

The Church Age

Revelation 2: “Four Church Letters”



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Let's Get Started

Now we are about to embark on the study of seven remarkable letters to seven specifically selected churches. In one sense, they are as ancient as the Apostle John, but in another, they are as modern as today's computers. We could read them as personal messages to people who lived almost 2,000 years ago, but we would be more correct to read them as personal messages to those living today. They were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and their message is of the utmost importance. We should keep in mind that these seven churches represent seven time periods giving us a panoramic view of church history running from Pentecost to the Rapture.

The Church Age

Author	Ephesus Period	Smyrna Period	Pergamum Period	Thyatira Period	Sardis Period	Philadelphia Period	Laodicea Period
Tim LaHaye <small>2:1</small>	A.D. 30 to A.D. 100	A.D. 100 to A.D. 312	A.D. 312 to A.D. 606	A.D. 606 to Trib. Period*	A.D. 1520 to Trib. Period*	A.D. 1750 to Trib. Period*	A.D. 1900 to Trib. Period*
Hal Lindsey <small>2:2</small>	A.D. 33 to A.D. 100	A.D. 100 to A.D. 312	A.D. 312 to A.D. 590	A.D. 590 to A.D. 1517	A.D. 1517 to A.D. 1750	A.D. 1750 to A.D. 1925	A.D. 1900 to Trib. Period
J. Vernon McGee <small>2:3</small>	Pentecost to A.D. 100	A.D. 100 to A.D. 314	A.D. 314 to A.D. 590	A.D. 590 to A.D. 1000	A.D. 1517 to A.D. 1800	A.D. 1800 to Rapture	Does not say
Daymond R. Duck	Pentecost to A.D. 100	A.D. 100 to A.D. 312	A.D. 312 to A.D. 590	A.D. 590 to A.D. 1517	A.D. 1517 to A.D. 1750	A.D. 1750 to A.D. 1900	A.D. 1900 to Trib. Mid- Point

*Tim LaHaye believes these 4 church periods all end with the Tribulation Period.

I Will Never Leave You

Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:

As we just saw in Chapter 1, the **seven stars** (Revelation 1:16, 20) represent seven angels and the **seven golden lampstands** (Revelation 1:12, 13, 20) represent seven churches. Since we are following the *Golden Rule of Interpretation*, we will say this letter was directed to the angel over the church in Ephesus, the same angel who presides over the Ephesus period of the Church Age.

Jesus told John to write this letter, and it is Jesus who holds the seven angels in his right hand and walks in the midst of the seven churches. Jesus is the one who controls the angels and the one who will never leave or forsake his Church. He is obviously a person of great power and love who has a message for the church in Ephesus and the Ephesus period of the Church Age.

What Others are Saying:

David Breese: I would like, therefore, to suggest that the Bible may be telling us that your church, my church, has an angel. 2:4

Remember This...

Two Important Things the World Needs to Know About Jesus

- ✓ He is all-powerful, yet loving.
- ✓ He will never forsake his Church.

The Eyes of God Are Everywhere

Revelation 2:2, 3 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

The penetrating eyes of Jesus (Proverbs 15:3) are everywhere beholding the evil and the good. He knows everything we do. He knew that the Ephesus church toiled with great difficulty, and he recognized their perseverance under trial. This church refused to tolerate evil men in their congregation that falsely claimed to have known and seen Jesus. These evil men were put on trial and found guilty of lying.

Jesus noted how the Ephesus church remained faithful, even though it was surrounded by immorality and pagan beliefs. This church stood firm against religious deception in the name of Jesus.

What Others are Saying:

Jack Van Impe: Major Christian denominations have been captured by those who reject the essential truth of the Bible, and the deity of Jesus Christ. ²⁵

Something to Ponder

Why Are These Problems Important to the Church?

- ✓ So we can learn from them.
- ✓ So we will not repeat them.

Backsliders

Revelation 2:4, 5 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

In spite of all the good things about the church in Ephesus, there was a problem. There was a decline in the people's relationship with Jesus because they had stopped loving him the way they once did.

