

Rev. 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Rev. 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Rev. 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Rev. 2:4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Rev. 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Rev. 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Rev. 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Jesus identifies Himself to the church at Ephesus as the one who “holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” This is a statement that He is the strength and authority behind His messenger to the church. He is aware of and concerned about what is happening in His churches.

He is aware of their works/ deeds/behavior/ actions. He knows that they have laboured, worked to the point of weariness. They have been patient, endured with hope and cheerfulness. They don't tolerate those that are evil, hurtful or wicked. They have been very careful to test those who claim to be teaching the truth of God and identify those who were teaching lies. They have endured and been steadfast. They have worked hard and toiled without giving up in honor of the name of Jesus.

How could they identify true apostles?

1) They were chosen by Jesus. **Luke 6:13** *And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;*

2) They had accompanied Jesus along with the disciples during His time of ministry and witness of His resurrection. **Acts 1:21-26** *Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

3) They could perform signs and wonders. *Acts 2:43* *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

4) They witnessed with great power and grace. *Acts 4:33* *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

5) They did not seek personal glory through their ministry. *2Corinthians 11:12-13* *But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*

Nevertheless--On the other side of the coin, Jesus isn't happy with them. Why? They have left/laid aside/abandoned their "first love." "Something can be lost by accident, but leaving is a deliberate act," D. Guzik.

I like this quote from Chuck Missler that really applies to this church—"Don't be so busy in the business of the King that you have no time for the King."

I loved Dixie's analogy re this church—"This church was a wife, but she had forsaken her first love. She had loved Him, but no longer did her eyes light up at the mention of His name. She didn't want to talk with Him. She didn't seek to hear His voice. She had no desire to spend time with Him. She didn't look forward to His appearing. She no longer yearned for intimacy. She was attentive to her duties, but distant to Him. She was a housekeeper, but not His lover. Her work was more important to her than her relationship to Him. She was always busy, but too busy to have time for Him. He didn't neglect her. He hadn't forsaken her. He obviously desired a relationship of closeness with her and sought to reestablish it—hence, the letter. He desired an intimacy with her that is described in the Song of Songs which many waters cannot quench and money cannot buy, because both partners value it as invincible and priceless."

The Lord urges them to **remember** "from whence thou art fallen." This indicates that they have gone on a downward spiral in their spiritual life; they are not living in victory. The only way to get back on the right track is to repent--have a change of heart/mind/purpose. The evidence of their repentance is to "do the first works." The word for "first" not only references time, but also importance. What are the first works?

Mark 12:30 *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*

If they don't repent, the Lord will remove their candlestick out of "his place." This indicates that each body of believers has "a place" of service, a purpose in the plan of God. It's up to that body to serve effectively by guarding their sensitivity to the leading and conviction of the Spirit through personal fellowship with the Savior in His word, in prayer and in worship.

After these words of rebuke, there is a compliment given to the church. They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans; God also hates their deeds. I've read that these were people who were placing themselves in a special position of honor over the laity—the body of believers (e.g., priests in the Catholic church). Another thought was that they tried to adjust Christianity to the level of the world rather than lifting the world to the level of Christianity. I am sure that the original recipients of these letters knew exactly what was meant.

I ran across a statement by Vernard Eller (with whom I can find little in agreement regarding this book) that was very interesting regarding the Nicolaitans: "Logically, a "Nicolaitan" would be a follower of "Nicolas"—whoever he might be. But the name "Nicolas" is itself built upon the Greek root found in the very next verse, *nikontes*, "him who is *victorious*," or "the *victor*." And this concept of "victor" is one that is central not only to these letters but also to Revelation as a whole. So whoever the Nicolaitans may have been, and whatever the line they were peddling, the Revealer classifies them with the thousands upon thousands of deceivers who, throughout the history of the church, have claimed to possess the key to personal success and victory. Nicolaitans (victory-promisers) are still very active among us; you can give specific name to those who would tempt you."

The Lord wants us to exercise discernment in judging what is right and wrong. We are to approve the things He approves and hate the things He hates. It is important to note that God hates the deeds of the sinner—not the sinner.

