

# (Revelation) Revelation 1:19-2:29

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the threefold division of the book of Revelation and the purpose of the church, which is to give light in a dark world by holding up the word of God.*

**Duration:** 59:53

**Topics:** "Revelation Of Christ", "Church Discipline"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Revelation, specifically chapter 1 and verse 19. He emphasizes that the book is primarily a revelation of Jesus Christ and is given for obedience rather than just understanding. The speaker highlights that Jesus Christ is described as the faithful witness, who tells it like it is without sugarcoating the truth. The sermon also mentions that the book of Revelation is divided into three sections, with chapters 2 and 3 containing messages to seven local churches in Asia Minor (now Western Turkey).

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## Transcript

Let's turn to God's Word. We turn today to Revelation and Chapter 1 and Verse 19. In our last study last week, we mentioned that the first paragraph of Revelation, the first three verses, are verses that we must bear in mind throughout our study of the book.

And there we saw that it was primarily a revelation of Jesus Christ. It is the testimony of Jesus Christ, Verse 2. And it is given for us to obey, Verse 3, more than to understand. Understanding is not necessary for obedience.

For true obedience to God, we can obey even without understanding. When God gave a command to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, He never gave them any reason. It is only the rebellious spirit in man that desires to know reason.

The trusting, childlike heart, it is enough to know that God has said. And so, the whole Word of God has been given to us for obedience primarily. So we approach this book with the same attitude.

When we turn to Revelation 1.19, last week we considered the vision of Jesus Christ that John had. A vision that floored the Apostle John. He fell like a dead man, we read in Verse 17, and the Lord lifted him up and told him, don't be afraid.

And then the Lord Jesus speaks to the Apostle John in Verse 19 of Revelation 1 and tells him what we can call a threefold division of the book of Revelation. You see, we don't have to divide the book of Revelation because Jesus Christ, our Lord, has done it for us in Verse 19. He has said there, this book, or what I'm going to tell you, John, is divided into three parts.

And the three parts are, first of all, write therefore the things which you have seen. That is, what you have already seen, beginning at Verse 10 of Chapter 1. He's seen the vision of Jesus Christ. The first part of the book of Revelation is the vision of the crucified and triumphant Lord.

Triumphant over sin, hell, death, the grave, and now having the keys and having all authority. We have to begin there. If we don't begin there, we can get a bit frightened as we go through the book of Revelation and also as we go through life on earth in general.

So that's the first part, and that's the most important part. Then we come to the second division of the book of Revelation, and that's described here as the things which are. That means the things which are now existing.

And that applies to this entire period from the day of Pentecost, from the time that John saw this vision on till almost the end of the age. And that is described for us in Chapters 2 and 3. And the third division of the book of Revelation is described in Verse 19, Chapter 1, as the things which shall take place after these things. Now, how do we know that the third section begins at Chapter 4, Verse 1? Because Chapter 4, Verse 1 begins with this phrase, After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet, speaking with me, said, Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.

That's the same phrase in Chapter 1, Verse 19, what will take place after these things. So it's pretty clear from comparing Chapter 1, Verse 19 with Chapter 4, Verse 1, that the third section of the book of Revelation begins there in Chapter 4, Verse 1. So therefore we conclude that the things which are relate to Chapters 2 and 3. And Chapters 2 and 3 are basically the messages to seven local churches in an area called Asia Minor, which is now called Western Turkey. And these seven churches are pictured in Verse 20, it says, Chapter 1, Verse 20, As for the mystery of the seven stars, which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels.

Now the word angel in the Greek language is a word which can also be translated as messenger. And in fact, in one or two places in the New Testament, it is translated as messenger. So we could correctly read it as the messengers of the seven churches.

And this seems to teach that among the elders in each local church, usually among the elders, one person among the elders was usually the one who was gifted with the word in each local church, according to God's original intention. And that one is called the messenger of the local church. And this messenger is likened to a star.

And the thing we saw last time also is the star is held in the hand of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ our Lord holds in His hand the messengers whom He has appointed in each local church. And that is why when those messengers get up to speak God's word, they speak with the authority of God behind them, because Jesus Christ is holding them in His hand.

There is a sense in which He holds all believers in His hand, but in a special way, His messengers. And the seven golden lampstands are the seven local churches. And we mentioned last time that all these seven churches did not become one denomination.

There was no such thing as denominations according to God's will in the first century. Denominations are the work of man, it is the principle of the business world, the principle of Babylon that has come into the Christian church, and it is not according to the word of God. Each church God intended to be a local church.

Each was a separate lampstand. In the Old Testament they had only one lampstand. The Jews had one lampstand with seven branches, and all the Jews were one people with one high priest, one central king, one central coordinating authority.

But in the New Testament, there is no such thing as a branch of a church. Each lampstand is independent. This local church, for example, can never have a branch anywhere else in India or in the world, not even five miles outside Bangalore, if we stay according to the word of God.