Jesus asked them to recall the relationship they once had with him, to take inventory of their lives, and to turn from the things of the world and back to him. If they did not, he warned that they would lose their right to exist as a church. They must stop backsliding or they will die out. The choice was theirs.

Many mistakenly believe the early Christians of the Ephesus church period got on a spiritual mountain top and stayed there. When the period began, the people's highest priority was Jesus. As time went on, they started backsliding. By the end of the period, they needed to get back to their first love.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Ephesus
 - *backsliders*
 - *the church should*
 - remember
 - repent
 - return

Love The Person, But Hate The Sin

Revelation 2:6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Exactly who the Nicolaitans were, and what they did, is anyone's guess. Some say they were a cult that tried to create a ruling class of priests in the Ephesus church. Others say they taught that Christians could sin because what is done in the flesh does not affect the spirit. Still others say they taught that Christians needed to indulge in sin to understand it. Whoever they were, and whatever they did, the church in Ephesus hated it. And so did Jesus.

During the Ephesus period, many groups tried to introduce false doctrines and false practices into the Church. What they were doing was repulsive to Christians, and more importantly, it was repulsive to Jesus.

Jesus didn't say he hated the Nicolaitans, but he did say he hated what they were doing. This is a classic example of New Testament teaching, Jesus loves the person, but hates the sin (Amos 5:15; John 15:12).

What Others are Saying:

Ed Hindson: One of the great warnings of prophetic Scripture is that false teaching will bring deception upon professing Christendom in the last days. Jesus himself warned that *many will come in my name, claiming, "I am Christ," and will deceive many* (Matthew 24:5). He also predicted that *many false prophets will appear and deceive many people* (Matthew 24:11). Our Lord said this would continue throughout the Church Age, but he also spoke of a time at the end of the age in which false messiahs and false prophets would perform miracles to deceive the world and even confuse the elect. ²⁻⁶

Remember This...

- ✓ Sin is the transgression of the *Law*; breaking God's rules (1 John 3:4).
- ✓ Sin is knowing to do good but not doing it (James 4:17).
- ✓ Sin is anything that is not of *faith*; not trusting in God (Romans 14:23).
- ✓ Sin is all *unrighteousness*; wickedness (1 John 5:17).
- ✓ Sin is a disease of the *soul*; the inner part of man that lives forever (Psalm 41:4).
- ✓ Sin is foolishly thinking we can ignore God (Proverbs 24:9).

Overcomers

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Although this letter was specifically addressed to the church in Ephesus, the last line is addressed to anyone who will listen. He has a blessing for those who overcome (1 John 5:4). After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:3-22) they were forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of life. Apparently there was something on that tree that could cause a person who ate it to live forever. It amounted to a permanent cure for death. Jesus promises to give overcomers the opportunity to eat from that tree. It was located in the Garden of Eden, but now is located in paradise.

Remember This...

3 Steps to Overcoming Sin

- ✓ Remember the height from which you have fallen (your first love).
- ✓ Repent of your backsliding or falling away.
- ✓ Restore the good deeds you did at first.

Great Persecution

Revelation 2:8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

The church in Smyrna was experiencing great persecution, so Jesus reminded them that he is the **First and the Last** (Revelation 1:8), the Alpha and Omega. He is the one who created all things, and the one who will end all things.

Just like this church, Jesus was also persecuted. His enemies falsely accused him, beat him, spit on him, ripped out his beard, crowned him with thorns, and nailed him to a cross (Matthew 27:35) where he died.

Remember This...

When You're Persecuted, Remember:

- ✓ Jesus has always existed.
- ✓ Jesus will never cease to exist.
- ✓ Jesus died.
- ✓ Jesus triumphed when he rose from the dead (John 20:15-18).

