

1. **Introduction:** Continuing with the letters from Jesus to the 7 Churches.
2. **Pergamum:** Pergamum was located about 70 miles north of Smyrna. Jesus begins the letter to them reminding that God's Word is both penetrating and discerning, able to separate truth from falsehood, revealing the depths of the human heart.
3. **Revelation 2:12-13:** *And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: "The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. ¹³ 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*
 - Jesus knows the evil conditions under which they dwell are so bad it's as though Satan's throne is in Pergamum, a city of many temples including one for the Imperial Cult.
4. **Favorable Things (2:13):** Jesus commends them for faithfully persevering despite the evil all around them. He warns them not to compromise with the idolatrous, immoral culture in which they live. The moral challenges of Pergamum are like those of Ephesus.
 - They have remained faithful, persevering in the evil environment of Pergamum even when Antipas, one of them, was murdered. Faithfulness in such an environment means they succeeded in persevering in the face of rampant evil and persecution.
5. **Things Against Pergamum- Revelation 2:14-16:** *But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.*
 - Some in the church hold to the teaching of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitians, both of whom encourage Christians to use their freedom to participate in pagan worship activities, including worship of the Emperor.
 - Christians who refused to participate in this compromise suffered social and economic persecution or worse.
 - The church in Ephesus dealt properly with false teaching. Pergamum likewise needs to take a firm stand in rejecting the teaching and practices of false teachers in their midst.
 - The "sword" coming from Jesus' mouth is a metaphor for His powerful, piercing word which He will use as a tool of judgment against false teachings and unrepentant sin within the church. It represents spiritual authority and the ability to discern and expose spiritual falsehood, rather than physical violence.
6. **Revelation 2:17:** *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a*

white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

- "Hidden manna" refers to the spiritual sustenance and abundant provision God provides for believers who endure in their faith. It symbolizes the nourishment produced by a deep relationship with Jesus.
- It's "hidden" because it is not physical. It is a divine grace that provides deep, often inexplicable, satisfaction that only those faithful in Christ can experience.
- The "white stone" is Jesus' symbolic promise to the victorious believer, representing forgiveness of sins and a new personal identity known only to the recipient.

7. **Thyatira:** Thyatira was located about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. It was a great business location and a prosperous place for trade guilds. The city was especially known for its purple dye (Acts 16:14 refers to Lydia, a seller of purple cloth from Thyatira).

- The guilds were powerful economically, socially, and in religious influence. If Christians joined a guild, they would be committed to participate in idolatrous feasts. If they refused to join, they would suffer financially and socially.

8. **Revelation 2:18-19:** *And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.* ¹⁹ *"I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first."*

- The description of Jesus is reminiscent of the heavenly "son of man" in Daniel. It is a fitting description as a contrast to Apollo, the son of Zeus, the patron god of Thyatira.
- Jesus commends the church for trusting and loving God, for serving people, for persevering in the faith, and that their latter works exceed the first (unlike Ephesus). He warns them of judgment for any who don't oppose the false teaching that promotes idolatry and immorality.

9. **Revelation 2:20-21:** *But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.* ²¹ *I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.*

- Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, was devoted to Canaanite Baal worship and aggressively opposed God's prophets (1 Kings 16-18). The self-proclaimed prophetess in Thyatira who promotes idolatry and immorality is like Jezebel.
- Two specific things this prophetess, "Jezebel," was promoting are sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols. Her teaching might have been that Christians could join the trade-guilds and participate in their pagan worship feasts without compromising their faith.
- God was displeased with this "Jezebel" who taught things called deep things of Satan.

10. **Revelation 2:22-23:** *Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.*
- Jesus' words show God's absolute control over every person's health and welfare.
 - He pronounces judgment on the new Jezebel and those (her children) dedicated to following her. He will throw her into a sickbed and those who follow her into great tribulation unless they repent.
 - Those following Jezebel may still repent (2:21-22). Those who refuse to repent, will suffer great tribulation up to and including death. All churches are to recognize that God searches mind and heart. Each person receives what they deserve. You reap what you sow.
11. **Revelation 2:24-29:** *But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come.²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.²⁸ And I will give him the morning star.²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*
- To those in Thyatira, who do not accept and act on the teachings of "Jezebel," Jesus says He will not put on them any additional burden but asks that they hold fast to what they have.
 - Those faithful until the end in doing works that honor Jesus and are consistent with His character, will receive authority to rule over the nations. They will be given the "morning star." I take that to mean having Jesus Himself (being "in Christ") – the bright Morning Star (Rev 22:16).
 - As He has done before, Jesus says those who listen to the reading of Revelation with understanding will hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches through the visions John receives and describes.
12. **Sardis:** Sardis was located about 35 miles southeast of Thyatira and a bit over 50 miles inland from Ephesus and Smyrna. It was the capitol of the Lydian Kingdom and one of the richest and most powerful cities of the ancient world.
- It was conquered by the Persians, then by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and then by Rome. In 17 AD there was a devastating earthquake. Rome financed its reconstruction.

- Artemis (associated with reproductive power) was the mother Goddess of Sardis and construction on a large Temple to her was started but never completed.
- Sardis had a thriving Jewish community with strong connections to the surrounding society. Many Jews in Sardis are said to hold Roman citizenship.
- The message from Jesus to the Sardis church is the most negative of the seven.

13. **Revelation 3:1-3:** *And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.*

- Jesus rebuked the Sardis church for its compromises with the world that are producing spiritual death. He says, *“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”*
- The situation is dire unless bad things cease and good things replace them. They need to wake up and realize what they are doing that is causing their faith to die.
- *“Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.” Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.*
- This is a warning. If they pay no attention, Jesus will come against them like a thief.

14. **Revelation 3:4-6:** *Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. ⁶ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

- A few faithful people remain who have done nothing wrong and steadfastly stand with Jesus.
- Those who stay on the path of righteousness to the end will never have their name blotted out of the book of life.
- Jesus will confess their names before the Father and His angels.
- Everyone needs to hear and pay attention to what the Spirit is saying to all the churches.