Each local church is directly under the headship of Jesus Christ. That's why we see not one lampstand with seven branches, but seven separate lampstands. It's very important for us to bear this in mind, because there's a lot that depends upon it.

For example, false doctrine spreads easily when seven churches are in a denomination. But because these seven churches were separate, you find some of them were infected, but others were not. It's like infection in a system.

If it spreads in one place, it spreads all over. But if each is a separate system under the headship of Christ, one can be protected even if another one twenty miles away is corrupt. And that's what we shall see as we look through the seven churches, that they're all so different.

Right. The other thing we see is that these churches are represented by lampstands, which means the main function of the church is described as giving light in a dark world, not a decoration. What is the purpose of a lampstand in a room? It's not a decoration.

It's a sad thing when a church becomes a decoration. The only purpose of a lampstand is to give light. When it stops giving light, it has ceased to fulfill its purpose.

And when a church has stopped to give forth the light of God in the midst of a dark world, the light of purity in the midst of sin, the light of love in the midst of hatred, the light of the revelation of God in the midst of idolatry and darkness in the world around, it has ceased to fulfill its function. When the church does not stand as a light like that, even if the church is still doing so many other things like running hospitals, running schools, doing a lot of good social work, but if it has stopped showing forth the light, and what is that light? That light is God's word. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

When the church's main function is to hold up the word of God, social work and all that is absolutely secondary, the church is a lampstand. Let's never forget that. Now we come to chapter 2, verse 1. There are seven churches mentioned in chapter 2 and chapter 3, and at the end of the message to each of the churches, we find this phrase, chapter 2, verse 7, for example, He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to what? We can say to all the churches.

In other words, even though this particular letter, chapter 2, verses 1 to 7, is addressed to the messenger of the church in Ephesus or to the church in Ephesus, yet it is a message, according to chapter 2, verse 7, for all the churches. Now, the Apostle Paul, in the New Testament, has written letters to seven churches. To the church of the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians.

So there we see, the Apostle Paul, he wrote letters to seven churches, and they are messages to all the churches in the twentieth century. In the same way, the same Lord who gave a message through the Apostle Paul to seven churches in that first century, has also given, through the Apostle John, a second set of messages to seven churches, which are also meant to be messages to all the churches in these twenty centuries. And that's why the number seven is a number of perfection.

It applies to the whole world. Now, in these letters to the churches, we find Jesus Christ fulfilling his function, which we read in chapter 1, verse 5. You know, the first thing mentioned about Jesus Christ, in the description of Christ, in chapter 1, verse 5, is what? He is the faithful witness. Or, in other words, like a modern phrase, he tells it like it is.

He tells us exactly what he thinks of us, without touching up the photograph in any way, telling us exactly, because he's got eyes like a flame of fire that sees through and through. He loves fervently, but he tells us exactly what we are like. Where there is cause for appreciation, he appreciates.

Where there is cause for rebuke, he rebukes. He is the faithful witness. It's very important for us to see Jesus Christ like this, as one who sees us through and through.

Generally speaking, most Christians like to think of Jesus Christ as one who is more like a grandfather. See, a grandfather is not usually a faithful witness to his grandchildren, because he only gives them gifts and does good things and says nice things to them. He doesn't rebuke them or spank them or any such thing, but Jesus Christ is not like that.

He's a faithful witness telling us the truth, and he does it in love. And so we find, to all the churches, he who has eyes like a flame of fire sees through and through and tells the truth. And each church is addressed in a special way.

We read here in verse 1, to the messenger of the church in Ephesus, the message was first of all directed to the messenger, that was, to the leader of the church there in Ephesus, and through him to the whole church. And what was it? The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand. The one who holds the messengers of God in his right hand, and who walks among the seven churches.

Why does he walk among the seven churches? Because he's always examining. And we said those seven churches represent every local church across the face of the earth in all these twenty centuries. We can say Jesus is always moving around, examining.

We can be sure that Jesus Christ is moving around this church and other churches that call themselves by his name, examining everything to see if it measures up to his high calling. And what does he say? He says this, verse 2, I know your deeds. He certainly does.

We can't hide anything from him. And he's saying this in appreciation. The first thing is appreciation.

So one mark of God's love for us is that he always appreciates us before he criticizes us. Now men are not always like that. You may suddenly hear criticism from a man who's never bothered to appreciate any good thing in you.

And that's a sad thing. That shows that we haven't understood much about divine nature when we are quicker to criticize something in someone and are not quick to appreciate. That's something we can learn from the Lord's message to these seven churches that even where he has something to criticize, he always finds something good to say where there is something good to say.

And that's a wonderful lesson for us to learn. If we want the life of Jesus in us and to partake of the divine nature, let's learn, even where somebody is wrong, to appreciate what is good. Yes? To appreciate what is good.

