfort and strengthen us to be faithful. He will help us to stand fast against all the trials and temptations of life.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" ([Matthew 10:30-31](#)).

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not" ([2 Cor. 4:1](#)).

"And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" ([Phil. 1:28-29](#)).

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" ([Deut. 31:6](#)).

**5. (2:10-11) Promise— Overcomer:** there is the promise to the overcomers. (See note— [Rev. 2:7](#) for more discussion.) The promise is twofold.

1. The overcomer shall receive a crown of life. This simply means the reward of eternal life, of life that goes on forever and ever. Persecutors may take our life on earth, but quicker than the eye can blink, God transfers us to heaven. Men can kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul. They cannot extinguish our lives. If we are faithful to Christ, God takes us home to heaven to live with Him eternally. He crowns us with eternal life. (See note—[James 1:12](#) for more discussion.)

**"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" ([John 3:14-15](#)).**

**"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" ([John 3:36](#)).**

**"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" ([John 6:27](#)).**

**"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" ([John 10:28](#)).**

**"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" ([John 12:25](#)).**

**"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" ([John 17:3](#)).**

**"And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" ([1 John 2:25](#)).**

2. The overcomer shall be delivered from the second death. What is the second death? Scripture clearly tells us.

**"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" ([Rev. 20:14](#)).**

**"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" ([Rev. 21:8](#)).**

The second death is the lake of fire, the judgment of eternal hell and torment from the presence of God forever and ever. The believer who overcomes in persecution shall escape the second death, the lake of fire and torment. The believer may have to pass through physical death, but he will never go through the second death. He shall be transported immediately into the presence of God to live forever and ever.

Note the exhortation: he who has an ear, let him hear what the Holy Spirit says to the churches. It is the duty of every believer and every church to hear this message. We must all stand fast against the persecution of the world: ridicule, mockery, abuse, being bypassed and overlooked, neglected and ignored, being imprisoned and killed. We must be faithful. The promises are too great to lose: we shall receive the crown of life and never suffer the second death.

**Thought 1.** Note the certainty of this point: there is to be a second death. There is no question, no equivocation about the matter. It is stated simply and in a straightforward manner. There is to be a second death, a death from which all men should escape. How? By being faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ through all the trials and temptations of this life. We must be faithful to God's Son even if it means standing firm in the midst of persecution.

**"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" ([Acts 5:41](#)).**

"And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" ([Acts 16:23-25](#)).

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" ([Romans 8:16-17](#)).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" ([2 Cor. 4:17](#)).

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" ([2 Tim. 2:10](#)).

"For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" ([Hebrews 10:34](#)).

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" ([Hebrews 11:26](#)).

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## The Message to Pergamos: The Corrupted Church That is Married to the World, [2:12-17](#)

[\(2:12-17\)](#) **Introduction:** worldliness corrupts a church. Four things cause a church to become worldly.

- ⇒ The church and its members begin to participate in worldly functions.
- ⇒ The church and its members allow worldly activities to take place in the church and in the homes of its members.
- ⇒ The church begins to baptize and accept people as members who have not truly repented and turned from the world to Christ.
- ⇒ The church and its members allow false teaching and preaching.

Nothing corrupts a church any quicker than worldliness. Pergamos was a corrupted church, a worldly church. Pergamos is the picture of the corrupted church that is married to the world.

[1. The recipients \(v.12\).](#)

[2. The speaker—Jesus \(v.12\).](#)

[3. The commendation \(v.13\).](#)

[4. The complaint: false doctrine and worldliness \(v.14-15\).](#)

[5. The counsel: repent \(v.16\).](#)

[6. The warning: God will come, oppose, and fight against \(v.16\).](#)

[7. The promise: to the overcomers \(v.17\).](#)

**1. (2:12) Minister— Church:** there is the recipient of this letter. The letter is addressed to the minister of the church. If a church becomes worldly, the minister is responsible. Christ has called the minister to lead believers to a life of self-denial and holiness, to deny the possessions and pleasures of this world and live a pure and godly life. He has called the minister to lead believers to focus upon heaven and to live sacrificially. He has called the minister to teach believers to give all they are and have to reach the lost and to meet the desperate needs of the needy. Therefore, if the minister is not leading his people to live spiritual lives—if he is allowing them to follow after the pleasures and possessions of the world—if he is allowing the church to become corrupted with worldliness—the minister is responsible. This is the reason this letter is sent to the minister. It is the task of the minister to proclaim the truth of sanctification and separation to a worldly church.