Laying Up Your Treasures In Heaven

Revelation 2:9 I know your afflictions and your poverty, yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Jesus knows what his Church is facing. He knows every prayer, every hymn, every gift, every Sunday School lesson, every sermon, every visit, every good thing, and every bad thing. He knew about the poverty of the Christians in Smyrna. He knew they were serving under the most difficult of circumstances. Their property was being seized and many had

no source of personal income.

Those of us who live today often think of poverty in terms of not having enough money to live comfortably. In a real sense, that is exactly what poverty is, but in a higher sense, poverty is not having an acceptable relationship with God. In that sense, these Christians were rich. They were children of God and were destined for heaven. They were **laying up their treasures in heaven** (Matthew 6:19-21). We can be rich in the *temporary* things of this world and poor in the *permanent* things of heaven, or we can be poor in the temporary things of this world and rich in the permanent things of heaven.

Key Point

We can be either rich in the temporary things of this world or rich in the permanent things of heaven, we can't have both.

Jesus also knew about a group in Smyrna who falsely called themselves Jews. They even called their place of worship a synagogue, inferring that it was *the synagogue of the Lord*. But Jesus called it *the synagogue of Satan*. Even today some religious pretenders call themselves members of God's Church, but Jesus knows their really **members of Satan's church**. It does not matter what we call ourselves because Jesus knows **his sheep** (John 10:14).

What Others are Saying:

Wim Malgo: It was some years ago when statistics told us that more than 500 churches of Satan exist in the United states. These "churches" are dedicated to worshipping Satan. ²⁷

Do Not Be Afraid

Revelation 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Jesus knew that Satan intended to attack these Christians, so he had a word of encouragement for them; *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell* (Matthew 10:28).

In a sense, there is **no real power** (Romans 13:1) except that which comes from God. Satan may **test us** (Job 1-42), but only because God allows it in order that we may be strengthened.

Jesus told his people they would be persecuted for ten days. Exactly what these ten days mean is not certain, but history reveals that there were ten distinct periods of intense persecution during the Smyrna period. During this time Satan let loose all the forces of hell in an effort to stamp out the fledgling Church. Christians were beaten, jailed, tortured, and killed, yet Jesus urged faithfulness. He even promised a crown of life to those who stood fast. Many did, even unto death.

Remember This...

Heavenly Crowns for Overcomers

- ✓ The Incorruptible Crown (1 Corinthians 9:24–27).
- ✓ The Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20).
- ✓ The Crown of Life (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).
- ✓ The Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8).
- ✓ The Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:2–4).

Related Current Events

10 Periods of Persecution known by their Roman Emperors (dates are approximate)

1	Nero (64–68 a.d.)—burned Rome and blamed Christians; crucified and threw Christians into pits with wild animals; executed Paul and possibly Peter
2	Domitian (90–96 a.d.)—killed thousands in Rome; banished John to the Isle of Patmos
3	Trajan (104–117 a.d.)—outlawed Christianity; burned Ignatius at the stake
4	Marcus Aurelius (161–180 a.d.)—tortured and beheaded Christians
5	Severus (200–211 a.d.)—burned, crucified, and beheaded Christians
6	Maximinus (235–237 a.d.)—executed Christians
7	Decius (250–253 a.d.)—tried to wipe out Christianity and executed those he could find
8	Valerian (257–260 a.d.)—tried to wipe out Christianity; executed the Bishop of Carthage
9	Aurelian (270–275 a.d.)—persecuted Christians any way he could
10	Diocletian (303–312 a.d.)—burned the Scriptures

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Smyrna
 - *persecuted*
 - *the church should know*
 - that Jesus has always existed
 - that Jesus will never cease to exist
 - that Jesus died
 - that Jesus was raised from the dead

A Second Death?

Revelation 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Once again Jesus turns from addressing a specific church to addressing anyone who will listen. No other church, and no other individual can do our listening for us.