And so he begins with appreciation. And that's something we can bear in mind in another way also, that it's good to have a certain rule to live by in our life that we should never criticize anyone whom we have never appreciated at any time. Because appreciation forms the proper background on which we can write the blackboard, on which we can write the words of criticism.

And they are more likely to be accepted. Verse 2. I know your deeds, your toil, your perseverance. You cannot endure evil men.

Do you see their good qualities? They were slogging away for the Lord. They were persevering. They didn't give up.

They were very careful not to allow evil men to get into their midst. That means people who were corrupt and who brought worldliness and sin into their church, they could not endure them. They disciplined them.

They kept the church pure in life. And not only that, they kept the church pure in doctrine as well, we see here. You put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not.

And you found them to be false. Now that teaches us that there are more than twelve apostles. Now many people think there are only twelve apostles, the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Those were the twelve Jesus chose when he was on earth. But by the time John wrote this letter, the other eleven had died. John was the only one alive.

So what is the need to test a person whether he's an apostle if there were no other apostles? There are other apostles. Jesus Christ appoints apostles. And even in the twentieth century, throughout the years, Jesus has given to some the ministry of an apostle, like he gives the ministry of prophet, shepherd, teacher, and evangelist as well, according to Ephesians 4 verse 11.

So this church didn't... But you know, there's something we can learn here also for the days in which we live. There are some people, many people, who call themselves apostles who are not apostles. So we shouldn't swallow every fellow who comes along and claims to be an apostle.

Most of them, many whom I've met, are false apostles who claim to be apostles. So this church tested these people who call themselves to be apostles. And they were very forthright.

They told the man to his face, Sorry, we believe you're a false apostle. There was no diplomacy and speaking nice things. They were straightforward and upright when it came to false doctrine, when it came

to evil men.

And verse 3, You have perseverance. That's repeated twice. Here's a church that really slogged away.

And you have endured for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. What a wonderful church. A church which was toiling, persevering, keeping away evil men, keeping away false apostles, purity in life, purity in doctrine, perseverance again, enduring for the name of Jesus Christ, and not growing weary.

You would think this church has got everything. There are people who feel that if you've got purity in life, purity in doctrine, we've got everything. But the Lord says to this church, and to the messenger who was the leader of this church, But I have this against you.

And it's a pretty serious charge. It's a very serious charge. You have left your first love.

What that means is, you don't love me, fervently, as you did in the beginning. Secondly, it also means, you don't love one another, as fervently, as you did at the beginning. That's the charge.

Oh yes, you're keeping your thought life pure, you're not gossiping, you're not backbiting, you're keeping your speech pure, you're righteous in money matters, you're paying your income tax properly, you're not allowing evil men to come into the midst, you're keeping your doctrine pure. But, that fervency of devotion, that you had for me once upon a time. Remember the days when you were converted first.

What devotion you had to Jesus. It's all dried up now. Now you're going through a routine, of going to meetings, and reading the Bible, and activity.

All good. But that fervency of devotion to Jesus has gone. It has dried up.

It's like a wife who's lost her love for her husband. That's the picture used. The bride and the bridegroom.

Church and Christ. It's like a wife who did everything in the house out of fervent love for her husband. Used to cook the food, and wash the clothes, and look forward to her husband coming back from office, and really love him.

Five, ten years later, she still cooks the food, and washes the clothes, and everything. But it's not. It's just a routine.

She's not eagerly looking forward to her husband anymore. All the activity is there. And the Lord says, what do you think I have been united to you for? Is it just to cook my food, and wash my clothes? I want your devotion.

I want your devotion first. You have left your first love. And also your fervent love for one another.

Which you once had. Once it was your boast that you loved one another fervently. And you stood out among the churches.

The church that fervently loved one another in the midst of so many other churches, where they didn't love one another. But now, that love has grown cold. It is.

You've left. You haven't given up your doctrine. You haven't given up your personal purity of life.

But you've given up your first love. Is this a serious thing? Yes, it is. In fact, it is so serious, verse 5, that he says, you've got to remember from where you have fallen.

You have fallen. Can you imagine this is a fall? We think a man's fallen only when he's committed adultery, or started going to the cinemas, or gambling, or drinking, or something like that. No.

He's fallen. Blessed are we if our conscience is so sensitive, that we recognize that when we lose that fervency of devotion to Jesus Christ, and that fervency of love for one another, we have fallen. We certainly have.

He who has a year, verse 7, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, to all churches in all 20 centuries, that when you lose your love, you've virtually lost everything. It's so serious, that you've got to repent. The middle of verse 5. Repent.

That verse, which we preach to the unbeliever, in the gospel meeting. You repent. Jesus says to the people in the church, He says, you repent first, before you tell all the other people around you to repent.

Repent of that lack of love you had for one another. That lack of love for me, and for your fellow believers. And do the deeds you did at first.

