

Revelation 2 – Message to the Churches

By Holly Effiom

VV1-7

Church	Description of Jesus	Good works for Jesus' name sake	Bad works	Prescription	Judgment	Reward
Ephesus	He that holds the 7 stars in right hand and walks among candlesticks	Labor; Patience; Hates evil-doers; Test those calling themselves apostles; Borne; and Not fainted; Hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans.	Left your first love	Repent	Removal of candlestick from its place	If prescription taken, then permitted to eat of the tree of life, in the middle of the paradise of God.

What aspect of Himself is Jesus emphasizing to this church?

What has Jesus observed about this church?

What were the good things they were doing?

How would Jesus know that the church hated those who were evil?

How would the church “try” one who calls him- or herself an apostle?

How does the church bear, and have patience, and labor, and not faint for Jesus' namesake?

Who are the Nicolaitans? What does this attitude have to do with leaving your first love?

What is it to leave your first love, on a personal level? Falling in/out of love?

How does a church leave its first love?

What is Jesus calling this church to do?

What will happen if the church doesn't follow Jesus' advice?

What is it to overcome?

Which of the 7 Spirits before the throne is speaking?

What is it to eat of the tree of life? Where is the tree of life? Why can't we eat of the tree of life now?

So, what is Jesus saying ultimately?

How does the way Jesus describe Himself apply to the message to this church?

LESSON: Leaving your first Love = Faithlessness

What is it to deal “treacherously” with someone? It is to violate or betray your allegiance, faith, or confidence in someone, and this is usually done secretly. So, initially a person presents him- or herself as a true friend or love, but later, and unexpectedly changes. God has spoken a lot about treachery, describing Himself as being on the receiving end of it in Hosea 5:7; and further comparing it to divorce in Malachi 2:14-16. And, God hates divorce.

God has seen the works of the church. He's seen how they have worked hard to help the homeless, care for the widows and orphans; helped raise up godly children and families from those who had been heathen; how they have protected the little ones from those who would want to take advantage of them, calling themselves “apostles”. And, God has especially appreciated the church's dealing with those who are Nicolaitans (those who call themselves Christians and yet use the freedom of Christ to live in any manner they wish).

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Jesus commends this church for doing what it is supposed to be doing; and, He sends warning to them, that there is a bad work that is crouched at the door – leaving your first love. Notice that that first love is not the one walking away, it is the church walking away from it.

So, how does one leave his or her first love? By maybe doing all the good works noted above but having the wrong motivation for doing them. Motivations such as, ambition, making a living, gaining attention – everything except loving Jesus and His church.

Leaving your first love does not sound like treachery, but Jesus’ warning is that it is the first step to treachery.

VV8-11

Church	Description of Jesus	Good works for Jesus’ name sake	Bad works	Prescription	Judgment	Reward
Smyrna	He who is the first and last; was dead and is alive	Tribulation; Poverty (but are rich); Blasphemed against by so-called Jews (actually working for satan); Imprisoned; Tribulation for 10 days.		Remain faithful to death		Crown of life and not affected by the 2 nd death.

How is Jesus describing Himself to this body?

What were Smyrna’s works?

What is the blasphemy of the Jews?

What is it to be of the synagogue of satan?

What is Jesus warning this church about? Is it their own behavior or someone else’s?

Would this church face tribulation forever?

What is the purpose of the coming tribulation?

What is the reward for the self-discipline?

What is a crown of life?

Which or what combination of the Spirits of the Lord are speaking to this church?

What is it to overcome in this context?

Is avoiding the 2nd death the crown of life?

Why did Jesus describe Himself as He did to this church?

LESSON: Giving in to fear = Faithlessness

Smyrna had nothing but good works – this church was doing everything right, and yet, they were suffering for their effort. Sort of like Job. Some of us feel that this is our life, and sometimes, suffering setback after setback leads us to depression. Jesus is addressing that church that feels fearful, powerless, and maybe even depressed – “Do not grow weary in well-doing” Gal 6:9, “for in due season, we shall reap [a crown of life, Rev 2:10], if we faint not”. Understand, Smyrna was in the place that Jesus had called them to; they were doing the work Jesus had called them to do... and He tells them that it will get worse.

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Are you depressed due to setbacks in the work you are doing *for the Lord*? People suffer depression for many different reasons, but mostly because they are doing whatever it is that *they* want to do, and it's not working out how *they* want. This is not the condition that Jesus is addressing when speaking to Smyrna. This church was meeting adversity when doing the work of the Lord – like John being imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos *because* of he was preaching Jesus Christ.

Jesus' most important warning to Smyrna is not to fear. Why is this? What does fear do to us? When you give in to fear, you communicate your lack of faith that God will do what He said He would, and you stop pressing on. Don't fear the one that can kill the body; fear the one that can kill the body and the soul, Matt 10:28.

Jesus describes Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the One who was dead is now alive – He is the beginning and end of everything and has all power, even over the very thing you fear – and He's telling you, "Do not fear, you are in the palm of My hand. Press on!"

VV12-17

Church	Description of Jesus	Good works for Jesus' name sake	Bad works	Prescription	Judgment	Reward
Pergamos	He which has the sharp 2-edged sword	Living in the midst of satan's dwelling place while holding fast to: Jesus' name; Faith in Jesus (despite martyrdom of Antipas).	Tolerate those with the doctrine of Balaam (Num 22-25); and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans	Repent.	Jesus Himself will fight against this church with his 2-edged sword	Eat the hidden manna; and a white stone with a new name.

How does Jesus describe Himself to this church?

Why is it significant that we know that the Pergamos church is in the midst of a place where "satan's seat is"?