We have already noted we can be overcomers by our faith in Jesus Christ. Now we learn that faith in Jesus is also rewarded with victory over the **second death** (Revelation 20:14). The Bible teaches that there are two deaths: a first death and second death. The first death is physical. The second death is spiritual. But do not think of death as the end of things. Think of it as a separation. The first death is a separation of the soul and spirit from the body. The second death is a separation of the soul and spirit from God. A person would be better off having physical death be the end of things than to die this second death, being cast into the **lake of fire** (Revelation 20:14, 15) forever and having eternal separation from God.

Something to Ponder

- If we are born just once, we will die twice, but if we are born twice (John 3:3), we will die just once.

Compromise

Revelation 2:12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

Compromise was the big problem for those under this angel's authority. It was caused by a merging of church and state. The church in Pergamum allied itself with the world.

Jesus identified himself as the one who has the sharp double-edged sword. We know from the last chapter that the sharp **double-edged sword** (Revelation 1:16) is the Word of God. Jesus reminds this church that he will deal with it through the Bible. It is a book that can create or destroy, heal or afflict, soothe or trouble. And it is always successful.

Remember This...

- ✓ What Does a Compromising Church Need to Know?
 - That Jesus wields a sword called the Word of God. Watch out!

Don't Back Off

Revelation 2:13 I know where you live, where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city, where Satan lives.

Jesus knows where his Church is. This particular church was located in a city run by heathen intellectuals, a city given over to idolatry and the temple worship of: Athena, Caesar Augustus, Dionysus, Asklepios, Hadrian, and Zeus. Satan had a large power base there and his rulers of darkness were a major force to be reckoned with.

Satan's power was strong, but the power of the Holy Spirit was stronger. These Christians

refused to surrender. They didn't back off, and greater words could not be spoken of anyone than was of Antipas. He was a "faithful martyr."

What Others are Saying:

Ed Hindson: The ultimate crisis in education is spiritual and philosophical. Public universities sold their souls to secularism early in this century and have survived to reap the consequences. The void of spiritual values has led to the great ethical crises of our times. People just don't care what is right or wrong anymore. All they care about is themselves. ²⁻⁸

Remember This...

- The faithful honor God, and God honors the faithful!

Balaam

Revelation 2:14, 15 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Satan's vicious attack from outside the church was failing, but he had a growing danger brewing inside the church. Within its walls were two groups of people who called themselves Christians but did not measure up. Both groups were very liberal on their view of what sin is. One espoused the teachings of Balaam (Numbers 22-31). The other espoused the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

To properly understand the teachings of Balaam, we have to go back to the Old Testament. Balaam, a prophet, took money from a king named Balak to pronounce a curse on Israel. When God stopped Balaam, Balaam told Balak to have women of his country intermarry with the Jews. These women could then tempt their Jewish husbands to sin against God. Balak used these women to entice the children of Israel into idolatry and fornication. There were those in Pergamum, and also during the Pergamum period, who were doing the same thing. They were liberal on sin and were enticing others to sin.

The teachings of the Nicolaitans were more complicated. As far as we know, they believed a person's spirit is inherently good and a person's flesh is inherently evil. They also believed that it did not matter what one did in the flesh because sin in the flesh had no effect on the spirit. In essence they were saying, "Live it up; immorality doesn't matter." That tickled some people's ears. They liked the idea of loose living, but Jesus was not pleased. He knew that *a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough* (1 Corinthians 5:6). A little compromise would eventually corrupt a lot of people.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Pergamum

- *compromising*
- *the church should know*
 - that Jesus wields a sword called the Word of God

Our Spiritual Sword

Revelation 2:16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Jesus warned the church in Pergamum to stop following the Nicolaitans. In the Old Testament, we learn that the children of Israel eventually killed Balaam (along with King Balak and his nation, Numbers 31:6-8) with a sword. Here in the New Testament, we learn that Jesus warns loose-living members of this church that he will fight them with a spiritual sword, the Bible, if they do not change their evil ways. The Bible is the effective weapon against sin in the Church because it confronts the sinner with his sin.

Remember This...