That means, your works must once again spring out of love. In other words, the motive with which you are doing all these deeds and perseverance and toil, is more important than the deeds themselves. We shall discover in the final day, when we stand before the Lord, that the motive with which we served Him, was much more important than our service itself.

And, what is going to be the punishment, if the church, and the leader of the church, does not repent? Here it is. Else, I am coming to you, and I will remove your lampstand out of its place. The lampstand is the church.

The Lord says, I'll remove this lampstand out of its place, means, you, as far as I'm concerned, from heaven, the Lord says, you will no longer be a church. But, of course, you will have a board outside, saying, the first church in Ephesus, or something like that, and people will still come to your meetings. But, as far as God is concerned, He says, I have no longer, I'll no longer consider you to be a church in my eyes.

I'll remove the lampstand. For what sin? For what sin? For their loss of love. Blessed is the church, who realizes the seriousness of it.

Brothers and sisters, when a local church, keeping purity and doctrine and all the other wonderful standards against sin and all that, loses its fervency of love for Jesus, and loses the fervency of its love for one another, it is in great danger, as far as God is concerned, of ceasing to be a church in His eyes. That's something very important for us to bear in mind. Verse 6. But, He says, you've got some good qualities.

You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Now, there is no other verse in the scripture which tells us what the Nicolaitans were, or who they were, or what their doctrine was, or what their deeds were. So, in the absence of any particular verse that teaches us what exactly they did and taught, we have to try and understand it from the meaning of the word Nicolaitan.

Now, this is a Greek word. The New Testament was first written in Greek. And the word Nicolaitan is a combination of two Greek words.

That word L-A-I-T is the word from which we get the English word laity. Laity means the ordinary people. Nicael means to conquer.

And it means to conquer the people, the common people. So we see that here in this church, towards the end of the first century, was the beginning of a certain evil seed. An evil seed of certain people in the church who wanted to dominate the others.

A sort of special priestly class who were going to be priests in a special way in which the other believers were not going to be priests. And there, around 100 A.D., we see the origin of this wretched system that has led to a distinction between certain people as priests and certain people as not priests. Certain people as pastors and certain people as not pastors.

Certain people as reverends and certain people as not reverends. It began there. But the Lord says, you hate the deeds of those people and I also hate them.

That type of desire to dominate others is something which God hates. Because it is like making a special mediatorial class of people. A special class of people who are mediators between Jesus Christ and the common people.

It is as though Jesus Christ 1 Timothy 2 5, who is the one mediator between God and men, is not enough. We want to add a second mediator in between. Now we know that the Roman Catholic Church has got this teaching, which is completely false, of Mary being a second mediator between Jesus Christ and us.

But I tell you, a lot of Protestant churches and Pentecostal churches have an equally false teaching when they have a pastor who has to find God's will for you. What is he? He is a sort of a second mediator too. Sure.

That is this Nicolaitan class of people who want to be a little above the others and don't allow the other people to come directly to Jesus Christ ahead. In a local church Jesus Christ wants everyone to have a direct connection with him. God has given different gifts in the church to teach, to evangelize, to be prophets and all that.

But none of them must come between the individual believer and Christ. That's the thing which Jesus hates. When a man tries to come between another soul and Jesus Christ in any way, in dominating him in some way or making him dependent on my prophecies or any such thing.

Jesus hates it. Let's never forget that. And that desire to dominate others, sometimes it can be through money.

There are many western organizations, Christian organizations, that control people in India with money. God is not enough. Jesus is not enough.

You also need my money. You are dependent on me. Jolly well listen to what I say if you want to survive.

Jesus hates that. We are never to dominate others with our gift or with money or any other way because Jesus has called everyone of us to be servants and if there is somebody who is very great in the church then he must be the servant of all, Jesus says. So Jesus hates those who are Nicolaitans and he says, as

far as you are concerned, you hate them.

In the church in Ephesus they were not there. They were driven out. He says, he doesn't say they were there in your midst but they were there in some of the other churches and he says, you have kept them out and I'm very proud of you for that.

Verse 7. He who has a year, let him hear what the Spirit says to all the churches. Now all the things we have just considered is what the Holy Spirit is saying to all the churches in every century but he also recognizes one very important thing that out of all the people who are sitting in each church they will not all have a year to hear. It's not that they are deficient in hearing and are deaf no, but that they don't have a spirit that's willing to do what God wants them to do.

They want to have their own way. That's what it means but the one who has a year to hear, the overcomers to him who overcomes, I will grant you each of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. And so we see here that in the church there is a group of people who are called the overcomers.

These are people who have conquered these things that we see are where the church comes short of God's standards. For example in the midst of the church in Ephesus the overcomers would be those who keep their love burning in the midst of all the other people who have lost their love. In a local church where we find people are going down from God's standards, there must be a group of people who stand for God's standards, who keep their love burning those are the overcomers who overcome sin, who overcome this losing of the first love and keep it burning.