**(2:12) Pergamos:** the city had three overriding claims to fame that seem to have had a bearing upon the message to the church.

1. Pergamos was a beautifully situated city with an air of royalty about it. It sat on top of a huge mountain, arising ever so steeply and majestically out of a beautiful valley. The city's citizens could see the Mediterranean Sea some fifteen miles away. To the approaching traveller the city struck him with a sense of stately awe and royal authority. The church had a ready picture of "Satan's seat," ([Rev. 2:13](#)) of what it was to suffer persecution at the hands of a royal city under the power of the prince of this world.

2. Pergamos was one of the cultural and religious centers of the world. It had been a capital city for some 400 years. Its library was second only to Alexandria, Egypt. But the city's most prominent feature was its acropolis, rising about a thousand feet in the midst of the city. Temple after temple had been built upon it. For example, there was a temple to Asclepius, a serpent-like god of healing. It was famous for its college of medical priests. But the most famous pagan altar was built to Zeus. It was an overpowering sight, built on a huge ledge that jutted out and towered above the city. It was the largest, most ornate, and most famous altar in the world. It was forty feet high and ninety feet square. The church knew what it was to live in a pagan society, as though Satan's seat itself was there ([Rev. 2:13](#)). They knew what it was to be persecuted ([Rev. 2:13](#)). But they also knew what it was to place their faith in Him with the two-edged sword ([Rev. 2:12](#)). They knew Him who could provide the true spiritual manna ([Rev. 2:17](#)) and assure them a new name in the future ([Rev. 2:17](#)).

3. Pergamos was the imperial and administrative center of Asia. As such, it was the first city in Asia to openly support imperial worship, that is, the worship of the state and its leader. What happened was this: Rome's conquest of the world had brought about peace by which food and trade and prosperity could more easily be secured. Life became much easier and more comfortable for many. As a result, a *Roman spirit* arose in many quarters. Roman government capitalized on this unifying spirit and began to center it in the Emperor Caesar himself. Gradually the government erected temples, altars, and images in Caesar's honor and he became a god. Finally, a law was issued requiring every citizen throughout the empire to go to the temple once a year and bow and say, "Caesar is Lord." To prove that a man had performed this loyal act to Rome, a written certificate was required to be in his possession. The church again knew what Christ meant when He claimed to be the One with the "two-edged sword" ([Rev. 2:12](#)). They took great confidence in the fact that He knew "where they dwelt" ([Rev. 2:13](#)). They knew what it was to live where "Satan's seat is" ([Rev. 2:13](#)), and what it was to suffer martyrdom because they refused to deny Christ ([Rev. 2:13](#)).

**2. (2:12) Jesus Christ— Church:** there is the speaker, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. A church that is corrupted by worldliness is committing a very serious crime against Christ. It is such a critical matter that Christ Himself delivers this message to the church. And note how Christ describes Himself: He is the One who has the *sharp two-edged sword* in His mouth. This means at least two things.

1. The sword of His mouth means His Word, the Word of God. The one thing needed in a worldly church is the Word of God.

- ⇒ The Word of God is sharp: it will cut through the most worldly and hardened heart. It will convict and convince the worldly of their sins and cut a sharp gash, separating the sinner from his sin.
- ⇒ The Word of God is a two-edged sword: it proclaims the law of God and the utter necessity of living a righteous life or else facing judgment and destruction. On the other side it proclaims the love and grace of God to those who separate from the world and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. As Matthew Henry says: "There is an edge to make a wound, and an edge to open a festered wound in order to its healing" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol.6. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, p.1127.)