The churches (plural) are encouraged to listen and understand what the Spirit is saying in these messages. Even though there are specific words for each church, the letters are for the edification of each individual in all the churches. Jesus is the one dictating these letters and yet He identifies Himself as the Spirit—yet another proof of the oneness of the triune God.

Those who choose to walk in victory in Jesus will be allowed to eat from the tree of life in the place of happiness prepared by God.

This letter is really quite disconcerting. It seems that the people were doing many commendable things. The problem seems to be with the attitude of heart with which they are serving. They are even serving for the right reason (for my name's sake), but it seems they are serving out of duty rather than love. This puts me in mind of the Pharisees, etc. God only wants us to give and serve out of a cheerful heart with love and devotion to Him. As I think on my own service to the Lord, I often fear that I sometimes fall into the trap of serving from duty and expectation rather than from love. It just emphasizes the importance of staying connected to the Lord through prayer and His word so that we are sensitive to the leading and/or conviction of the Spirit.

Since these letters are written to bodies of believers, I do not believe the Lord is saying that they will lose their salvation. We must also recognize that all "churches" are composed of true believers as well as those who profess faith for whatever reason, but haven't really placed their faith in Jesus as Lord of their life.

I think He is saying that as a body, they will no longer be useful to Him and will therefore lose their identity as a body. Ray Stedman states it this way, "they will lose their ability to shed light." The church is made up of individuals. Encouragement is given to those who choose to listen and heed the message being delivered. They are the ones whose fruit prove their position in Jesus and will qualify them to eat the fruit of the tree of life. They will get to enjoy everlasting life in the presence of the Father. I am reminded of the following verses in Matthew.

Matthew 7:15-16 *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.*

This principle applies to more than just the false prophets.

Galatians 5:22&23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Philippians 1:9-11 *"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."*

Rev. 2:8 **And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;**

Rev. 2:9 **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.**

Rev. 2:10 **Fear none of those things which thou shalt 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.**

Rev. 2:11 **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**

Jesus identifies Himself to the church in Smyrna (known as Izmir today) as "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." I think this is a special address of encouragement to this body of believers who need to be reminded that they are assured of victory over death and eternal life with Jesus because of Jesus' victory over death through His resurrection.

Again, God knows their works/deeds/actions/behavior. He knows about the persecution they have suffered. In this letter we are encouraged to look at things from God's perspective. Though considered poor from an earthly perspective, this church was considered rich from a heavenly perspective. The Lord is aware of the slander and vicious verbal abuse they have taken from those who claim to be Jews, followers of God, but they are really followers of Satan, the adversary of God. It's sad but true that often the persecution of true believers comes from others who claim to be part of the church but are actually impostors from the ranks of the enemy.

Romans 2:29 *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

Philippians 3:3 *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Obviously, these believers have no heart problem; they are serving and enduring out of deep gratitude, love and devotion to the Lord. They probably don't even realize the treasures and rewards they have accumulated for themselves in heaven.

He encourages the believers not to be afraid of the things they will suffer. He doesn't tell them they won't suffer—just not to be afraid of it. Other verses in the scripture support this thought.

Acts 14:22 *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

2Timothy 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

1Peter 1:6-7 *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

These verses really make me think. My life has been so blessed. I have never suffered real persecution—not that I want to mind you. But, according to these verses, I will have a time of suffering. There have been some times of testing—especially with my son—but nothing in comparison to those who have really had their lives put in jeopardy because of their faith.

The Greek for the word *suffer* states “to experience a sensation or impression (usually painful), passion.” It's natural to think of this suffering in context of physical abuse and harassment, but it would seem that context would only give partial understanding. You can experience pain and pressure from being surrounded by wickedness. You can experience pain, pressure and suffering from your own struggle with the flesh and the attacks of the enemy. I think that suffering in heart is probably the most common form of suffering in the believer's life and that persecution as represented by the pressures of wickedness surrounding us is much more common than physical persecution in the life of a believer. It reminds me of the verse in Peter regarding Lot.

2Peter 2:7-8 *And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.)*

Back to the believers in Smyrna--In fact, some of them will be put in prison as a test of their faith. Who puts them in prison? The devil (in the person of those

who follow him)—We often forget that he is the ruler currently in power on planet earth.