And so we see that right through the seven churches Jesus Christ is dealing primarily with the overcomers. Revelation chapter 2 verse 8 to 11 is the message of the Lord to the second church. Now out of the seven churches there are only two churches against which the Lord has no charge at all.

No rebuke. One is this church in Smyrna and the other is another one called Philadelphia which we'll come to later on. But this church in Smyrna is a wonderful church.

There are many good things and not one single bad thing spoken about this church. Notice what he says the first and the last. The one who was dead and who has come to life says this I know your tribulation and your poverty but you are rich spiritually and the slander of those who say they are Jews but are not.

We could say put it like this today. Those who say they are believers but are not. But are a synagogue of Satan today.

Now notice what this particular church had. Notice three things. They had tribulation they had material poverty and they were slandered by the so called believers around them.

Maybe slandered saying they are preaching false doctrine or slandered in various ways. But there are three things we see here. They were persecuted they were poor and they were opposed and slandered and they were suffering and it says here that the people who oppose you are the so called Jews.

The Jews were the people who called themselves God's people. They call themselves God's people but they are not Jesus said. He is not talking about the heathen people here now.

Notice he is not talking about the people who have no revelation of God. The Jews were the people who had a Bible These people had a Bible Genesis to Malachi. They call themselves God's people but they

oppose the true people of God in Smyrna and the Lord says I'll tell you what I think about these so called believers who oppose you.

They are a synagogue of Satan. Who said that Jesus doesn't use strong words? That Jesus doesn't give strong messages? Imagine calling a group of believers a synagogue of Satan! Boy, that's strong stuff. If some preacher preached that today we'd call him un-Christ like.

Well, Jesus himself is un-Christ like from that point of view. We've got a wrong idea of Jesus. It's another Jesus.

Here is the one who says here is a church that's suffering, that's poor but it's spiritually rich but it is slandered and this wonderful phrase which we find many times coming in the word of God do not be afraid. Wonderful. I really believe more than anything else we need to hear that word of Jesus for the coming days.

Do not be afraid. I want to tell you my dear brothers and sisters what I have observed in many many believers I would say in most believers there is a spirit of fear. Many believers, even believers who have an understanding of the new and living way have not been freed from the spirit of fear and the spirit of timidity.

Fear of Satan, fear of the future, fear of human beings, fear of various types of people and fear of fellow believers also. And if we do not radically work out our salvation with a true godly fear and trembling from this fear I want to tell you we'll never never be able to be what God wants us to be on earth. There's a song that we sing, Lord help me to be on this earth what you want me to be.

Well I'll tell you very clearly you'll never be what God wants you to be unless you completely get rid of the spirit of fear and timidity. We've got to fight it. Particularly the fear of people for example very often the spirit of prophecy in the church is restricted by the spirit of fear and timidity.

I believe that. In many churches where God wants to move powerfully the spirit of timidity and fear comes upon people. And the devil fools them that that's humility.

And then fear of the future, fear of what people are going to do to you and harm you and if you witness for Jesus what will happen? Why do you think there are so few believers who are willing to be bold witnesses for Jesus Christ in their office and in their factory? They're afraid they won't get their promotion. They're afraid in various ways to let other people know that I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. What is it? Even people who say they're baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.

There's a spirit of fear that grips them. They're very bold in the church. Like Peter in the midst of the other disciples he could say, oh if all men deny you I will not deny you.

But let him get into the midst of unbelievers and even a little servant girl is enough to keep this mighty fisherman's mouth shut. And so it is with many believers who sit in their offices and nobody in that office knows this person is a wholehearted disciple of Jesus Christ. Why? Is that true in your case my dear friend? Then I just want to say it is the spirit of fear.

I don't want to say this to condemn you. I just want to say that God doesn't want you to live under that bondage. He wants you to be free.

He wants you to be free. I know what it is like because I've had that spirit of fear myself and I thank God Jesus has freed me from it. We are to be bold to let everyone know that we are disciples of Jesus and if we suffer for it it's worth suffering for that.

That's the best thing worth suffering for. Don't be afraid what you're about to suffer. That's a word we need to hear.

Behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison. Yes, some of you will be put into prison, that you may be tested. But even that prison will only be used by God to test you.

Wonderful. That God can use even an imprisonment to test us. And you will have tribulation for ten days.

So we see God allows us to have tribulation. God doesn't protect us from suffering. There is a false gospel that's going around the world nowadays which teaches that if you really have faith you'll never suffer anything.

I want to tell you that's a lie. Because Jesus Christ suffered more than anyone else. The apostles all suffered.

There's a false gospel that goes around saying that if you have faith you'll become rich. That's a lie because Jesus wasn't rich, Paul wasn't rich, Peter wasn't rich. They had more faith than any of us sitting here.

