

## Revelation\_2

In the chapter 1 verse 11 is the list of seven churches in Asia as the addressees of the seven messages brought to John by an angel of God's Son, the King. All these messages are from the Heavenly Father. First four messages are in this chapter. In Acts and epistles we can read some information about some of these churches. Other churches are recorded only in the Revelation. The two last verses in John 20: 30&31 tell us about limited record of God's numberless deeds. This is a lesson. The prophets and the apostles have written the Scriptures as the Holy Spirit led them. The written Word of God is not hiding their humanity and is exposing to us our Lord's divinity. Every disciple experiences his or her own unique testimony. Comparing my testimony with the records of the Holy Spirit, I receive correction, protection, and assurance in my pilgrimage. I will never have second opportunity or obligation to live this life in the flesh. Our Lord's guidance is of enormous value. Every church received all the messages. A particular message for that church and more general messages were delivered. When we read the Scriptures, we pray for our Lord's guidance to understand our instant personal need in our stewardship. In Acts 18: 19 we see Paul witnessing to the Hebrews in an Ephesians' synagogue. The hearers were interested in learning more, but the Lord lead Paul to Antioch. Next minister in Ephesus was Apollos, a mighty, diligent preacher open to learn. Paul's helpers, Aquila and Priscilla, a very godly couple, assisted Apollos in absence of Paul. In Acts 19: 1 and on, Paul is back in Ephesus to pray for some disciples of John, the forerunner, and they received the miracle-anointing of the Holy Spirit. Paul is witnessing some three months in Ephesus. The Lord created a new Church and Paul continued some two years in Gospel work. God granted many miracles... In the verse 13 we see the Lord exposing judo-gentile abuse of the true Gospel. From the verse 18 and on the darkness of gentile superstitions is exposed by open confessions of the new disciples. In the verse 23 a massive plot against Paul's work erupted, but some gentile friends were

helping Paul. Ephesus was changing. In Acts 20: 17 the last meeting of Paul with the elders of the Church in Ephesus is opened and some of the problems indicated here in Revelation are foretold. Verse 38 is closing the meeting with great emotion, affection and prayer. Paul departed. They have not seen him again down here; but the Lord's Spirit remained. Quality and conglomerate of Ephesians' Fellowship was changing, but the Word of God remained the same in spite of many misinterpretations and misapplications of it. I suggest listening to the recordings on the Acts 18 – 20, I Corinthians 15 and 16, I Timothy 1, II Timothy 1 and 4 and the Epistle to the Ephesians, before proceeding with the Revelation; to understand better the history of this Church and its memo. We are not given as much information concerning all the churches addressed in these two chapters as we have about the Church in Ephesus. The available words to and about this Church can help us understand God's messages to every church.

1] Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: this says He that holds the seven stars in His right hand. He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks... The Holy Spirit 'gave' to John through the angel, a letter for the Church in Ephesus. Within this local Church are some true, genuine disciples, hard laborers, to whom God gave the character and ability of an angel – God's messenger. There are some others claiming to be 'in Christ' but they are enslaved by satanic deceptions. False disciples could be sincerely wrong or, self-confident, intentional liars battling to promote false religion seeking filthy lucre and satisfaction of their evil lusting. Battling against nominal believers within a fellowship is not easy for the faithful. In an ongoing battle within the local fellowship, each faithful believer often experienced an inner struggle. The Lord is watching, guarding, protecting and correcting His faithful. His guidance and correction keep us on the path of life. He holds the star of our message and testimony in His hand. We are safe relying on His grace and power. When we are in Christ and Christ is in our heart and daily walk, His light is shining through us; the true purpose of our pilgrimage is fulfilled. Our Master, our reliance, is in our midst and

we see Him, because He is in every heart of ours. He is our comfort, power, and the beginning of our everlasting joy.