**"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" ([Ephes. 6:17](#)).**

**"And then shall that Wicked [antichrist] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" ([2 Thes. 2:8](#)).**

**"For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" ([Hebrews 4:12](#)).**

**"And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" ([Rev. 1:16](#)).**

2. The sword of His mouth means the power and judgment of His Word. As shall be seen in the next note, the believers in Pergamos were being persecuted and some were even being martyred for their faith. Some government officials were misusing the power of the sword or execution. They were slaying innocent people, in particular believers who refused to deny Christ. Jesus Christ is proclaiming that the power of His sword—the power of His Word—is far greater. He holds the power of life and death over all men. He can speak the Word and snatch the life away from any person. Therefore, all men must heed this message. Those who do evil are hereby warned.

**"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" ([Rev. 2:16](#)).**

Note another point as well: this is a great promise to believers. If the Word of Christ is all powerful, then Christ can look after and take care of us no matter what confronts us. His power, the sword of His Word, is able to strengthen, deliver, and save us. And if it is our time to leave this world, His Word is able to transfer us right into God's presence to live perfected forever and ever.

**"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" ([2 Cor. 1:10](#)).**

**"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever" ([2 Tim. 4:18](#)).**

**"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" ([Hebrews 2:14-15](#)).**

**"And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer" ([2 Samuel 22:2](#)).**

**3. ([2:13](#)) Church—Believers:** there is the commendation. The church is commended for three things.

1. The church was loyal to Christ's name despite the environment. The church had been established in a cesspool of worldliness, a city of people who were consumed with the pleasures, possessions, and comforts of the world. Note: Christ refers to the city as the *seat* of Satan. However, the believers were refusing to deny Christ. Once a year they could have easily made their public confession that *Caesar is Lord*, but they refused. They knew better; they knew that Christ and Christ alone was Lord. They could have gone quietly about their affairs and never mentioned Christ except when they met for worship. But this they refused to do. They wanted their loved ones, neighbors, and friends to know the salvation and hope of eternal life that was now available in Christ. Therefore, they bore testimony to Christ. They refused to deny Him. They refused to bow the knee and make a false profession to a false god, even if that god was Caesar, the state religion. They held fast to the only name that could really save them, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" ([Matthew 10:32-33](#)).**

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" ([Mark 8:38](#)).

"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" ([Luke 12:8](#)).

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" ([Romans 10:9-10](#)).

"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" ([Phil. 2:11](#)).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" ([2 Tim. 2:12](#)).

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" ([1 John 2:22-23](#)).

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" ([1 John 4:15](#)).

2. The church was pure in doctrine. They had not denied the *faith of Christ*. They believed Christ and the Word of God, studied and taught it. They had neither denied Christ nor His Word. The Word of God was being preached and taught every week from the pulpit and classes of the church.

"But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth out hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ" ([1 Thes. 2:2-6](#)).

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained" ([1 Tim. 4:6](#)).

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" ([2 Tim. 4:1-2](#)).

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" ([Titus 1:9](#)).

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" ([Titus 2:1](#)).

3. The church was standing fast in persecution. At least one believer had been martyred, Antipas. Nothing is known about this dear believer other than what is recorded here. Tradition says that he was placed inside a brazen bull and slowly roasted to death (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol.6. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933, p.305).

Note: the word "martyr" (*martus*<sup>PWS: 2535</sup>) is the regular Greek word for witness. A.T. Robertson says that Antipas was a witness just as Jesus said we should be ([Acts 1:8](#)). Christ gave this dear man His own title: "my faithful one" (cp. [Rev. 1:5](#); [Rev. 3:14](#)). He was faithful unto death.

**Thought 1.** This is a sharp rebuke to us today. Just think: the word witness and martyr mean the same thing. The early believers knew exactly what it meant to become a follower of Christ: it meant the commitment of all they were and had. It meant the possibility of death. As William Barclay says:



*"In the early Church to be a martyr and to be a witness were one and the same thing. Witness meant so often martyrdom. An early Christian knew quite well what he was doing; as soon as he became a Christian he had made himself liable to death. Here is a rebuke to us. There are so many who are prepared to demonstrate their Christianity in Christian circles, but who are equally prepared to play down their Christianity in circles where Christianity is met with ridicule, with contempt, with indifference or with opposition. The Christian must remember that the word *martus*<sup>PWS: 2535</sup> means equally martyr and witness, and that Christian witness can be, and often must be, a costly thing" (The Revelation of John, Vol.1, p.113f).*

