



## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

A Daily Devotional  
Guide



**WEEK 2**

## *“Your First Love”*

**Study:** Revelation 2:1-7

**Reading:** Philipians 3:1-21

**Memory:** Revelation 2:4-5

**A**s a pastor, I have seen marriages that were once intimate, slowly over time become an agreement to live together. Couples that dreamed of doing everything together do very little together because they find themselves living two separate lives. Their marriage becomes a small part of their life and a corporate agreement as each partner goes through the day doing what they know they need to do to keep things together. Sadly, they live without the joy and incredible intimacy God intended for marriages to have.

Today, we are going to read how our walk with God can have the same fate if we are not careful.

### What Does the Bible Say?

The first church that Jesus spoke to was the church at Ephesus. The Ephesian church was one of the oldest churches in the region since it had been started by Paul on his second missionary journey. As Jesus addressed this church, he started out in a very positive way. He told them that He knew and understood how hard they had been working for His cause and how patient they had been when they suffered for the Gospel. Another strong point of the church was that it took a bold stance against evil and would not allow it to continue in the church. A prime example of this was their removal of men who claimed to be apostles, but after examination, they were found to be false teachers.

If people were to look at the church of Ephesus, they would call the church a success. This church faced its share of struggles and difficulties, yet they didn't grow weary or tired. They continued to press on, not giving up but thriving in the midst of difficulties (vs 2-3). Another thing the Ephesian church did well was stand against the Nicolaitans. Though the Nicolaitans can't be fully identified, the mention of them 2:14-15 reveal that they attempted to lure people away from the truth with things that were sexually immoral (vs 6).

Though they were accomplishing all these positive things, they

weren't meeting up to the criteria that God had set before them. This was because they had abandoned the love they first had when the church started. Christ had been their focus and reason for all that they did, but religion had set in. They had become an organization rather than a living organism. Though they had many good things going for them, if they chose not to return to an intimate walk with Christ, the influence they had as a church would be completely removed. This didn't necessarily mean that the church would cease to exist, but that the power of the Holy Spirit would depart from the church and they would become spiritually dead (vs 4-5).

To encourage them to obey, Christ reminded them of what He had waiting for them in heaven. The tree of life, which was one of the trees that was in the Garden of Eden, symbolized eternal life. This life of abundance in eternity was and is waiting for all those who have trusted in Jesus Christ (vs 7).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Why do you do what you do? The Ephesian church went through all the motions and even endured great persecution for the cause of Christ, yet they weren't fully functioning as God desired. They had turned into a religious organization. They were becoming similar to many of the organizations that have existed for centuries. If the Ephesian church could fall into this trap, you can too. It is easy to get so bogged down in programs and events that you forget about the fellowship that God wants to have with you. Your focus strays from your relationship with Him and directs itself onto the physical things that you can see. The reason that this is so easy to do is because a relationship is very hard to measure, but tangible things are much easier to see. Sometimes it feels like you can accomplish so much more by doing something rather than being in a relationship with God. Examine your life today to see if you are just going through the motions or if you are walking in a genuine love for your Savior.

## **Thought for the day**

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How is Jesus described (vs 1)?

Why do you think He is described this way here?

What four things was the church at Ephesus commended for (vs 2)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How do you see these things evident in your life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What did the Ephesians test (vs 2)? Why were they commended for this?

What were they commended for in verse 3?

What did Jesus have against them (vs 4)?

What do you think He meant by this?

What were they to do about this problem (vs 5)?

What would happen if they failed to do this (vs 5)? What do you think Jesus meant by that?

What else was the church commended for (vs 6)?

What was promised to those who "conquer" (vs 7)? Why do you think this was promised?