2] I know thy work, labor, and patience: how thou cannot bear them that are evil. Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. Our Lord knows all we do, even all we think. This truth is both – humbling and uplifting. Our Enemy wants us to doubt our Lord's might & grace. The devil tries to make us ignorant of our Savior's presence and safe keeping. As long as we trust in the Lord, He is supplying all our needs. In Him we are strong to endure. These disciples were armed by work, labor, patience and hate against evil. They were not indifferent toward wickedness within the fellowship, but they did not rely on their perception and impressions. They tested the false teachers comparing their deeds and teaching with Christ's Gospel and, rebuked evil deeds. Apparently, these false teachers and deceivers were not pretending meekness, they boasted of being apostles. This craftiness was used by some deceived deceivers already in II Corinthians 11: 1-15 as it was foretold by the Lord Jesus [Matthew 7: 15]. In his farewell meeting with the elders of the Ephesians, Paul told them that this deception was coming. The Lord is pleased with the true believers confronting and defeating the false teaching. The spirit of darkness cannot stand in the true light [Acts 20: 17-38 and John 3: 19&20].

3] Thou hast born [the burden of Christ's testimony] with patience; for My Name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Shallow converts hate bearing burdens for the Gospel call. Bearing burdens of godliness in patience is a virtue of the faithful. Sincere followers of the Master labor for His Name's sake with the power supplied by Him; they will not faint; they will not give up or surrender to the worldly trends. Did over three decades pass since Paul's farewell speech? The war is still raging. Are any of the Paul's time elders still around? Is the goal and reward of the faithful ministry clearly in sight of the believers at this time? Is Christ's victory in

their life?

4] Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. What is this first love? I observed some denominations with the main goal of retaining relative tranquility among their membership: status quo was paramount. Year after year they were drifting deeper into worldliness and away from the Lord. Their main motto was: "Only to preserve what we received." They were constantly losing even that they received from the preceding leaders. Their church lost Christ. When some of the members found in the Scriptures our Lord's teaching the first disciples pure Gospel, their leaders earnestly admonished them to follow their church tradition and not to be puffed up with their own understanding the Word. The first love may be the love a convert first experienced for the Lord our Savior. Probably more reliable definition is that the first love is the kind and quality of love trusting, obeying, adoring Christ Jesus and any other affection is for His sake. That kind of love is eager to learn, to grow in faith and knowledge of the Lord. That love labors and continues in prayer to multiply the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit. That love adds to the fervent zeal sincere confession of many shortcomings. The worshippers having the first love are on the right hand side in Matthew 25: 33 and they wonder when and how they ever could have deserved the Lord's praise. The Lord did not rebuke Ephesians for any evil deeds, only for their first-love-loss. The loss of first love is evident by self-enforcement in doing deeds of love without love. All is hard. There is no sense of purpose, no looking forward to our King's return, no expectation of His ultimate triumph; no joy in Christ-Spirit's fellowship. Looking at all the praises the Lord gave to the Ephesians, I think they were not loveless yet; only tired and having their vision of the Savior dimmed not seeing results matching their great efforts. Did they remember Lazarus the beggar [Luke 16: 20]? How great was the love of the Lord in this brother's heart; the first love, the only love! In Christ's love we labor for His goal, His pleasure, and His honor; in awareness of His values. Our loss of first love is a message to the Lord:

“hopeless”. It is also a message to the world: “useless”. It’s a message to the fellow believers: “shouldn’t we quit?” Loveless work is very sinful. It’s a spiritual fall – crash. That first love is our unity with the Lord’s Spirit, our comfort, power, encouragement and joy.

5] Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. Can I remember when, where, how & why am I fallen? How did I arrive to the level and place where I am now? Do I remember “the good old days” but do not remember any more my sliding back? Or, do I treasure many excuses and self-justifications? I am admonished to remember – to analyze ‘self’. I must search my heart and seek my Lord’s deliverance. As soon as I embrace His good will for me, I’ll realize that all He is doing works for good to my soul. Any degree of stagnation is disobedience as big as the Lord whose calling I neglected. If I “just don’t feel like doing His will”, I must DO His will and pray for the proper attitude. Doing the ‘first works’ means doing the works that deserve to be first and foremost: my Master’s pleasing. His will is the only important goal for me. Every path starts with the first step. All the ways of sin lead to self-destruction. ‘Repent’ means ‘turn to opposing direction – reject evil and obey the Lord Jesus. Intoxication by sin tends to dim the sense of time and many sinners die lost in sin. If we get entangled with sin and the world, Satan will labor to replace our abandoned confidence in the Lord with the false ‘support’ of the world: “you are one of us, you belong to us, we gave you all you have, love and depend on”. Lie! Our lamp-holder is in place and functional only when our Master’s Spirit in Truth shines in us & through us. A well decorated church without Christ is dead corpse.