What are the "works" that the Pergamos church is performing?

What is Balaam's story? Num 22-25 Was Balaam one of the children of Israel?

Where did the Moabites come from? Gen 19:30-38

What is the doctrine of Balaam? Num 31:16

What is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans? Rev 2:6 What are the "deeds" of the Nicolaitans?

Why would the doctrine of Balaam have a natural affinity to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans?

What is the prescription for the problem that Jesus is calling out?

What will happen if the church does not take the prescription?

Against whom will Jesus be fighting?

Which of the 7 Spirits is speaking to this church?

What is it to overcome? What will the overcomers get from Jesus?

What is significant about the "hidden manna"? John 6:49-51

What is significant about a "white stone" and a "new name"?

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LESSON: Licentiousness = Faithlessness

In looking at the story of Balaam, we understand that God is telling us about a characteristic that He doesn't like; a characteristic that He saw in the deeds of Lot's daughters in the creation of the Moabite people. He saw it perpetuated in the deeds of Balaam who taught the Moabites how to seduce the children of Israel into idolatry and thus bringing a curse upon themselves. And, He saw it in the deeds of the Nicolaitans. And in this church, He sees it being perpetuated in "doctrine" within the Christian body. And, this characteristic says that *my* own understanding is perfect; and *my* own understanding is telling me that it is the end of the world, and we all know that that is a bad thing because God said "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth"! Therefore, *my* understanding is that I must do whatever I must do to keep whatever disaster from happening....

Therefore, I must get my father drunk and have sex with him...

Therefore, I must curse these people so that I can have the resources and attention to let people know about the mighty God who's using me...

Therefore, I must have sex with this man or woman, or bow down to his or her idol, to keep his or her attention and witness to him or her about Jesus...

Utter nonsense... and God hates it!

Jesus describes Himself as He who has the sharp 2-edged sword to this church – why is this? A sword is a weapon, not a tool, and it is generally used against a threat. The threat in this church is heresy, and He intends to shred *all* lies and heresies, and the *people* who are perpetuating them, to pieces with the truth of the word of God!

To whom is Jesus speaking? This is a reminder that Jesus is speaking to His church. Anyone who even attempts to seduce His children into idolatry is His enemy whether you are regularly sitting in the church or on the curb, and this whole revelation is about His intent to destroy you.

Being licentious is when we insist on leaning on our own understanding of what God wants and even teaching others to do the same. And if we are leaning on our own understanding, we are surely not trusting in God – we are faithless.

VV18-29

Church	Description of Jesus	Good works for Jesus' name sake	Bad works	Prescription	Judgment	Reward
Thyatira	Message from the Son of God with eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet of fine brass; Searches the reins and hearts of people, and rewards according to the servant's works.	Works; Charity; Service; Faith; Patience; Works (last to be greater than the first)	Tolerate those with the doctrine of an unrepentant Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31-32), so-called prophetess, teaching and seducing Jesus' servants into fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols.	Repent	Cast these servants into a bed with Jezebel and into great tribulation and will kill the children produced by her and the unrepentant servants	No further burden than that which you are currently dealing; Power over the nations, similar to that given to Jesus by His Father; The morning star

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How does Jesus describe Himself to this church?

What are the “works” that the Thyatira church are performing?

Jesus repeats “works” in the list, saying the last to be more than the first. Why?

What problem has Jesus observed?

Was the problem that Jezebel was a woman, or that a woman was teaching in the church?

Who is Jezebel? 1 King 16:29-33; 18:3-4; 19:1-2.

What is it that “Jezebel” is doing wrong?

What will happen to her and those who refuse to repent?

Who is Jesus speaking to, the local heathens?

What will happen to those who don’t keep Jezebel’s doctrine?

What does it mean when Jesus says, “I will put upon you none other burden...”? Does that mean He’s taking the other burdens away?

What is Jesus telling the faithful to do?

What is it to overcome? What will the faithful overcomers get?

What are Jesus’ works?

How does the way Jesus describe Himself relate to this message to the church?

LESSON: Idolatry = Faithlessness

The first Jezebel mentioned in the Bible was a Zidonian (first born son of Canaan), who married into Israel’s royal family and encouraged her husband, King Ahab, to bow his knee to Baal – which did not require too much arm twisting, considering his progenitors. However, scripture specifically states that King Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than *all* of the previous kings of Israel, 1 Kings 16:30-33, and they were pretty bad.

Well, Queen Jezebel was not a very nice person. She ordered the death of the prophets of the Lord, and Obadiah, a prophet of the Lord himself, and governor of the king’s house hid 100 of them in caves and fed them, 1 King 18:3-4. (Which is a perfect example of the fact that not all prophets of the Lord support themselves through their work as prophets. God has some in key secular positions to serve Him when called upon.) And later, Queen Jezebel threatened Elijah’s life, when he had 450 of the prophets of Baal killed. 1 King 19:1-2

So, another Jezebel rears her head in the New Testament church. And, what is she doing? Calling herself a prophetess, teaching, and seducing the servants of God into fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols. Does this sound familiar? I don’t know if this Jezebel was a namesake of the first, but she sure carried the same spirit, regardless of her name. Understand, Jesus was not calling out this “Jezebel” for *being* a woman teacher in the church; He called her out for *what* she was teaching – “...beware of the leaven of the Pharisees...” Mark 8:15

Jesus describes Himself as the One with eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass. He is the one who searches the heart and intent of every man, burning off the impurities that His eyes discover; and burning off impurities is a painful process. And, Jesus knows of what He speaks – His own feet having been tried and proven strong and true.