Our Spiritual Sword is the Bible which:

- ✓ Reveals all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).
- ✓ Shines the light of God on our failures (John 3:20).
- ✓ Reveals the true will of God (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
- ✓ Convicts us of sin (John 8:7).
- ✓ Reveals the love of God (John 3:16).
- ✓ Reveals the judgment of God (Romans 14:10).
- ✓ Calls for repentance (Acts 2:38).

What Others are Saying:

J. Vernon McGee: What a mistake we make if we think that the Church has the authority to decide what is right and what is wrong. The true Church is made up of believers in Jesus Christ—what Scripture calls the body of Christ. They are to be lights in the world. And if we are going to be lights in this dark world, we need to be careful to identify with the person of Jesus Christ and to recognize, not the Church, but the Word of God as our authority. ²⁹

Manna From Heaven

Revelation 2:17 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. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

The hidden manna takes us back to another Old Testament story. As the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness they ran short of food. They began to complain, so God fed them manna from heaven (Exodus 16). When the manna fell, Moses told Aaron to collect a pot full and hide it in the ark as a reminder to future generations that God had met their needs. Since we cannot see Jesus, he is our *hidden* manna. He promises that we will never hunger spiritually (John 6:35) because he is always with us.

The white stone is a reference to the way votes were cast at the courts of justice in John's day. When a case was tried, the jurors voted by dropping stones into an urn: black for guilty or white for innocent. Jesus promises that overcomers will be found innocent when God judges all things. Because of the shed blood of Jesus overcomers are set free from the penalty of sin.

The new name that no one knows has many interpretations, but the most common one seems to be that overcomers will receive a white stone bearing a secret name of Jesus. It will symbolize that each one of us has a special, intimate relationship with him. We will know him by a very personal name that no one else knows.

Think about it. We will be innocent, never hunger, and have a personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus promises to take care of his people and provide for their future. Overcomers will enter God's glory with many rewards from a Lord who loves each one of us.

Eyes Of Fire and Feet Of Bronze

Revelation 2:18 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

Jesus is the Son of God, which reveals his relationship to the God, the Father.

Jesus goes on to further identify himself as the one *whose eyes are like a blazing fire*. His fiery eyes depict his penetrating insight, his anger, and his attitude toward the adulterous nature of the church in Thyatira and its church period. His eyes are burning with strong displeasure as he looks upon the wickedness of this church.

Jesus describes himself as the one *whose feet are like burnished bronze*. This is a reminder that he will judge his Church. Those who bring evil into the Church in the name of Christianity are begging to be judged by the Son of God.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Blazing Eyes
 - sees everything
- ✓ Bronze Feet
 - judgment

We Are What We Do?

Revelation 2:19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more that you did at first.

The Bible teaches that all believers will appear before the judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10) of Christ. This is not the **Great White Throne Judgment** where only the lost will appear. It is the judgment seat of Christ where heavenly crowns will be given. To be a Righteous Judge, Jesus must know how we lived. Concerning this church, He knew:

- ✓ Their *deeds*. We are what we do! Christians do the works of Christians. Those who do

not do the works of Christians, are not Christians.

- ✓ Their *love*. When people turn to God they receive the Holy Spirit in their heart. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22) is love. Love is of God (1 John 4:7), and God's people will love.
- ✓ Their *service*. Service is a ministry. The purpose of the Church is not for entertainment, enhancing our image, or doctoring our sore toes. Its purpose is service to God.
- ✓ Their *faith*. Genuine faith is something that can be seen. It produces good deeds (James 2:17, 18). It is how an unbelieving world sees Christ in us.
- ✓ Their *perseverance*. This is often called long-suffering in the Bible. It is the fourth fruit of the Holy Spirit. Many in this church endured under great pressure for long periods of time.
- ✓ Their *last works*. This church was doing more and more. That should be the goal of every church: to grow, to do more, to reach more people, and to increase in good works.