6] Thou art doing right hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Our Lord hates evil; He is against any violation of the Father’s good pleasure. We are admonished to prefer one another in honor [Romans 12: 10], not to gain our personal prestige as the name Nicolas indicate. The Spirit speaks to all and always. The message of Christ’s Spirit is clear and

sound and blessed are the hearers that hear and faithfully obey the bidding of the Master. The Spirit abhors puffing up; its Satanic device and snare – first to him-self and, afterward, to all of his victims.

7] He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; to him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of God's paradise. Our ears and all the Lord has given us must be employed in our service. Christ gave Him-self for our salvation and we belong to Him alone. He created us for the Father's pleasure and our soul is restless until we rest in His salvation laboring in His Spirit to glorify the Son in Whom the Father is perfectly glorified. Blessed is the man that gave up his-own will to strive for the pleasure of the Master in the power of His Spirit. In Him alone we can have our victory: His victory in our heart, our mind and our daily walk; that is the true victory in Christ. God's Word is revealing to us His paradise. When we obey His Word, His teaching, we see the Father in the Son, the only true, living God in the midst of His universe, and the center of all He created and saved: we see us in Him and Him in us. Then we are feeding on the Tree of Life. We are in His paradise, although we might be suffering in the flesh, when He permits us to be His witnesses in persecution and martyrdom. We cannot now perceive the glory, beauty and delight of heaven. What we experience as we journey toward His glory exceeds the limits of our ability to explain. Our soul can only dream, longing for the fullness of joy ever-lasting. Since His victory in our heart is so amazing, what will the full triumph be! I can never deserve the heavenly delight of feeding on the Tree of Life. The battle and the victory is His doing, yet it is the Father's good pleasure to reward His Son in me. O, the mystery of God's salvation in Christ our Redeemer, Savior, and King. Our Heavenly Father, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven. Give us our daily Bread and forgive us our debts as we also forgive the others... For Thine are the Kingdom, Power & Glory forever.

8&9] Unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write: This is what says the

First and the last, which was dead, and is alive, I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Is this all concerning Smyrna? I don't know of any other chapter providing information about the church in Smyrna. We see that the believers in Smyrna were among those disciples in Acts 14: 22 that through much tribulation were entering into the Kingdom of our God. To the suffering believers the Lord Jesus is appearing as the First and the last. In John 1: 3 the entire universe is His creative work. There is no true value apart from Him and His might. His life, life in Him, is the only Light, giving light to men. The First and the Last is the One true God, the Creator and the Savior; the Fullness and the every 'atom' of It. No evil is un-noticed by Him. His work is goodness. He took our sin through the judgment on Calvary; and He bears our suffering always. The Christians in Smyrna were not left alone; Christ made them victorious in Him. He is reminding them that He was dead and is alive. The disciples were bereaved, devastated when the dead body of Ever Living One was buried in guarded grave. Christ's victory was confirmed by His resurrection only after it was clearly, and indeed brightly, manifested in His suffering and death. All the sufferers and martyrs in Christ are the royal priests and priestly kings; He leads them to glory. The Lord knows all that His flock in Smyrna suffers and He tells them that they are wealthy. Satan said in Matthew 4: 8 that both the kingdoms of the world and their glory are his – Satan's. Since the world glory in sin & corruption this is true in part. But the kingdoms are not Satan's property. The earth is our Lord's property. Even the least one in Christ, without any possessions, like Lazarus, the beggar, is beyond comparison wealthier than the richest sinner ending in everlasting doom. Rebellious Jews saying that they are God's people blasphemed the God of Israel. Today the nominal believers promoting sin - blaspheme the Father and the Son. Our continuous prayers and striving must be for full obedience to our Master and for His Spirit's power to do His good pleasure whole-heartedly. This is true wealth. Teaching deliberate sin as a part of our Lord's Gospel, is