Or any of the other fellows who speak about that today. No. You will have tribulation.

In the world you will have tribulation. Jesus said that in John 16. Verse 33 In the world you will have tribulation.

But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. So we shall have difficulties in the world.

Those who live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But notice the restriction there. You will have it only for ten days.

The Lord says I'm in control of the knob. And I know when to turn it down. And I know when to bring it down to zero.

I am in control. And even when you go through that tribulation and you're imprisoned, I am going to put a time limit to it. Praise God for that, that Jesus Christ puts a time limit on our suffering.

He will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability. But with the temptation will give us grace to overcome it. So that's a wonderful thing there, that he puts a time limit on that tribulation.

And he says, you've only got to be faithful. Be faithful unto death, even if you have to die for it. Be faithful.

My dear brothers and sisters, if we are not willing to boldly proclaim Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord in our office and factory today, how will we stand up for him in the day of persecution? Will we really confess him boldly when we are concerned about a little thing like a promotion or little reproach from some fellow in the office? We really need to be ashamed of ourselves a little more in this area. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life which is far better than any earthly promotion. He who has a year, not everybody has a year to hear this.

People are still interested in their, in the honor of men in their earthly promotions and so many things like that. Alright, you can go your way. But the few overcomers, he who has a year to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. There is a first death, and there is a second death. Just like there is a first birth, and a second birth.

There is a first death, which is the physical death, and the second death is the eternal death, being cast into the lake of fire, which we'll come to later. Again, the message is to the overcomer. The overcomer, be faithful unto death.

So here we see a wonderful church, that's willing to suffer, that's poor materially, does not have all the rich people in Smyrna in its congregation, and it's suffering, it's slandered by everyone else, but the Lord's delighted with this church. Nothing to rebuke in this church. He says, don't be afraid, and even if you're troubled by others, I will allow it only for a limited period, and during that time I'll test you, and it'll work to bring greater glory to you.

To the next church, verse 12. To the angel of the church in Pergamum writes, the one who has the sharp two-edged sword says this, I know where you dwell. This is to the leader of the church in Pergamum.

The one who has the sharp two-edged sword says this, I know where you dwell. The Lord knows the exact difficulties surrounding the situation in which we live. He says, you are dwelling where Satan's throne is.

Now, the Bible teaches in Ephesians 6.12 that Satan dwells in the heavenly places, in the second heavens, between the first and the third heavens, but he roams about on the earth, as we read in the book of Job, chapter 1. And during his roaming about on the earth, there was one particular place in the first century where he had established his throne. Now, I want to say it's a bit of an honor if Satan decides to have his throne somewhere where we are, because that indicates that we are a bit of a threat to him. He decides that he's got to be pretty close to this church, because this can be a cause of some problem to my kingdom.

So, that's not something to be afraid of. I think it's a real privilege if I heard that Satan has decided to settle down in Bangalore, somewhere near us, I'd say, boy, that's tremendous. Wonderful, that means we are a real threat to his kingdom, but if Satan ignored us, oh, I'd say there's something wrong with us, if we can be ignored by Satan, that he doesn't feel we're a threat to the fulfillment of his purpose.

So, he says, I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is, and you hold fast my name. Here are the good qualities in this church. There are some things wrong here.

We'll come to that. We find that Satan did keep his throne there, and he did succeed in corrupting this church. That's the sad thing we see here in Pergamon.

But they had some good things. You hold fast to my name. You're not ashamed to confess my name.

You did not deny my faith, even when you were persecuted. And even in the days of Antipas, my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you where Satan dwells. Twice it's mentioned where Satan dwells, where Satan has his throne.

And there was a man there who was an outstandingly faithful witness called Antipas. I want to tell you something. Do you know Antipas is a Greek word? Do you know the meaning of it? Against everyone.

How would you like to be that? Against everyone. What a man he was. I heard of a great man of God somewhere in the 2nd or 3rd century or somewhere, who was standing up for some particular doctrine, which is in the word of God.

And it was a time when probably 4th century, a time when corruption had come into the church. And some of the other bishops came up to him and said do you know that the whole world is against you? He says, well, I'm against the whole world then. No problem there.

The whole world is against me because I stand for this truth? Well, I'm against the whole world. I tell you, brothers and sisters, God needs men and women like that to fulfill His purpose. Now you are looking around to see how many people believe this.

Let me see before deciding whether I want to believe this or not. It's got nothing to do with how many people believe it. It's got to do with, is it written in the word of God? Had God shown it to you in Scripture? Well, never mind if everybody's against me, I'm against everybody then.

That's how Antipas was. Of course, he didn't get a reputation for being a diplomat and being gentle and nice and all that type of thing. He probably was considered a bit of a lunatic.

You know, one of these difficult people, hard to get along with him. He's just against everything you do. But what was he against? He was against sin.

He was against worldliness. He was against compromise. He was against disobedience to the word of God.