Jezebel

Revelation 2:20, 21 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

Something Jesus did not like was the fact that this church was using a false teacher named Jezebel. History shows that she was a priestess at a pagan temple. She was also deeply involved in fortune-telling but was passing herself off as a prophetess of God. She was enticing God's people to depart from the faith. Instead of teaching them to be faithful, she was teaching them to commit fornication. Instead of teaching them to avoid idolatry, she was teaching them to eat food sacrificed to idols. Instead of leading them to Jesus, she was leading them astray.

This is a good example of what inclusiveness does. The church leaders in Thyatira thought their inclusiveness would bring in more people. They wanted to make more people comfortable at church, so they allowed Jezebel to tickle their ears with heresies.

Jesus was patient with Jezebel. He gave her plenty of time to repent, but those who are caught up in the occult find it difficult to change. Such is the case with Jezebel who persisted in her sin.

Jesus gave the Thyatira church approximately one thousand years to turn around. This is why some call it the Devil's Millennium. Jesus held his peace while the Church cooperated with false teachers. Multitudes were led astray. Instead of repenting, some in charge of the Church often had the true servants of God killed.

Key Symbols:

- ✓ Thyatira
 - Devil's Millennium
 - *spiritual adultery*

- *the church should know*
 - that Jesus is the Son of God
 - that Jesus sees every sin
 - that Jesus will judge sin in the church

Related Current Events

Examples of the Devil's Millennium

Sudan—the governing National Islamic Front murders or enslaves Christians on sight; 2,000,000 Sudanese have been massacred since 1989

China—millions of Chinese Christians have been arrested, killed, tortured, or sent to labor camps for "re-education;" eye-witnesses say pastors are regarded as more dangerous than common criminals

Nigeria and Chad—ruling Muslims incite mass riots against Christians; one riot was started when a Christian was beheaded and his head paraded down a street to shouts of "Allah Akbar!" (God is great) ²⁻¹⁰

Playing With Fire

Revelation 2:22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.

This church is a forerunner to the harlot church in Chapter 17. When we reach that chapter we will study events that will occur during the Tribulation Period, and learn that world leaders will turn on the harlot church and destroy it with a vengeance.

Jezebel was a spiritual harlot at Thyatira. Harlots are known for committing sins in bed, so Jesus warns this church that he will make a bed for Jezebel and her adulterous followers. He will put them in bed together and cast them into intense suffering. If a church wants to play with fire, Jesus will let it play with fire. If it does not repent, he will eventually let it die out and pay for its sins. False teachings should never be tolerated.

Key Point

If you want to **play with fire**, Jesus will let you **play with fire**.

What Others are Saying:

Hal Lindsey: Today some leaders of churches and "Christian" colleges who ought to know better are doing the same sort of thing. They invite noted fortune-tellers to speak in churches and classrooms to satisfy curiosity. These occultic mediums are Trojan horses (**wolf in sheep's clothing**, Matthew 7:15) in the midst of God's camp. Only evil can come from listening to their poisonous doctrines. ²⁻¹¹

You Get What You Do

Revelation 2:23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am

he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Some would argue that Jezebel was entitled to her own beliefs, but her beliefs were passed on from generation to generation. Her children followed in her footsteps and also led others astray. The Bible says, *Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God* (Romans 11:22). Everyone needs to keep in mind these two natures of God:

- ✓ He is good, but
- ✓ He will judge sin.

He is good, but he will be no more tolerant of spiritual adultery in our day than He was in Jezebel's day. The offspring of Jezebel's teachings will suffer the same fate as Jezebel. They will suffer the second death and be cast into the lake of fire.

Key Point

Everyone will receive according to what they have done on earth.

When Jesus talks about being the one *who searches hearts and minds*, he is reminding us that he looks inside us to our innermost core. He looks to see what our real affections are. He looks at our emotions, desires, and thoughts. Nothing is hidden from him.

When Jesus talks about giving to everyone *according to their deeds*, he is talking about the coming judgment. Every person will be judged in the future. There will be degrees of reward in heaven and degrees of punishment in hell. Everyone will receive according to what they did on earth.