rejection of our Lord. As the Jews with their uncircumcised heart and mind were a synagogue of Satan, so the nominal believers today, in their rebellion against the Word, are the church of Satan. It is easy to paint a sign and to advertize; living in Christ now, is essential. We must know and keep God's Word to be able to test every teaching whether it is of Christ's Spirit, or of the world in sin, that we never get entangled into snares of falsehood. Christ is our teacher and Master; no man is more or less than a man.

10] Fear none of those things which thou shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Fear nothing. The Lord is not promising we are not going to suffer. Can we suffer fearlessly? There is a significant difference between suffering and suffering. We remember Stephan's dying gloriously in Acts 7. Moses walked up the mountain to die there. Suffering fear before suffering that we fear is a man's self afflicting punishment for not trusting the Lord. Awareness of the true value in suffering for Christ's Gospel proclamation eliminates doubts and fear and opens our vision of Heaven. None of us is going to suffer death like Herod in Acts 12: 23. We don't suffer degradation like the king in Daniel 4. None of us is worthy to suffer as much as our blessed Redeemer. Suffering in fear is torture. To suffer in Christ is glorious. The Lord seems to be promising: Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison. He also said in Luke 21: 16-19 that some of His disciples shall be put to death, but a hair of their head shall not perish. He has appointed for us to suffer. When we know this truth, we know that our suffering in Christ is a great gain. Sufferers are elevated [Job 42: 5], glorified [Revelation 7: 14&15] and presented to the whole Flock as encouragements and bright examples of following our Lord. The devil is blind in his hatred and foolish in his fury against Christ's ministers. The devil must fulfill the Scriptures and justify God's just and awful judgments; but we suffer not because it is the devil's will, but because testing and trials are our gain. The ten days of tribulation could be ten literal days, but to me



it seems highly unlikely. I see in that number fullness of time appointed for us to suffer. Our Savior's loyal followers suffer for a time on the way to glory. Sinners suffer forever. We are admonished to be faithful till death. If we outline our limit of suffering, we are not faithful to our Redeemer and the adversary will victimize us. If only death can end our walk with the Savior on earth, that death joins us with Him forever. To the faithful the King promised the crown of life. He, our glorious King of kings is our eternal crown and if He will give us any sign of recognition and praise, we will cast it at His feet in glory, for all that is good in us and through us is His grace in us. Fear nothing. Glorify God of grace and salvation in Christ. Glory is His eternally.

11] He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death. Verse 8 is written to Smyrna. Verse 11 is for the churches: for which churches? For the seven, for all those churches of that time? For all of us until we see the Lord in glory. The Spirit is our Lord's 'speaker' and every word is of great value for us all. His Word is our Manna. What is that we need to overcome in order not to fear the second death? There is a battle going before any victory. In the life and teaching of prophets and apostles we can see a battle. In all of the Scriptures, old & new, the same war is obvious. God's Spirit manifests a great power of persuasion. The devil is using deception as much as he can. We see this battle in the Garden of Eden and it is not ended until the final judgment. In Romans 7: 25 we are helped to accept right and reject evil. God's word is for our mind's enlightenment. Sinful lusts apply to our weakness of the flesh. When we are delivered from our slavery to sin and death, we are in the grace of God and on the path of Life in Christ our Redeemer, Master, and Lord.