# *“Enduring To The End”*

**Study:** Revelation 2:8-11

**Reading:** James 1:1-18

**Memory:** Revelation 2:4-5

## What Does the Bible Say?

Just like today, some churches faced greater persecution. Though the whole area was under control of the Roman government, local leaders were given power to do what they thought best to keep control of the people. Jews were often watched very closely because they were considered non-conformists and would often be the group that would cause trouble since they didn't want to be under the Roman government. By the time of the writing of the Revelation, Jews had been spread abroad throughout the Roman world, and in many cases, the Romans saw no difference between Christians and Jews. Even if a church was filled with more Gentiles than Jews, they placed Gentile converts in the category of the Jews.

As Jesus introduced Himself to the church in Smyrna, He reminded them that He was once dead, but had come back to life because He was the “first and the last.” It is very significant that Jesus introduced Himself this way considering the great persecution the church was going through. Jesus introduced Himself in a way that gave hope to the believers (vs 8).

The Christians in Smyrna were looked down on and faced financial persecution as well as physical suffering. Jesus let them know that He knew the condition they were in, but also wanted to let them know that they were really rich since they were living for the kingdom of God and things that would last for eternity. Some of the greatest problems they faced were from a group of people who claimed to be Jews but were clearly controlled by Satan. This group was causing problems with the church and probably brought about severe persecution on the church (vs 9).

Jesus told them that they were going to suffer for 10 days by the hand of Satan. This is a clear reference to the fact that many of the rulers of this world are under the control of Satan as he works his way in this world. Jesus gave hope though and told the people that the fierce persecution would be short lived and some of them would die during this time. Jesus wanted them to be faithful during this time and wanted to give them hope

that something greater than this life was waiting for them. He promised that those who overcame would receive the “crown of life,” the same crown promised in James 1:12 for those who endured the trials of this life. The picture of a crown received as a reward was much more understandable and sought after in that society than it is in ours. Today, we give out medals and trophies to winners of events, where in those days crowns were the prizes for victory. The exact nature of the crown isn't clear, but just as in a race, the crown was the physical reward, but finishing the race in first place is the real thrill. Jesus was telling the believers that they would be greatly rewarded for the suffering that they were going to experience. Not only would they be spared from hell, but they would receive great blessings in heaven (vs 10-11).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Galatians 6:9 says, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” The message to the church in Smyrna is a great reminder to all those who are serving the Lord today. II Timothy 3:12 tells us “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” As a pastor, I have found this verse to be very true and have also found that persecution doesn't always come from without. In the United States we face very little oppression from the government. In fact, we experience many privileges as a church from our government. We do face some persecution from unbelievers who don't like our message, but I have seen that some of the greatest persecution can come from those around you who claim to be believers. Standing for what is right in the midst of a culture full of “believers” who live like the world is not always easy. Yes, you have been reminded today that living for Christ is worth it.

## Suggestions for Prayer

\* *Ask God to help you suffer with grace and a focus on Him.*

## Thought for the day

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How is Jesus described (vs 8)?

Why do you think He was described this way?

*\*\*\*It appears that the description corresponds with some of the struggles the church in Smyrna was facing. They were being persecuted, but needed to remember that Jesus was greater than this life. The hope of eternity far surpassed the current suffering they were experiencing.*

What three things did Jesus know the church at Smyrna was facing (vs 9)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can you face some of these same things today?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why do you think Jesus added “but you are rich” (vs 9)?

Why do you think Jesus referred to those Jews as being part of the “synagogue of Satan” (vs 9)?

What were they told not to do (vs 10)?

What was going to happen to them (vs 10)?

Why do you think this would be for 10 days?

What were they promised if they were faithful (vs 10)?

What will happen to the person who conquers (vs 11)?

Why do you think they would be encouraged by this fact?

## “The Teaching of Balaamm”

**Study:** Revelation 2:12-17

**Reading:** Numbers 22:1-41

**Memory:** Revelation 2:4-5

### What Does the Bible Say?

While the address to the church at Smyrna was one of hope, the address to the church at Pergamum was one of judgement. Christ pictured Himself to them as one who was coming with a sword in His mouth which is a picture of judgement upon those who have chosen to allow sin and impurity to continue (vs 12).