***2Corinthians 4:4** In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

***Ephesians 2:2** Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

In light of the persecution this church suffers, the meaning of the word Smyrna is significant. It comes from the word for myrrh, which is a plant that only yields its fragrance when it is crushed. Our faith is most on display when we are going through times of testing, crushing times.

“Ye shall have tribulation ten days” – I am not sure what this means. I have read that it refers to being tested for a specified period of time.

***2Corinthians 4:17** For our light affliction, which is but **for a moment**, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

Is there insight to be found in some way in connection to the ten days of awe between Rosh Hoshanah and Yom Kippur that are representative of a time of repentance?

In The Revelation Record, Henry Morris equates the ten days to the ten days of testing that Daniel and his friends underwent at the beginning of their captivity. “Ten days of testing in Daniel’s case then yielded over 70 years of uniquely effective service for God. Just so, Christ assures Christians in Smyrna and all other suffering churches that a brief ‘ten days’ of testing will, if accepted with a resolve to be ‘faithful unto death,’ yield a crown of life and glory that will be ten times greater when Jesus comes.”

Those who are faithful unto death, willing to die for their faith in Jesus, will be given a crown of life. “Father, please humble me, convict me, love me to a place and spirit that will honor you as the body of believers at Smyrna. Strengthen me to the point that if I am ever in a position to die for my faith, I will do so willingly, joyfully and victoriously.”

Special note—This church receives no words of rebuke. If they had been deserving of rebuke, they would have received it.

Again, this message is for all the churches; and those who are willing to listen to and heed the message being given will not be hurt by the second death (separation from God forever).

Rev. 2:12 **And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;**

Rev. 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even where Satan's seat is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Rev. 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Rev. 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Rev. 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Rev. 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

Jesus identifies Himself to the church in Pergamos as the one who “hath the sharp sword with two edges.” This is significant since this represents God’s authority and ability to judge and convict as necessary in this body of believers.

Again, He knows their works/deeds/actions/behaviors. He is aware that they are living in the middle of one of Satan’s strongholds, where Satan was choosing to dwell at that time. The great altar of Zeus, one of the wonders of the ancient world, was in Pergamos. In spite of this, they had not denied His truth, His gospel, even at point of death—as proven by the death of Antipas, God’s faithful witness.

Again, from The Revelation Record: “According to Alexander Hislop’s book, Two Babylons, the evidence indicates ‘that Pergamos had inherited the religious mantle of ancient Babylon.... The priests who had kept the secrets of the ancient mystery religions centered at Babylon ever since the days of Nimrod, were forced to migrate, transferring what amounted to the headquarters of Satan’s religious system away from Babylon north and west to Pergamos where it endured for several centuries in that great center of evolutionary pantheistic paganism.’”

Pastor Bob had an interesting thought on this church. The fact that they had chosen to stay as “lights” in a wicked (dark) place was part of their commendation.

Still, God has words of chastisement for them:

- 1) They are tolerating those who hold the doctrine of Balaam (who because of his greed encouraged the followers of Balac to lure the children of Israel into eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication). Cf **Numbers 22-24** and **Jude 11**.
- 2) They are also tolerating those who hold the “doctrine” of the Nicolaitans. We already learned in the letter to Ephesus that God hates the “deeds” of the Nicolaitans.

Arthur Pink adds this information: "...in Ephesus it was the deeds of the Nicolaitanes that were mentioned, here it is the 'doctrine of the Nicolaitanes' – false practices had now become articles of faith. Observe that at first the church 'hated' their deeds, here their evil beliefs were tolerated and cherished."

This appears to be a church that is trying to compromise with the world and not offend anyone. That seems to be an apt description of many churches today. They are afraid to speak out strongly on issues in the Word that would identify sin. They are not diligent in guarding against the intrusion of those in the body who would pervert the Word of God.

The church is warned to repent—have a change of heart/mind/purpose. If they don't, the Lord says He will come unto "thee" (the church) and fight against "them" (perverters of the truth—false teachers) with the sword of His Word. I think this is indicative of God's willingness to apply whatever judgment/punishment/discipline necessary to preserve His church.

***Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Those who are willing to listen to and heed the message to this church--the overcomers--will:

- 1) Be allowed to eat the hidden manna -- Manna represents bread from heaven, sustenance, God's provision. I'm not quite sure what hidden manna is unless it is referring to the truth from the Word that can only be discerned through "spiritual" eyes and ears. Only those who have accepted the Savior and have the Spirit dwelling in them can see through spiritual eyes and hear with spiritual ears.
- 2) Be given a white stone with a new name that will be known only to the recipient of the stone. -- The white stone represents a verdict of acquittal or ticket of admission—acquittal regarding their sin that is covered by the blood of the Lamb and admission to the presence of God forever. It is not clear in the wording, but I believe the new name is for the overcoming believer since God often gave His followers new names to reflect their relationship to Him (e.g., Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, Simon Peter to Cephas, etc.).

Rev. 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

Rev. 2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Rev. 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Rev. 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Rev. 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Rev. 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Rev. 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

Rev. 2:25 But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.

Rev. 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Rev. 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Rev. 2:28 And I will give him the morning star.

Rev. 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Jesus identifies Himself to the church in Thyatira as “the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass.” This seems to emphasize His power and authority in judgment. The phrase “the Son of God” is not used in chapter one and affirms the identity of the one “like unto the Son of Man” (1:13) as Jesus Christ (1:5-6).

Again, God knows their works/ deeds/ actions/ behavior, their charity (*agape*—love/ goodwill), service/ ministry, faith (moral conviction, fidelity to the truth), and patience (steadfastness, endurance). Then He repeats that He knows their works, to the point that He sees that they are doing much more now than in the beginning.

The above are all good things, but they are not evidence of spiritual health. The Lord still has words of rebuke for them. Why?

They (the church as a whole) suffer (allow, permit) that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce the believers to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed unto idols. Jezebel is a generic term for a false prophet/ teacher; she claims to have special enlightenment. This reminds me of the warning in Matthew; keep in mind that leaven is a type of sin.

Matthew 13:33 “Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

False teachers in the church tend to emerge gradually. They introduce their false teachings in increments and before you know it, they have a group of followers in the church that have been deceived by their false teachings. We need to recognize that the most dangerous enemies to the true church today have emerged from within its ranks.

Note from Wiersbe—“Jezebel (1&2 Kings) was the daughter of a priest of Baal; she introduced worship of Baal to Israel. She was guilty of whoredom, witchcraft, idolatry, murder, deceit and priestcraft.”

According to the wording given, it appears to me that there was a specific person, false teacher, at that point in time who was being permitted to operate in this church. God even states specifically that He had given her time to repent of her fornication, but she chose not to.

It seems to me that the word *fornication* in verse 20 is referring to physical fornication as a part of worship (which was common to pagan religions of that time). In verse 22 I believe the word *adultery* is a reference to spiritual adultery.

Eating things sacrificed to idols seems to be indicative of a willingness to compromise with the world instead of coming out from among them and being separate (cf **2Corinthians 6:17**).

God warns that those who had chosen to consort with her in her immoral activity would experience great tribulation unless they repented (change of heart/mind/purpose). Implied—Those who do not consort with her will not experience great tribulation. People seem to ignore the fact that the Lord sees what is in our hearts and minds. They seem to think that if they can fool the people with their hypocrisy and lies, they can fool God.

“kill her children with death” – I believe this refers to both spiritual and physical death to those who choose to follow her. Those who made that choice were obviously rejecting Jesus and the truth. He will personally see to their judgment. They will die physically as a result of their sin (from venereal disease, Aids, _____), and they will die spiritually (to experience eternity out of the presence of God in the lake of fire).

Another good quote from John Schultz: “Every sin has its own built-in punishment. The same bed on which Jezebel commits her adultery will become her sickbed. The sin man commits will turn against him. All things only work for good for those who love God.”

Thought from Dixie—“‘all churches shall know’ - God’s judgment on one church brings a righteous fear (Psalm 64:9) and understanding to those who hear of it, similar to the reaction of Rahab, hearing of God’s judgment in behalf of the children of Israel (Joshua 2:9-11).”