Our flesh is still weak. Our enemy's deception is very crafty. Our victory is in our blessed Savior. In His Spirit and Truth there is no room for the lies of the devil; he is defeated the moment we focus the Gospel light against his crafty perversions. Victory is in the growing faith and knowledge of God's

Son, our Lord and Savior. Victory is in rejecting compromises with worldliness. Victory is in living with one purpose only: to please the Lord Jesus as He always pleased the Heavenly Father. In Galatians 6: 14 Paul considers the accomplished offering of the Lamb of God as his, Paul's, glory and in Christ Paul is dead – nonexistent - to the world of sin and death; he also sees the worldly enticement as death to his soul. That is victory. In I Corinthians 15: 31 Paul declares that he dies daily. At times we might benefit by praying for our victory in Christ hourly. Christ alone is perfectly victorious over our adversary and in Christ the victory is available for us. He gives Him-self for us. To receive Christ we must give up our self-will, vanity, and pride. That is victory. In Christ, the second death is not going to touch us and the death of our body only sets us free to join His redeemed who already went to be with Christ, our Lord [Philippians 1: 20-23] 12&13]. To the church in Pergamos write; He, which has His sharp two-edged sword, says; I know thy works, and dwelling place, even where Satan's seat is. Thou art holding fast My Name, and have not denied My Faith, even in those days when Antipas, My faithful martyr, was slain among you, where Satan dwells. A sword was a universal weapon: for attack, for defense, and for executing power. The Word of God from the lips of our Lord Jesus is a sword cutting off our doubts and fears, ignorance and superstitions; cultivating the seed of salvation & Truth. The same Word, from the same Source, in John 12: 47-49 is the final judgment for rejection of God's mercy and grace in Christ. Here, in this Revelation 19: 11-16 that humble and brave preacher of Nazareth appears as King of kings and Lord of lords. In Daniel 2: 21 all the kingdoms of this world are under the power and majesty of this one Eternal Creator of the universe and the only Savior of His redeemed souls. Our Almighty God and Savior know all within us and about us. He is personally involved in our living moment by moment. Our constant prayer should be to live in Him and for Him all our days, to have nothing to fear and no time to waste. Our life will not be easy, boring, idle, or aimless: our Master's Spirit is our treasure and armory. In the flesh, we live where Satan is followed as an angel of light, obeyed as a supreme ruler

- an emperor, and feared more than the Almighty God. In the Spirit of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High, we live under the wings of our Father's mercy and grace; no evil power can snatch us out of the hands that were nailed for us on the pillar of suffering - triumphing in love. Thus we are in the portals of the Glorious Kingdom and the moment our King of kings called us Home, our battle is finished; He made us ready to meet our soul's Desire; to see Him as He is and to join the chorus: 'Worthy is the Lamb...' & Amen. We can hold fast Christ's Name because He holds us fast in His embrace of eternal love. The believers in Pergamos are another example and encouragement to us never to deny the most holy faith in His Name - our only Savior of penitent sinner. The same mighty voice that condemned Cain's murder, here testifies of Antipas. What joy our God reserved for His faithful in Christ that endured in Christ's Name. We know not if Antipas had aging parents, small children, and a church to care for; was he wealthy or a poor man? We know that he was faithful; and this fact points to him as to one of the richest people on this earth and an heir of God's Kingdom. There is no place in the sinful world where Satan does not dwell. Satan's seat is in the darken minds of deceived souls, shackled in sin. But he can hide nowhere out of the sight of God, the dreadful judge of all evil spirits. In Christ, we are secured. Along these bright testimonies: good, godly works, standing bravely against Satan's throne, facing the threat of martyrdom, exalting the greatest Name, keeping the faith in the Lord; along all these gleaming testimonies – corrections! The All-seeing Eye spotted Satan hiding behind his blinded victims chained in sin.

14] Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam – an enemy in disguise. Here is God's Word exposing the crafty, ugly adversary. That is the loving care of our blessed Lord: He rebukes us in His love and wisdom revealing our weak sides. I suggest listening to the recorded presentation on Numbers 22 to get impression of Balaam's character and actions applicable to nominal 'Christianity'. Here is an abbreviated list of Balaam's

self-destructive, suicidal religion; for us to beware of. In the Numbers 22: 18 he declared God's will in his-own words. In the verse 19 he hopes God might change His will to accommodate his, Balaam's, greed. Verse 21 and on, Balaam is thinking hard how to trick God. He will only speak God's will. His main intention will be perversion: to sell a curse to the enemies and to destroy God's people that he would somehow obtain his craved reward. He ignores signs of God's displeasure. He is an angry, cruel man. His worship is dramatic but, false. He admits sin, but has an excuse for it. Balaam regrets inability of cursing Israel. In the chapter 23 he tries to impress God with many altars and sacrifices hoping to change God's will. Many attempts to curse Israel manifest his satanic character. In Numbers 31: 16 we see Balaam's secret plot: he advised the enemies to entice Hebrews into idol-worship and gross immorality. In Joshua 13: 21&22 we see him on the side of the enemy, finally killed by the people he labored so much to curse. Balaam's teaching is a treacherous devising stumbling block to entice the carnal, uncircumcised hearts to eat idol-sacrifices and to commit fornication. Balaam was killed long ago in Joshua 13: 22 but the devil is using the same snare until today. Foolish, rebellious believers that profess liberty in Christ but revel in sin, often fall into this self-destruction. We must be on guard and continue in prayers for purity. After this long and still incomplete list of wicked deeds, what is left for the # 15?

15] Thou hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which I hate. Our Lord supported Ephesians' hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. In Pergamos the teaching of Balaam and the deeds of the Nicolaitans became their doctrines. It might have been that some individuals or small groups were committing some of the Nicolaitans' deeds that are abhorred by God and by His faithful. Perhaps for a time tolerated by the rest of the disciples some evil practice became a custom. Customs turned into doctrines. Our Lord's teaching was replaced with these false doctrines. Even in our days some similar deceptions are practiced under a slogan: We are not under the law, but under the grace. God will judge all perversions. The believers

in Pergamos endured persecution but yielded to some enticements. We remember the prophet from Judea in I Kings 13: he rested when he should have hastened [#14], then he believed a man more than God's word – to feast [#19]. When Satan appears as a raging enemy, he might be less dangerous than when he comes as a crafty, false, friend. We must continue in prayers and supplications, study the Word and search our heart. Our Lord keeps us alert when we obey Him. Self-confidence is pride and arrogance in disguise but in the Lord is our safety.

16] Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. In John 15 we see the Lord removing fruitless branches. From disobedience only one way leads to the Lord's favor: repentance. Turn away from evil and seek our Lord's mercy. Obey the Lord and resist the devil. Stubborn disobedience has no right to claim God's mercy; He has not promised delays. How many sinners promised to themselves repentance before death and died in their sins to face God's judgment? The day of salvation is now [II Corinthians 6: 2]; next moment it might be too late. Those that mock the Lord, sin against their own soul.

17] Let us hear what the Spirit says to the churches: Christ feeds His victors with His hidden manna; He gives them a white stone with a new name known only to the receiver. Humble hearers are blessed with good understanding of God's Word. In I Peter 2: 4&5 we see the Stone once given for us that we might receive of His power to give our all to Him. Our names are written in Him when His Name is in our soul. Delight & beauty known to Christ's faithful disciples are unknown in sin.

18] Unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; these things says the Son of God, who has eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass. To this church the Lord appears with His most complete title: the Almighty God's Son. The focus of the believers is turned to the Person of the Son and His supreme authority and power to guide and correct us. We are admonished to consider His perfect sight of our service to Him and His

understanding of our needs. By their daily walk in the Spirit of God's Son the Christians in Thyatira were not like brass in fire; they are like fine brass. They are representing Gold almost as much as the apostle John suffering for Christ's testimony; yet not that much. Some of these genuine disciples in this church needed more awareness of our Master's Lordship. Our Lord deserves our loyalty with fearless bravery. We must beware of reducing His full authority pretending that we are magnifying His grace and mercy; it's sin. No portion of His grace may be wasted on tolerating sin or encouraging slackness. Faithful stewards are obligated to be alert and to keep the light on.

As our Master's return is nearing, our zeal and watchfulness should increase.