The church at Pergamum wasn't all bad, and this is why Jesus started out with focusing on the positive things they had done. This church was in a city where Satan had a definite stronghold. The exact meaning of the phrase “where Satan's throne is” has been given several different suggestions by different commentators and Bible teachers. There was a large temple to the god Zues on top of the hill which would have been visible for miles away. Many believe this is “Satan's throne.” Though we may not know the exact meaning, the point was that Satan was strongly in control of the area which led to fierce spiritual battles between the forces of good and evil. Part of this battle involved fierce persecution during which the church continued to stand strong and chose not to deny Christ. This persecution wasn't just a slap on the wrist, but involved the death of one of the church leaders at the hands of the persecutors. Yet, through all this, they stood strong and didn't quit (vs 13).

Though this church had stood strong in persecution, Jesus was still warning them about judgment because they allowed worldly philosophy and teaching to be a part of their church. One of the ways this was done was by allowing leaders to promote some form of sexual impurity that would draw their attention away from the true worship of God. Just as Balaam tried to seduce the children of Israel away from God by getting the Israelites to intermarry with Moabite women, these leaders were teaching a doctrine that would cause many to stumble into some type of sexual impurity, drawing them away from Christ (vs 14).

The Nicolatians of the day were a sect of people claiming to be believers who promoted the idea of sexual indulgence. Their teaching was similar to those who promoted the ideas of the world which were focused

around fulfilling the pleasures of the body (vs 15). The allowance of the Nicolatians and others who caused great stumbling blocks was not going to be tolerated by a pure and holy God. The church was instructed to repent, or to face the wrath of a holy God (vs 16).

Though it would not be easy for the believers to stand up against these false teachings, Jesus reminded them of the great things that were awaiting them if they chose to obey. He promised them “hidden manna” which had to do with some type of heavenly provision, and also promised them that they would have a new and special name awaiting them in heaven. The fact that this name would be written on a white stone appears to be a reference to the white stones that were either given as a prize to winners of a race, or white stones that lined the streets which carried the name of prominent people in the city. The point was that standing up for purity, holiness and obedience would be worth it for all those who chose to obey (vs 17).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Though it may not be an exact parallel, the teaching of Baalam and the doctrine of the Nicolatians seems to be alive and prevalent in society today. Instead of calling for repentance, many churches encourage people to add Christianity to their lives. This gives many the idea that they can live however they want and have all the blessings of being a follower of Christ. In an attempt to get unbelievers to come to know the truth, we try to bring God down to the level of the world and picture God as one who “hangs with sinners.” Though the motives for this seem to be right, the actions themselves are often against the Scriptural commands of God desiring purity and holiness. Instead of bringing glory to God, it causes many to fall away from Him. Examine your life to see if any of the teachings of Balaam or the Nicolatians exist in you.

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- \* *Thank God for warning you so that you can avoid evil.*
- \* *Ask God to help you live in purity and holiness.*

## **Thought for the day**

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What do you know about the city of Pergamum?

*\*\*\*Pergamum was very unique in that the city center was built on a very high hill. The city center consisted of multiple temples for multiple gods. The city also contained an extremely large library. One of the largest in the world in those days.*

How is Jesus described in verse 12?

Why do you think He is described this way?

What did Jesus recognize about where the believers were living (vs 13)?

*\*\*\*Just as in today's society, not every region or every city treats believers the same. Some cities were known for greater wickedness, just as some cities are known for that in the United States today.*

What did Jesus commend them for (vs 13)?

What did the church at Pergamum have to endure (vs 13)?

What did Jesus say He had against them (vs 14)?

How would you define the “teaching of Balaam” (vs 14)?

What else did the church allow (vs 15)?

What was the church challenged to do (vs 16)?

What was Jesus going to do if they failed to repent (vs 16)?

What do you think this meant?

What would Jesus give to those who were conquerors (vs 17)?

Why do you think a “new name” would have been significant (vs 17)?

How can you struggle today with similar things that the church in Pergamum struggled with?