Psalm 64:9 *And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.*

Joshua 2:9-11 *And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites,*

that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

Each person will be held accountable for his own actions.

Jeremiah 17:10 *I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

Ezekiel 18:20 *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

Those in the church at Thyatira who have not followed Jezebel, who have stood firm and avoided involvement in her false doctrines and intimate contact with the things of Satan, are admonished to continue holding fast the faith until Jesus returns. This seems to indicate that this body of believers was up against serious spiritual warfare from the “*principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places*” (**Ephesians 6:12**). Their fight to hold onto their faith would not leave them with the energy to accomplish much else. God was not going to burden them with any other demands. God knows our human limits. He will never expect more from us than we are able to do or give.

Those who stand fast and keep on putting forth their best effort to emulate the works of Jesus will eventually be given power over the nations (just as God empowered His Son). I believe this is a reference to service in the millennial kingdom. They will rule with the Lord who will rule with a rod of iron.

Psalms 2:9 *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

No false teachers will be dealt with lightly at that time. They will be broken and rendered useless as represented by the shards of a broken piece of pottery. The overcomer will also be given the morning star (identified as Jesus in **Rev. 22:16**). I think this indicates the thrill of intimate fellowship with the Savior for eternity.

The sad thing is that the people were to blame for the terrible warfare they were experiencing because they weren't diligent in guarding their hearts and exercising discernment regarding who they allowed in their fellowship.

God is so merciful. He doesn't keep throwing this up in their face. He identifies the problem, and then goes on to encourage them to hold on fast and fight the good fight of faith. He doesn't try to punish them by making their burden heavier; they've pretty much brought harsh punishment upon themselves. God opens His message in a spirit of judgment and closes the message with encouragement to be an overcomer.

Again, the believers are warned to listen to and take heed of the message being sent to the churches.

This church is really active in doing good deeds, showing love to others, exhibiting strong moral convictions, and demonstrating commitment and dependability. This church gives the appearance of having members that are mature Christians in love with their Lord. Truth is that they are lacking in spiritual discernment to the point that a false prophetess is openly operating in the church and has generated quite a following. She is evidently arrogant and full of pride as she is intent on ignoring the truth of God's word and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in pursuit of her own purposes. She is in league with Satan.

Since I first completed this journal, the "church" in America has made great headway in transforming itself into just such a church. I want to be careful not to be judgmental, but discerning. In my opinion, there seem to be more and more pastors of very large churches with national influence who are more interested in leading their congregations into "Christian" service than in teaching of the whole word of God and investing in the spiritual growth of their members. Their stated motives are identified as reaching the unsaved, while their own members are spiritually malnourished. I believe God's word teaches that the church is supposed to strengthen and edify believers first and foremost. Scripture is clear that the teaching of the word is the primary source of providing the spiritual food necessary for that growth. Christians who are nourished through the word and edified through the Spirit working through the body of the believers to minister to one another will naturally produce Christians who will then go out and win others to Christ through sharing the gospel and showing the love of Christ in service to those in need.

It struck me that the Ephesian church had gotten so busy in ministry that it had become focused on what it was accomplishing and was investing no time in fellowship with and worship of the God in whose name they were serving. They were not, however, spiritually malnourished; they were still showing spiritual discernment and evidencing an understanding of God's word since they were able to identify false apostles and hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. The church at Thyatira is a mirror of the Ephesian church in their focus on serving others, but they evidence no spiritual discernment or understanding of God's word. The Ephesians are called to repent from leaving their first love; in other words, they had given definite evidence of their salvation. In Thyatira, however, most of the church is caught up in the false teaching and adulterous ways of the prophetess. They too are called to repent, but that repentance is from a way of life that is leading to death. The amazing thing is that there are evidently some true believers in the church who are encouraged to hold fast to their faith in spite of the false teaching surrounding them. This makes me think of those today who have probably grown up in a church or just have so many friends and/or family in a church that is spiritually unhealthy that they hang in there hoping they can make a difference. In that regard they are similar to the true believers in the church at Pergamos.