Key Point

- ✓ There will be degrees of reward in heaven and **degrees of punishment in hell.**

Hold On

Revelation 2:24, 25 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come.

Jesus is talking to those in Thyatira who either rejected Jezebel's teachings or who were unaware of it. He promised not to place any other burdens upon them. They were already serving under difficult circumstances, so he would not ask anything more of them.

He did have some advice though. Hold on to your love, faith, ministry, patience, and ever-increasing works. Hold on to these until I return. This is another reference to the Rapture. It is also another indication that there is some overlapping of the seven church periods. It tells us that there will be some people in every church period who have characteristics of other church periods.

Warning!

- ✓ **Satan's Attack on the Church**
 - **I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9).**
 - **You remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives (Revelation 2:13).**
 - **Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (Revelation 2:24).**

A Promise

Revelation 2:26–28 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery—just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.

If you refuse to follow Jezebel's teachings, refuse to do her works, continue in the works of Jesus (John 6:29), persist until your death or Christ's return, you will receive a position of power (1 Corinthians 6:2) over the nations.

Be a faithful believer and you will rule over nations with a strong, loving hand. You will break those who resist your authority like a potter breaks vessels of clay. You will receive power and authority from Jesus (2 Timothy 2:12) in the same way he received power and authority from God the Father (Acts 1:8; Revelation 20:4).

The planet Venus is called the morning star because it is the brightest object in the sky just before the sun rises. It is sometimes a guide to navigators who use it to determine their location on earth. The **Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16) is also one of the names of Jesus, so when he promises to give the morning star to the overcomer, the gift is himself. This is a promise that Jesus will indwell in the believer, that he will never leave the believer, and that he will guide the believer during the dark or difficult times of life.**

Warning!

- ✓ **Believe and receive or doubt and go without.**

Faithful Unto Death

Revelation 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

We have already seen this same statement four times. The fact is, Jesus ends every letter with this same exhortation. It is a command for all to listen and pay attention to what is in these letters. History tells us that the followers of Jezebel did not listen, just as many churches today are not listening. Yet some in Thyatira were faithful unto death, just as some today will be faithful unto death.

Something to Ponder

Before the Tribulation Period begins, Jesus will remove his faithful from the earth. True believers will not suffer the terrible events found later in Revelation, but instead will be removed from this earth in what we know as the Rapture (Revelation 4:1). In Revelation 13:9 we read, *He who has an ear, let him hear*. The question is, why did Jesus leave out that last part about *what the Spirit says to the churches*? Why does he say seven times, *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*, and then suddenly shorten it by saying, *He who has an ear, let him hear*? Could it be that the Church is no longer on earth?

What Others are Saying:

Hal Lindsey: I believe that (Revelation 13:9) is another one of those clear symbols that show the Church is not on earth during that (the Tribulation) period. [2:12](#)

Study Questions

- ✓ What did God hold against the church in Ephesus?
- ✓ What was the affliction of the church in Smyrna?
- ✓ What was the good asset of the church in Pergamum?
- ✓ Why was God upset with the church in Thyatira?
- ✓ What message should Christians today get from these letters?

[Go to Answers](#)

Chapter Wrap-up

- ✓ The first four church letters are addressed to: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira. Each letter explains the churches' problems and offers a solution.
- ✓ Those who conquer their sinful nature can overcome the second death. Through faith in Jesus Christ one can live forever with God. ([Revelation 2:11](#))
- ✓ Christ is described as having eyes of fire and feet of bronze. His eyes depict his ability to see everything that we do, and his feet refer to his position as judge over of all creation. ([Revelation 2:18](#))
- ✓ Jezebel, a false priestess in Thyatira, was leading people away from God. God told this church to rid themselves of her or face punishment. ([Revelation 2:20–23](#))
- ✓ When Christ promises to give the Bright and Morning Star to overcomers he is really promising the gift of himself to the believer. ([Revelation 2:28](#))

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