# “Making A Choice”

**Study:** Revelation 2:18-28

**Reading:** Joshua 24:15-28

**Memory:** Revelation 2:4-5

## What Does the Bible Say?

The description that Jesus gave of himself to the church at Thyatira was a picture of judgment. Eyes of fire indicated the ability to see all that was going on even though others might not be aware of it. The bronze feet symbolized the process of purification by fire. The church at Thyatira had many positive things going for it, but just like the church of Pergamum, it had allowed sin to continue in the church. This church was commended for their love, patience, service and faith. They had been growing more and more committed to the work of the Lord, yet the whole time sin had been allowed to exist in the church.

The sin that existed in Thyatira had to do with that of tolerating a woman leader who was leading many from the church into sin. The reference to Jezebel makes it clear that this woman was acting like Queen Jezebel who had helped Israel become involved in the great wickedness of the foreign nations all around her (. This particular woman was allowed to be a leader and her leading was encouraging people to practice sexual immorality as well as participating in the worship of some idols. If translated to our days thoughts and ideas, she was mixing the true worship of God with worldly ways and worldly ideas. Sexual impurity and meat that was offered to idols was the popular thing to do in that day. She took the pleasures of the world and tried to get people of the church to participate in those pleasures (vs 19-20).

Jesus declared that He knew what was going on and sent her warnings and encouraged her to repent, but she wanted to continue in her sin. Judgment was going to come on this woman and those who she was leading astray unless they chose to repent of what they had been involved in (vs 21-23).

Apparently, there was also a group of individuals in the church who either didn't know what was going on or they had stood up against the sin. Jesus told this group that punishment would not come upon them, and He encouraged them to continue to live faithful and holy lives. Those who would endure to the end living for God would be thankful that they had

chosen the right path. Jesus promised that those who followed Him faithfully would be allowed to rule and reign with Him and would be given similar authority to what He had. The believers were also promised the “morning star” which was a reference to Jesus Christ and the close intimate full fellowship with Him (vs 24-28).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Though we could get into much more detail about the meaning of this passage (for devotional purposes we won't), there are really two choices given to those in this passage. The people were either to repent and choose to follow Christ (or continue to live for Christ) and receive great and wonderful eternal rewards, or they could continue in their sin and face the judgment of God. Those followers of Christ who chose to live in and be destroyed in their sins, would not experience the same privileges in eternity as those who did what was right. Though the exact differences of rewards in heaven will be debated by scholar's until Christ returns, the point Jesus was making wasn't to give specific rewards to work for, but was given to direct and set the believer's minds on eternal things. Jesus wanted them and wants you to understand His desire for purity and holiness. The popular thing of that day was to mix the pleasures of the world with the worship of God, fulfilling the desires of the flesh on this earth. That same thing is popular today and God is calling His Church not to live fulfilling their flesh, but to set their eyes on eternal values.

Are you living on the fence between the world and God? Do you try to have the best of both worlds or try to mix the world with godliness? Choose today to personally take a stand against this in your life and also in your church. God's eternal blessings will be far greater than the short lived pleasure that you will receive in this life.

## Suggestions for Prayer

\* *Ask God to show you any area where you are letting worldly philosophies or ideals creep into your life.*

## Thought for the day

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How were the eyes of Jesus described (vs 18)? Why?

How were the feet of Jesus described (vs 18)? Why?

What five things were the believers commended for (vs 19)? How do these exist in your life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What do you think the end of verse 19 means?

What did Jesus have against the church (vs 20)?

What was the woman Jezebel teaching (vs 20)?

Why do you think sexual teaching was accepted?

*\*\*\*It must be remembered that most of the pagan worship in those days was centered around sexual activity. Part of pagan worship involved sexual acts.*

What had Jesus given (vs 21)?

What does this show about God's patience?

What did Jesus say He would do (vs 22-23)?

What did Jesus say to the rest of the church (vs 24)?

What were they told to hold fast to (vs 25)?

What would Jesus do for the one who conquered (vs 26)?

What do you think verse 27 means?

What would Jesus give them (vs 28)? What did this mean?

