

### Messages to the Churches of Pergamum and Thyatira

#### Revelation 2:12-29

Revelation 2:12-29 - *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: <sup>13</sup> ‘I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. <sup>14</sup> But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup> Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.’”*

*<sup>18</sup> “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: <sup>19</sup> ‘I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. <sup>22</sup> Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup> I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.*

*<sup>24</sup> “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. <sup>25</sup> But hold fast what you have till I come. <sup>26</sup> And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— <sup>27</sup> ‘ He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup> “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

#### Background Notes

In Revelation 2 and 3 we have seven letters or messages to seven literal churches of the 1st century A.D. These seven churches were located in the Roman province of Asia, where the country of Turkey is located today. The churches were located in somewhat of a circle, and the sequence of the messages moves around the circle, beginning at Ephesus and proceeding clockwise around the circle. If you were to find the center of this circle on your Bible map, you would see that you could reach any one of the seven churches within a 75-mile radius, and for most of them much less. Of course, in the 1st century you wouldn't have an air-conditioned tour bus to get around, so getting to all seven churches would certainly have been more difficult than it was for me, when I had the opportunity to visit the sites of all seven churches a few years ago.

We've seen already in our talks from Revelation that the seven letters were not only messages to the seven literal churches of the 1st century Asia, but they have plenty of application for churches and individual Christians today. In the letter to Ephesus, we learned that it was a church that had left its first love. In the letter to Smyrna, there was a message for the persecuted church. Now in the third letter, the letter to Pergamum, we see that a message for a compromising church.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The church at Pergamum represents the compromising church.

In verse 13 we see that the church at Pergamum was commended for holding fast to the name of Christ. They even stood firm in the face of severe persecution, which resulted in the martyrdom of Antipas, a faithful believer in the church of Pergamum. *"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."* That was the good news! The believers of the church at Pergamum did not deny the name of Christ, even when living in the midst of pagan surroundings, and even under the threat of severe persecution.

The city of Pergamum was a cultic center for Roman emperor worship --thus the reference to as the place "where Satan dwells," or "where Satan's throne is." Putting mere man in the place of God is idolatry, and it is satanic! So, the church at Pergamum had resisted emperor worship, but they had compromised in other areas.

Some of the Christians at Pergamum were holding to "the teaching of Balaam," and some were holding to "the teaching of the Nicolaitans." The teaching of Balaam would involve immorality and idolatry, because the false prophet, Balaam, showed Balak, king of Moab, how to seduce the men of Israel and involve them in idolatry and sexual immorality with the women of Moab. Verse 15 may indicate that the false teaching of the Nicolaitans also involved immorality in a religious context, a practice that was rampant in the worship of the Roman gods. So, it appears that the church at Pergamum was guilty of compromising in the area of morality.

In verse 16 the Lord told the church at Pergamum to *"Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."* The Lord Himself would fight against these false teachers and those who had been taken in by their false teaching! The sword of His mouth, of course, is the sharp two-edged sword of verse 12, that we also saw in Revelation 1. The sharp two-edged sword is the Word of God. God uses His Word to fight against and to judge compromising Christians and compromising churches -- both then and today.

Have you compromised in your Christian walk and commitment in any way? The Lord doesn't use the relative and changing standards of secular society to judge us. He doesn't use what's politically correct to judge us. He uses the unchanging standards of His Word! How do we measure up to the standards of God's Word? The church of Pergamum represents the compromising church.

## 2. The Church at Thyatira represents the church that tolerates false doctrine.

Verses 18-29: *“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: <sup>19</sup> ‘I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. <sup>22</sup> Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup> I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.*

*<sup>24</sup> ‘Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. <sup>25</sup> But hold fast what you have till I come. <sup>26</sup> And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— <sup>27</sup> ‘ He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup> ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”*

The church of Thyatira was commended for its Christian service. In fact, verse 19 says that it was increasing in good works and Christian service! That’s always a good commendation! So that was the good news.

However, the church of Thyatira’s problem was that it tolerated false doctrine. A church member named Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, was promoting the false teaching that Christians could engage in fornication and participate in the pagan festivals -- and yet be free from sinning! She taught that if you were saved, you could do whatever you wanted with your body. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Verse 24 says that such teachings are satanic -- and yet some churches today tolerate similar false doctrine in the area of morality. Churches that tolerate and even condone immoral sexual practices -- practices that are condemned in the Bible -- are involved in the “depths of Satan” (v24). These churches would deny it, of course, but the Word of God is the judge. God said that He would bring judgment on Jezebel and her followers, and many would die from sickness. Jezebel may have been the literal name of this false prophetess, or John may have used that name in a symbolic way. Like the Old Testament Queen Jezebel, this Jezebel brought idolatry into the midst of God’s people.

The faithful, true believers of Thyatira who had not undergone the initiation and rites of Jezebel were to hold fast and not tolerate this false doctrine. They would be rewarded with a significant position in Christ’s future Kingdom on this earth, when the Lord alone will have authority over the nations. Verses 26-27: *“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—“* And now a quote taken from Psalms: *<sup>27</sup> ‘ He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star.”* This passage refers to the time when the Lord will come back in judgment and will set up

His Kingdom on this earth, known as the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. He will reign for a thousand years, and believers who are true and faithful will reign with Him.

We, too, will be rewarded in Christ's coming Kingdom on this earth -- if we don't tolerate false doctrine in our lives and in our churches now! The church at Thyatira represents the church that tolerates false doctrine.

## Practical Application

### Go for the "white stone" and the "morning star."

What is the "white stone," and what is the "morning star"? These are the rewards for overcomers – rewards for committed Christians who don't compromise in their faith and don't tolerate false doctrine. Verse 17: *"...To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."* The hidden manna refers to the sufficiency of Christ to meet our daily needs, just as the manna met the needs of the children of Israel in the wilderness. What about the white stone? In that day, white stones were used as symbols of victory in athletic contest or legal cases, and they were also used as tokens of welcome from hosts to guests. The fact that a new name is written on the white stone -- a name that is known only to the Lord and to the person receiving the stone -- emphasizes that this is a personal reward from the Lord for faithful service to Him.

What about the "morning star" reward in verse 28? *"and I will give him the morning star."* The Lord refers to Himself as the morning star in Revelation 22:16 - *"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."* Just as the morning star appears in the sky before the sun rises, so our Lord will appear to catch His Church up to heaven before He appears as the Son of Righteousness in His Kingdom on this earth. So, we believe that the reward of the morning star is a promise and a guarantee that true believers will participate in Christ's great Rapture of the church.

In the Olympic Games the motto for athletes is, "Go for the Gold!" As faithful and committed Christians, let's "Go for the white stone and the morning star"!