**"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles" ([Matthew 10:17-18](#)).**

**"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" ([Matthew 24:9](#)).**

**"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake" ([Luke 21:12](#)).**

**"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" ([John 15:20-21](#)).**

**"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" ([John 16:2](#)).**

**"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" ([Phil. 1:29](#)).**

**"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" ([2 Tim. 3:12](#)).**

**"For consider him that endured such contradiction [hostility] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" ([Hebrews 12:3](#)).**

**"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" ([1 Peter 4:12-13](#)).**

**4. ([2:14-15](#)) Teaching, False— Balaam-ism— Nicolaitans: there is the complaint. The church was guilty of false doctrine and of gross worldliness. Note two charges against the worldly church.**

1. The worldly church is guilty of the doctrine of Balaam. What does this mean? It means that corruption and worldliness are within the church itself; it means a mixture of religion and worldliness. Balac, the Moabite king reigning adjacent to Palestine, feared Israel. To protect his kingdom, he sought the services of Balaam, a prophet, to curse Israel. When the king first approached Balaam, Balaam refused. But he accepted the second offer. Three times Balaam cursed Israel, but with no results. He then conceived an insidious plan. He would corrupt them. He suggested Moabite girls seduce Israel's men to intermarry and lead them to worship their idolatrous gods ([Numbers 22-25](#); cp. [Numbers 31:16](#)). The scheme worked. And Israel, though rooted in God, became unequally yoked together with worldliness and was thereby corrupted.

Apparently what had happened in the Pergamos church was this: the church...

- had baptized some persons who had never repented and forsaken the ways of the world.
- had allowed some of the worldly to teach in the church.
- had allowed a mixed membership of believers and unbelievers: some were living separated lives of holiness and sacrificial commitment for the cause of Christ, and others were living worldly lives seeking the pleasures and possessions of this world.

The result was tragic: there were those within the church committing fornication, that is, all kinds of sexual sins; and there were those participating in the drunken parties of the world, even to the point of participating in the feasts of idolatrous worshippers. (See outline—[1 Cor. 10:14-11:1](#) and notes—[1 Cor. 10:14-11:1](#) for more discussion.)

**"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" ([Acts 2:40](#)).**

**"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" ([1 Cor. 5:11](#)).**

**"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" ([2 Cor. 6:14](#)).**

**"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" ([2 Cor. 6:17-18](#)).**

**"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" ([Ephes. 5:11](#)).**

**"Now we comand you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" ([2 Thes. 3:6](#)).**

**"Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee" ([Exodus 34:12](#)).**

**"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" ([Psalm 1:1](#)).**

2. The worldly church is guilty of making the false profession of the Nicolaitans (see note, pt.2—[Rev. 2:5-6](#) for discussion and verses).

**5. (2:16) Repentance:** the counsel is to repent. The church and its believers needed to repent and to change their ways. What does this mean? The church and the true believers...

- needed to deal with those who were worldly and lead them to repentance.
- needed to change its practice of accepting people into the church just because they professed Christ. There needed to be evidence of repentance.
- needed to discipline those who refused to repent and chose to continue on in their worldly living.
- needed to stop conveying a sense of false hope and false security to unbelievers by baptizing them when they made profession without true repentance.
- needed to stop allowing the worldly to seduce, deceive, and mislead other believers in the church.

**"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matthew 3:2](#)).**

**"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" ([Luke 13:3](#)).**

**"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" ([Acts 2:38](#)).**

**"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" ([Acts 3:19](#)).**

**"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" ([Acts 8:22](#)).**

**"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" ([Acts 17:30](#)).**

**"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).**

**"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).**

**6. (2:16) Warning:** there is the warning. Christ warns the church that becomes worldly. He will come quickly and make war against the worldly. Note this: the Lord is not going to punish the faithful believers who are spiritual minded. He is going to punish only those who refuse to repent of their worldliness. The anger of Christ is always against the impure. Christ will never punish the spiritual members of a church; He will only punish the worldly members. Note how: with the sword of His mouth, that is, with the power of His Word. His Word is strong enough *to judge* all the worldly, no matter who they are or how many there may be.