## “Wake Up!”

**Study:** Revelation 3:1-6

**Reading:** Romans 13:11-14, Matthew 25:1-16

**Memory:** Revelation 2:4-5

**W**hen my wife and I went on our first cruise, she was a little scared about being sea sick so we bought some pills that were supposed to prevent sea sickness. The pills that she took were supposed to be the “least drowsy” of all the pills on the market, but if they were the least, I would hate to see the most. One of the days that she took the pills, she felt like she was a zombie and spent much of the day sleeping. As she looks back at the trip, that choice was the only thing that she regrets because she felt that she missed a whole day because of it.

Today, we are going to see how Satan wants churches to take the “drowsy pill.” He loves churches that are just churches in name rather than churches in Spirit. We will read today how the church was challenged to wake up and live for Christ.

## What Does the Bible Say?

To the church in Sardis, Jesus Christ introduced Himself as the One who “hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.” This is a reference to His sovereign control over the churches and His direction and leading in the lives of the people of those churches. He didn’t present a picture of judgement as he had done with some of the other churches, though certain judgment would take place if there was no repentance. He pictured Himself as a God who wanted to transform the church. This was because the church had fallen asleep. They had become a church in name, but not in function. The exact cause of this is not know, but from the reference to the soiled garments a little later on, it appears that the reason they had fallen asleep is because they attempted to conform to the world’s ideals and had probably tried to become “politically correct.”

This church is different than some of the others that we have looked at because there is no mention of outside false teachers that had come in to destroy the church. Neither does it appear that the church was involved in sexual or immoral sin. The church on the outside appeared to be a righteous and holy church, but had become soiled and dirty because they

had lost the power that God wanted them to have. This seems to fit the description of some churches today who have been lulled into a social club mentality (vs 1-2).

Though severe punishment is threatened, this type of church seems to have more hope than the others. Their hope would be realized by the personal choice of each member to “wake up” and realize that they were bought with a price and that God desired them to live for Him. If the church failed to turn around and become alive again, God would come upon them quickly and remove the light from them. How He planned to do this is unclear, but what is clear is that God wanted those who named the name of Christ to be vibrant and active representatives of the One they claimed to serve (vs 3).

The hope for this church was in the fact that there were a few members who hadn’t been lulled into sleep and had not bought into the world’s idea of a church. They were still serving God with a pure heart and a vision for what He wanted to accomplish. God wanted all the believers in that church to live like those few and encouraged them with great promises in eternity that consisted of white garments and His advocating their cause before God (vs 4-6).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Is your church like the church in Sardis? Are you a church in name only or are you a church how God intended a church? Even the name “church,” which today often refers to a building, was used to describe a group of called out individuals. God has called His people to be united together for the purpose of glorifying Him, which is done through pure and holy lives which draw others to God. Local bodies of believers should be united for the purpose of bringing people to the knowledge of salvation and seeing those who trust Christ grow into mature, reproducing believers. Though this is what God wants, churches often become stagnant because they become more consumed with themselves than with God. They become a church in name, but not according to God’s plan.

## **Thought for the day**

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How did Jesus describe Himself to the church at Sardis (vs 1)?

Why do you think He described Himself this way?

*\*\*\*In chapter 1, Jesus mentioned the “seven spirits.” It is unclear exactly what He meant by this, but it appears the emphasis was on delivering a message to the people.*

What did Jesus say about their reputation (vs 1)?

How do you think a church can fall into this same category today?

Why do think they were told to wake up (vs 2)?

What were they told to remember (vs 3)?

How do you think they had forgotten it?

Why was repentance so important (vs 3)?

How did Jesus say He would come (vs 3)? Why?

What did He commend them for (vs 4)?

What were the faithful ones promised (vs 4)?

What did Jesus promise to those who conquered (vs 5)?

What do you think the white garments represent (vs 5)?

Why do you think the theme of conquering and overcoming is repeated many times?

What would not be blotted out (vs 5)?

What is the “book of life” (vs 5)?