He was against the devil. Yeah, I can imagine why the devil put his throne there. I think the devil put his throne there because Antipas was there.

He wasn't bothered about all the others, but this fellow was a real threat to him. And I tell you, brothers and sisters, be like that. God needs people like that in India in these last days.

Yes, and he stood true, and you'll have to pay a price, I might as well tell you that. You may lose your head, like Antipas did, like John the Baptist did, like many others have done, but it's worth it. It's worth it to lose your head because you stand up for the truth.

And now God is testing us with little things. If we are not willing to lose little things today, to stand up for the truth, we'll never be willing to lose our head in that day. Easy to say, oh, I'll be a martyr in that day, and here one little thing I'm not willing to give up when I stand up for the truth.

Be like Antipas, whom God, Jesus says, my faithful one. And I'd like to be somewhere near the judgment seat of Christ when Antipas gets his reward. Yes, I'd really like to clap my hands for that man.

Verse 14, but even though there was such an outstanding man like this in that church, he had died. I think things were probably all right when he was alive and he kept the fire burning, made sure the compromiser was outside, but he had died now, and the devil managed to get in. Oh, what a sad thing.

Like Paul said to the church in Ephesus once, he says, as long as I was here, everything was all right, because I kept the spirit of the Antichrist out, but after I go, he says in Acts 20, I know that evil wolves will come inside. Well, that's what happened after Antipas died. I have a few things against you, because now you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam.

Balaam was one of those Old Testament false prophets who you read about him and when you get time, you can read it in Numbers chapter 22 to 24. You read there that Balaam was a man who was one of these hired preachers. You know, these preachers whom you've got to pay in order to get them to preach for you.

Well, Balaam was one of the first of those hired preachers. And when the king sent for him, and the first time he didn't go, because the offering was not big enough. But then the king promised to give a bigger offering and he prayed about it.

All these prophets usually pray about such things. And he got the guidance to go. He got the guidance to go, because the offering was a little bigger now.

You see, this is not just Balaam. It's happened all through the years. Balaam was 1500 years before Christ, and from 1500 years before Christ to 2080, it's happened all along these people who, when they find something attractive, they say, ah, God's meeting me there.

Balaam is an example of that because he felt God was meeting him. And God allowed him to go, just like he allows a lot of people to go today after money. And this has become a teaching now, you see, a particular type of teaching.

And he, the way he corrupted Israel was, he couldn't curse them. He had a little fear of God. But he told Belak the king, I'll tell you how to spoil these people.

You see, God is a very jealous God. If you will get these Israeli young men to marry some of your unconverted Moabite girls, I tell you that's the best way to corrupt the church. Corrupt them.

And so, Belak did that. He allowed these young girls to go flirting inside the Israeli camp, and sure enough, those Israeli young men fell. Just like a lot of young believers fall today.

It's the same old story. Well, Balaam introduced that. And so the sons of Israel got corrupt, and then they followed their wives in worshipping idols.

Eating things sacrificed to idols means worshipping idols, and then also committing acts of immorality. Now there are two things mentioned here in verse 14. One is immorality, and the other is idolatry.

Participation in idolatry and immorality. And if you read through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, you'll find some of the strongest condemnations of God against sin are against these two sins. Idolatry and immorality.

Idolatry and immorality. That is why God judged the Israelites severely many times. It is for idolatry and immorality.

And it says here in this particular church there were some people doesn't say it had gotten to the leadership level yet, but there were some people and they were not judged, they were not disciplined. They were allowed to carry on with this teaching in a small way of idolatry and immorality. What is

idolatry? Idolatry is bowing down to something other than God.

It can be your job. Your job can be an idol where you'd be willing to deny God in order to keep your job. Making money can be an idol where money becomes your God.

Or some human being whom you adore very much can be your God. Idolatry is what God hates. And always God's judgment has come very severely on idolatry.

And particularly as those who seek to be a witness for Christ in a country like ours. I just want to say brothers and sisters we have a tremendous responsibility to be a flaming witness for Jesus Christ in this land which is steeped in idolatry. Tremendous responsibility to fight that spirit and to overcome.

And immorality there's a lot of immorality where there's idolatry. And immorality begins in the thoughts as Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount. And there were people who took that lightly.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And then, verse 15, you also have in the same way some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Now notice the Nicolaitans who came up earlier in verse 6 did not have any power in the church in Ephesus because the church in Ephesus hated them.

But when it came to the church in Pergamos these Nicolaitans had got power. The priests had come in. The mediators had taken over.

The mediators between man and Jesus Christ. The priests and the pastors and the reverends and the right reverends and all the rest of the garbage there is in Christendom today. They've all got there, got into place now.

And the Lord said I've got that against you. Repent, verse 16. Or else I'm coming to you quickly.

Notice the first reference to the second coming of Christ. I'm coming to you quickly and I'll make war against them with the sword of my mouth. Now it says here the teaching of the Nicolaitans, verse 15.