**Thought 1.** Note this: the church as a whole is responsible for allowing worldly people to be baptized. The command of Christ is to repent and believe the gospel. True belief always involves repentance—a turning away from the world to Christ—total denial of self—the total commitment of all one is and has to Christ and His cause of world missions.

**"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3).**

**"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).**

**"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness" (2 Peter 3:17).**

**7. (2:17) Overcomers— Promise:** there is the great promise to the overcomers. The promise is twofold.

1. The overcomer is given the right to eat the manna or bread of heaven. This is a reference to the manna that was used to feed the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings. God actually caused the manna or bread to be rained down from heaven upon them (Exodus 16:4). The point to note is that the manna was given by God to feed them and to keep them alive during their wandering upon this earth. Now, what does the *hidden manna* mean? What is the bread of heaven? It means Christ Himself. The overcomer is given the right to feed upon Christ. This is exactly what Christ Himself said.

**"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:32-33).**

**"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).**

**"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).**

**"This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:58).**

The bread or manna of God is not physical and material bread: it is spiritual. God actually promises to provide for the physical necessities of *His followers* (Matthew 6:24-33). But physical and material bread is not what Christ was talking about in this passage. Physical and material bread lasts only for a short

while. Once consumed, it is gone. Its satisfaction passes and man's gnawing hunger arises again. But the bread God gives is spiritual bread, that is, spiritual food for the soul (see note—[Ephes. 1:3](#)). It is the bread that man really needs more than anything else on earth. It is the only bread that can *permanently* feed and meet the need of man's...

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| ⇒ gnawing hunger | ⇒ loneliness       |
| ⇒ restlessness   | ⇒ lack of purpose, |
| ⇒ emptiness      | meaning, and       |
| ⇒ vacuum         | significance       |

**"This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" ([John 6:50-51](#)).**

**"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" ([John 6:53-54](#)).**

**"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" ([John 6:57-58](#)).**

The heavenly Bread, Christ Himself, gives life to man. The very purpose of bread is to give life. Bread gives life by...

- nourishing and sustaining
- satisfying
- energizing
- creating desire (the need) for more (See note—[Luke 4:3-4](#). Cp. [Neh. 9:15](#).)
- being eaten on a regular basis

Note that Jesus Christ Himself gives life to the overcomer by doing the very same thing. Jesus Christ...

- nourishes and sustains
- satisfies
- energizes
- creates desire (the need) for more (See note—[Luke 4:3-4](#). Cp. [Neh. 9:15](#).)
- feeds on a regular basis

The point is clearly seen: the person who overcomes worldliness—who stops feeding upon the world—that person will be given the food of heaven itself. He will be allowed to eat the eternal bread of heaven. He will never die.

Note that manna is hidden. This simply means that Christ is hid to the worldly people of the earth. The worldly do not see nor feed upon the bread of heaven. Christ is hid from the worldly.

2. The overcomer is given a white stone with a new name written on it. There are an endless number of guesses about what this stone is. Only one thing is clear in this reference to it, and it is best to stick to the Scripture. The white stone is the means of being admitted into heaven, into God's presence. The overcomer is allowed into God's presence because of the white stone. Note that a new name is written upon the stone. This must mean either the name of Jesus Christ or of the believer himself.

- ⇒ If the name is that of Christ, then the meaning is this: the name of Jesus Christ is the only name accepted for entrance into heaven. A person must have the white stone with Christ's name written on it in order to be admitted into God's presence.
- ⇒ If the name is that of the believer, then the believer is given the white stone as his ticket into heaven. The stone must have his name on it in order to be admitted.

Note: the church member who has an ear must hear this message to the worldly church. He can never overcome the attacks of worldliness unless he heeds this message. Hearing and heeding is his only hope of ever conquering the seductive worldliness of this earth.

**"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" ([John 14:6](#)).**

**"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" ([Romans 10:13](#)).**

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