Why would Jesus confess their names before the Father (vs 5)?



# “*Psychological Persecution*”

**Study:** Revelation 3:7-13

**Reading:** Isaiah 22:15-25, I Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Memory:** Revelation 2:4-5

## What Does the Bible Say?

The way in which Jesus introduced Himself to the church of Philadelphia was different than how He had for the other churches. For the other churches, He repeated the description of Himself given in chapter 1, but this time He repeated some of the descriptions (1:18) but added a description given of the Messiah found in Isaiah 22:22. When a person has the keys to something, they are the only one who controls the access in and out of that thing. The description of Jesus holding the keys reveals that He is the only way that a person can escape eternity in hell and enter into eternity with God (vs 7).

From the context of the passage, it appears that there was a group of false teachers who claimed they were believers, and they also claimed that many who were part of the church would not be able to get to heaven. Perhaps they emphasized certain works or other requirements that some of the Philadelphian believers couldn't meet. This appears to be why Jesus told the believers that they had an open door to heaven because He was the one who controlled the access and not men. The reference to some who claimed they were Jews but weren't was probably a description of those who claimed to be believers, yet practiced their own form of religion rather than having a relationship with God.

Apparently, these men did much to cause the real believers to question the real truth by constant negativity towards the church. As an encouragement, Jesus told the true believers that one day they would be vindicated as He would make the false teachers bow down before those they treated badly and admit that they were the ones who were wrong. This doesn't seem to be something that happened on this earth, but would take place after their death (vs 8-9).

Jesus went on to encourage the believers to overcome. He wanted them to patiently endure the trials they were going through and promised them that He would spare them from the great tribulation that was going to come upon the earth during the last days. This is a verse that many who believe in the rapture before the tribulation use since Jesus told the

believers in Philadelphia they would be spared the trial that would come to the whole world (vs 10).

The believers were encouraged to hold strong to what they had learned and to continue what they were doing. He told them that He was going to come and if they gave up under pressure that they could lose some of the rewards that He wanted to give them. He then went on to promise them great benefits and blessings that they would experience for eternity. Verses 11-12 describe many different benefits that believers would have and these, though they don't mean a lot to us in our culture today, were significant rewards for that culture. Some of the rewards referred to things in the city of Philadelphia, but due to the devotional nature of this study, we won't go into great detail (vs 11-13).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you find that there are some people who complain about the way that you are seeking to obey the Lord or seem to make you feel the position that God has called you to serve is less important? The church members in Philadelphia didn't seem to be under physical persecution, but they faced psychological persecution which many times is worse than physical suffering. They were constantly being put down and degraded even to the point where they were being told that their belief wasn't good enough. The great encouragement that Jesus gave them reminded them and reminds you that you are not accountable to any one else except to God. Jesus is the one who controls your destiny and the rewards you will receive. No matter what others think or say, you must remember that you are not accountable to others, but you are only accountable to God.

## Suggestions for Prayer

- \* *Thank the Lord for sending encouraging words your way.*
- \* *Ask God to help you focus on pleasing Him and not others.*
- \* *Praise God because He is the One who controls eternity.*

## Thought for the day

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How is Jesus holy and true (vs 7)?

What does Jesus have the keys to (vs 7)?

Why is this important to realize?

What did Jesus set before them (vs 8)?

What do you think He meant by this?

What did they have little of (vs 8)?

What were they commended for (vs 8)?

What would God say would happen to those who were causing problems in the church (vs 9)?

Why do you think this would have been an encouragement to them?

What would they learn (vs 9)?

What do you think these who were of the “synagogue of Satan” were doing to the believers?

What did Jesus say He would keep them from (vs 10)?

What do you think this trial refers to?

Why did Jesus say to “hold fast” (vs 11)?

What did Jesus promise to those who conquered (vs 12)?

Why do you think He used the example of a pillar (vs 12)?

What is the new Jerusalem (vs 12)?

Why do you think a new name is emphasized (vs 12)?

What should we do if we have ears (vs 13)? Why is this emphasized?