In other words, these Nicolaitans had got some verses in the Bible to support their so-called priestcraft. They're pretty clever the devil, to support all these unbiblical things. He's got verses in the Bible.

But the Lord says repent of all these things. It's something you've got to repent. And what's going to judge you? The sword of my mouth, which is God's word.

Jesus said in John 12, verse 48. He says if a man doesn't listen to my words, I won't judge him. John 12, 48.

But the word I have spoken will judge him in the final day. That's something very significant. The word I have spoken will judge him in the final day.

And so we find that Jesus doesn't have to judge us in the final day. Jesus is going to judge us by what he's already revealed in his word. This word will be our judge in the final day.

And that's why it's important to take heed to this word right now. I'll make war with them with the sword of my mouth. Verse 17.

He who has a ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to all the churches. Again, the message to the overcomers, to him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. Now in the Old Testament, we

read that every day the manna fell from heaven for the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years.

That was their food. But then the Lord told Moses, you take some of that manna and put it in a little pot and keep it inside the ark of the covenant in the most holy place of the tabernacle. That was the hidden manna.

And that was just to be a testimony before God. The most holy place was the other side of the veil beyond which no Israelite could go in the Old Testament except the high priest once a year. Now today that place has been opened up.

That's what we speak about the new and living way that goes through the veil. And when you get there, there is the hidden manna there. That is, that which is hidden from man.

God will reveal to us if we overcome. God will give to us that hidden food hidden from the eyes of men, revelation on God's word inside the most holy place if we walk the new and living way. And I will give him a white stone and a new name written on that stone which no one knows but he who receives it.

That is like an intimate name that Jesus is going to give to each overcomer. In other words, if I become an overcomer, Jesus is going to give me a name which symbolizes his intimate relationship with me and you won't know that name. And if you are an overcomer Jesus is going to give you a special name like a husband gives to a wife.

Speaking of intimacy, a relationship with you which I won't know. It's wonderful. Tremendous promises to the overcomer.

Intimate fellowship with the bridegroom. It's wonderful to be an overcomer written on a white stone. And then we come to the fourth church which is mentioned here, and that is the church in Thyatira verse 18 to 29.

To the leader of the church in Thyatira writes the son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like burnished bronze. That means he can see through everything. He is one who judges.

I know your deeds. There are a lot of things wrong to be said about this church but he begins with appreciation again. I know your deeds, your love, your faith, your service and perseverance and your deeds of late are greater than at first.

There are plenty of deeds but you've got false doctrine. Verse 20. You tolerate the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and she teaches and leads my bond servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Now, in the New Testament God has not ordained prophetesses. Ephesians 4.11 says there are prophets in the church but no prophetesses. In the Old Testament under the Old Covenant there were a few prophetesses.

Five, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, the wife of Isaiah and the last one was Anna in Luke chapter 2. That was under the Old Covenant. But after the day of Pentecost there are no more prophetesses. Women can prophesy but they cannot be prophetesses.

And so when you find some middle-aged woman who tries to be a prophetess I say beware. Remember Jezebel. Paul said in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 12 I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority

over men.

God has not allowed a woman to teach for two reasons. One, she was created inferior to the man. A second reason because she was deceived by the devil and she can be deceived more easily even today.

That's why a woman is not allowed to be a teacher. And when a woman begins to be a teacher she is in danger. Now the sad thing is that in this particular church the authority the leader was not strong enough to keep this woman under control.

Now I want to tell you something else. In the Greek language, verse 20 the word woman, there is only one word in the Greek language for woman and wife. And you have to translate it according to the context.

So there is a possibility that this Jezebel was the wife of the leader. To the leader of the church in Thyatira writes I have this against you that you allow your wife to be a teacher to run the show, to control the church from behind the scenes and to lead people astray. And she had such power that she, it says in the middle of verse 20 that she led God's bond servants astray.

Imagine that even the servants of God in that church were being led astray. And to such things like immorality and idolatry again. I just want to say this.

A man who is called to be a leader, to leadership in a church has got to have a wife who has a meek and a quiet spirit. Beware of a Christian leader whose wife is like a associate pastor or co-leader with him. I tell you there is real danger in such a church.

I wouldn't go anywhere near such a church. But blessed is a man who is called to leadership in a church if he has a wife who can be a sister just like all the other sisters so that there is absolutely no difference. So that you can't even distinguish.

Blessed is a man who has a wife like that. And here was Jezebel, this false prophetess and all the confusion that she caused in this church. God gave her time to repent.

We read in verse 21. But she didn't want to repent. And so God says, I'm going to punish all those who committed adultery with her.

That is, who come into a relationship with her. And God will punish them with great tribulation. Now the tribulation the church in Smyrna faced was from men.

But this great tribulation is from God. God's going to punish those

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