19] I know thy works, charity, service, faith, thy patience, and thy growing work zeal. Considering such a testimony our Lord is pronouncing for Thyatira, I see the faithful family of Lydia in Acts 16: 14 as Christ's fellowship-condiment. These believers are laborers in the Gospel. They labor in charity. They are fervent in the teaching and practice of God's Word. They not only keep their faith, they are growing in the faith and knowledge of God's Son, Jesus Christ. In their faith they exercise patience. Their life is not gliding effortlessly; but they know the purpose and the value of serving the Heavenly Master & Lord. They see some hypocrites, some false prophets among them, but, they wait. Perhaps the Lord is going to move their mind away from falsehood. Hopefully they will repent and follow the Lord. Time is passing, the evil is growing, Satan is gaining power, & the victims of devil's entrapments are growing in numbers. Can charity and confronting heresy be practiced at the same time? Must we compromise the Gospel for the sake of personal or social kindness & respect? In Matthew 10: 37&38 a genuine disciple can love nothing more than his Lord.

20&21] These things I have against thee: thou suffer that woman Jezebel,

which named herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. She will not repent. Speaking the Truth in Love requires wisdom and power only the Lord can give us. Here the faithful and loving Christians are rebuked for the activity of some false brethren in their fellowship. Our Lord Jesus is our perfect example in all. He is gentle and merciful to the needy and penitent [Luke 7: 13&47]. He was strongly against some customary evildoing [John 2: 15]. Obvious violation of God's Word must be confronted respectfully, kindly, & without compromise. Considering so much allegory and symbolism in this book and all the virtues ascribed to this church, I think perhaps the teaching of this Jezebel was not crude, ordinary fornication and idolatry; it could have been ego-exaltation. At times Christ-less piety and influence of numerous vain, heathen, religions were practiced by infiltrators among true disciples. Lacking real conversion of the heart these false paths often include both physical and spiritual impurity. Something very common for much of counterfeit religion are great but false promises of miracles and rewards, claims of performed miracles and wealth accumulated, without repentance and forsaking sinful, godless ways & deeds. In I Corinthians 5: 4, 5 & 11 the way of helping a heretic within the fellowship was a swift and decisive confrontation; proper action without delay. If that did not save that sinner, at least it could have protected the fellowship from filth.

22&23] Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. Her children I will kill; all the churches shall know: I search all hearts and reward all as they work. Sometimes the Lord would not protect believers from natural consequences of sin but would allow some suffering to help them see God's displeasure with their evil deeds. Immorality is destruction of the mind, heart, soul, and body. In some cases the gain sinners expected turned into material or physical ruins. Satan deceived many, but was never able to give lasting happiness to any. He is the arch deceiver and self-deceived

adversary of the mankind and of angels. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only complete and perfect Victor over this awful monster named the devil. Satan can enslave and tyrannize only his victims that trust in sin and deception. We trust & obey God's Son and, are delivered. Christ is the Truth. Before our Savior the Liar with all his lies must fall. Jesus is the Light that gives us light and destroys the darkness. He is Life that gives us life; by His death He destroyed our death. In Christ we are safe & secured. Here is an example of stubborn gross abuse of God's patience. God gave them time for repentance; they used that time to continue in sin and also to miss-guide into godlessness and destruction other confused shallow believers. All this rebellion was continuing under a label of a special gift of prophecy. Apparently, there were active disciples of that movement. If blind lead a blind, they both fall into a ditch [Matthew 15: 14]. Followers share the leader's fate. The Lord says that the "prophetess" was given time to repent but she repented not. She will be punished by some suffering. Her followers will have a time of great tribulation if they repent not. How should we understand this?

If we sin deliberately after we received the Gospel-knowledge, we deserve condemnation. If we repent, the Lord will forgive us our transgressions. Our Lord has authority to give us time for repentance when we deserve judgment. The Lord is not telling us to enjoy sin. He is not promising endless time for repentance. The Word is admonishing us to haste out of sin and cleave to our Lord in faithfulness. Living in sin till our end here, heralds the second death. How is it possible for the true believers not to be aware of this abominable activity in their midst? If they were aware of that movement, how can they tolerate so much sin? II Corinthians 11: 14&15 points to a glossy sin-cover. The development of evil in the fellowship did not leave the faithful ministers blameless. The Lord rebuked them in the verse 20. It is not easy to figure out the best measure of patience and zeal for the truth of our Lord's Gospel. We owe to our Lord, to our fellow believers and to our own souls the diligence necessary for exposing Satan in



all the places of our private and fellowship life. Sincere confession of our struggles and godly concern for others is necessary. The Lord promised to give us all according to our works. If we live in Christ, He is our eternal reward. If we live in sin, we are under condemnation with Satan. It is a wonderful expectation to receive reward for all His goodness in our life. As great as our hope of seeing our King in glory is, the total delight of His loving care is so abundant that His presence is with us every step of our way. Satan will lie to make us feel alone or forsaken; but we know our faithful Lord. It is an awful horror to face the condemnation that awaits the evil spirits; but without Christ, our Lord and Savior, only that horror is left for sinners. In Christ, the measureless wealth and splendor of heaven is ours – to adore Him.

24&25] I say unto you, and to the rest in Thyatira, that have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden; that which ye have already hold fast till I come. This is a clear indication of our Lord's knowledge of, and involvement in our daily walk, our burdens and our joy. Some hardship can be very heavy for a time, and the purpose of our suffering invisible to us; but our Lord knows all of it. His ways are mysterious ways and He makes no mistake in arranging all things to work for good to them that love Him [Romans 8: 28]. We need to be alert to resist satanic doctrines, worldly, gentile, foolish, reasoning and ignorance. We must be wise not to desire to even look into the depth of Satan. His depth is the depth of death, the bottomless pit of endless and measureless suffering. Our Father's treasure is unsearchable: worthy to be cherished and longed for. The burdens we received from the Lord to bear with His power working in us might seem to hasten our body to the grave, but our Lord is with us and no time or effort is wasted. No man on earth is as blessed as Christ's redeemed. We are admonished to hold fast all our Master has given to our stewardship, rejecting all enticing of Satan and his slaves, and all compromises. The Lord is going to appear in glory and matchless majesty at time the Father

appointed. He also visited His flock with many blessings and often unexpected [Acts 12]. Our God many times visited stubborn sinners with calamities they refused to believe could ever happen, until it was too late for them to escape disasters.

26-28] To the overcoming faithful keeper of My works I will give power over the nations. He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be broken to shivers like clay vessels: as my Father gave to me. I give him the morning star. Christ's victory was so obvious in Stephen's heart and testimony! He kept his Lord's work to the end: to the portals of heaven [Acts 7: 56]. In his testimony the power of the Holy Spirit and the Gospel was stronger than a rod of iron. In the Name of Christ, Stephen ruled over his own nation; Saul of Tarsus got broken into shivers [Acts 9] and God made a chosen vessel for a testimony only His Spirit can in a man's life; and Christ's Gospel echoed sound and clear. Three men in the fiery furnace [Daniel 3] ruled over the king and his empire. The king got broken in part at that time. Eventually, he did break into shivers, in the chapter 4 and glorified God Who has the rod of both, justice and mercy. How can any man overcome in anything without the power the Father gives in His Son to the redeemed? He is Alpha and Omega! I see here His promise of eternal glory, but, also, His assurance to us of His River of grace everlasting. Christ is our Daystar [II Peter 1: 19] given to us since the world's foundation to redeem us for now, and for eternity - His chosen Bride He holds so dear. In the chapter 22: 16 He is our Morning Star beaming with His Father's glory.

29] He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. God has created men with ears to hear; and they do. When Adam sinned, he died and so did his original hearing. Then he heard only a Judge, not his loving God. The voice of God's Son in John 5: 25 gave life to us dead. Now we should shun the tumult of worldly lusts lest our hearing become dole for hearing our loving Shepherd's calling [Jeremiah 6: 10 & Acts 7: 51]. We belong to Christ - entirely.