

Revelation 2:12-29 - Churches at Pergamos and Thyatira

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COURSE COMMENTARY

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2:12 - Pergamos - introduction

Temple of Dionysus at Pergamum



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- 1) Modern town of Bergamo.
- 2) About sixty miles north of Smyrna.
- 3) Famous for a library of 200,000 volumes, taken to Alexandria.
- 4) Religious preeminence: Zeus Soter, Athena Nicephoros, Dionysius, Kathegemon, Asklepios Soter, temple of Athena.

2:12 - Pergamos - title

- **sharp two-edged sword**
The sword emphasizes the imminent judgment of the doctrinal errors of the Balaamites and Nicolaitans by the *Word of God* ([Rev. 2:16](#)). The significance of this title was discussed in the lesson on [Revelation 1:12-20](#).

2:13 - Pergamos - commendation

- **where Satan's throne is**
 - 1) Asklepios, associated with the serpent, was said to be "savior."
 - 2) Zeus was also considered a "savior." *Throne* may refer to the altar of Zeus.
 - 3) The chief location of the emperor cult.
 - 4) May also denote the activities of secret pagan mystery religions at Pergamum.
- **Antipas**
Name means either *like the Father* or *against all*.

2:14 - Pergamos - criticism

- **the doctrine of Balaam**
Revelation 2:1-11.
- **stumbling block**
Ska'ndalon - describes a trap, or more specifically, the trigger of a trap upon which the bait is laid.
- **eat things sacrificed to idols**
Eidolo'thuta - sacrificial meat, part burned on the altar, part eaten by pagans in the temple, part sold in the market for home use.
- **sexual immorality**
Porneu'sai - "To give one's self to unlawful sexual intercourse."
- **Thus... also... doctrine of the Nicolaitans**
"Thus... also" indicates a similarity between the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and that of Balaam. Both encouraged licentious behavior and intermarriage with the ways of the pagan culture.
Revelation 2:1-11.

2:16 - Pergamos - exhortation

- **Repent**
An imperative command: repent! *Metanoia* involves: 1) an accurate understanding of past actions; 2) a change of mind concerning those events; 3) a change in behavior in the future.
- **sword of my mouth**
The teaching of the Balaamites and Nicolaitans would not stand up to the "Sword of the Spirit," God's Word would provide the standard by which they would be judged.

2:17 - Pergamos - promises

- **hidden manna**
Contrasted with the "things sacrificed to idols." Manna was provided to Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16:31; Num. 11:7). *Hidden manna* refers to the manna stored in the Sanctuary (Ex. 16:32-34 cf. Heb. 9:4). Believers eat the "bread of life" which is Jesus Who is currently hidden from view (John 6:31-51).

- **white stone - pagan explanations**
 - 1) Token of innocence.
 - 2) Token of privilege.
 - 3) Token of initiation.
 - 4) Good omen.
- **white stone - Scriptural explanations**
 - 1) High priest's headdress.
 - 2) High priest's breastplate.
 - 3) Urim and Thummim.
 - 4) Stone tablets of the law.

2:18 - Thyatira - introduction

Excavations at Thyatira



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- 1) Thyatira means "sacrifice of labor" or "odor of affliction."
- 2) Site covered by the modern town of Akhisar.
- 3) Many trade guilds: bakers, potters, brass workers, tanners, etc.
- 4) Not a major religious center.
- 5) Church may have been the result of Paul's ministry to Lydia ([Acts 16:14](#)).

2:18 - Thyatira - title

- **Son of God**
The first of numerous allusions to [Psalm 2](#). This underscores the judgment of Jezebel ([Rev. 2:22-23](#)) and the promises made to the overcomer in this church who is given "power over the nations" ([Rev. 2:26](#)).

- **eyes like a flame**
Eyes which are omniscient and that will judge!
- **feet like fine brass**
"Fine brass" is *chalkoliVbano* which is an unknown metal (here and in [Rev. 1:15](#)). This speaks of judgment ([Rev. 2:23](#)).

2:19 - Thyatira - commendation

- **works, love, service, faith, patience**
The ministry of the Thyatiran church is evidencing the fruit of the Holy Spirit ([Gal. 5:22](#)).
- **last more than the first**
This is the opposite state of affairs from Ephesus. The church at Thyatira has made positive progress in numerous areas.

2:20 - Thyatira - criticism

- **allow that woman Jezebel**
Probably a woman by another name, but called "Jezebel" to draw attention to the similarities with Jezebel of the Old Testament ([1K. 18](#)). The Thyatiran church *allowed* her to promote error.
- **who calls herself a prophetess**
Self-promotion is a key pattern of false teachers, but Scripture indicates humility is the true fruit of godliness ([Pr. 27:2](#); [2Cor. 10:18](#)).
- **to teach and seduce**
The Thyatiran church was condoning two unscriptural practices: **1**) They were allowing a woman to have a prominent role teaching over the congregation, including men ([1Ti. 2:12-14](#)); **2**) They were allowing her to teach error.
- **sexual immorality, eat things sacrificed to idols**
Trade guild feasts included a sacrifice to a god of the meat to be eaten and often ended as occasions for drunken revelry and immoral activities.

2:21 - Thyatira - exhortation

- **she did not repent**
A pattern we will see on the part of the "earth dwellers" throughout this book. Even in the face of clear evidence, they will not repent of their deeds ([Rev. 9:20-21](#); [16:9-11](#)).
- **cast into sickbed**
"Sickbed" is *klinen* which is simply "bed." It may refer to a dining couch at the guild feasts which also served for immoral activities later in the evening.
- **great tribulation**
There is an imminent personal judgment in view. But this also would seem to be a *type* for the Harlot of [Revelation 17](#) -- the apostate church of the last days which enters the "Great

Tribulation."

- **kill her children with death**
A Hebraism denoting certain death.
- **all the churches shall know**
There were two purposes of the death penalty in the Mosaic Law: **1)** to eliminate the violator; **2)** to dissuade the observers. When judgment fell upon Ananias and Sapphira, "great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things" (**Acts 5:11**).
- **who have not known the depths of Satan**
Possibly an ironic retort to the claims of Jezebel and her devotees to know "the deep things of God." Jezebel may have taught that Christians should sample evil to the fullest so as to know the enemy intimately--a dualistic separation of spiritual and material which is common to gnosticism.
- **hold fast... till I come**
Imperative and plural: "you all hold fast!"

2:26 - Thyatira - promises

- **power over the nations**
Believers will exercise royal authority, *exousi'an* , by virtue of their identity with Christ. They will "reign with him a thousand years" (**Rev. 20:6**).
- **rule with rod of iron**
The overcomer shares in the ruling authority and tasks of the Millennial Kingdom with Jesus. A "breaking scepter" which will crush all resistance (**Rev. 12:5; 19:15**). Jesus will rule when he receives the kingdom immediately prior to His Second Coming.
- **dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels**
A direct reference to **Psalm 2**. If the vessel fashioned by the potter refuses to serve His purpose, it is His right to break it (**Jer. 18:1-11**).
- **the morning star**
Christ is the "morning star" (**Rev. 22:16**).
1) The period between His ascension and Second Coming is the "night" (**Ps. 130:5-6; 2Pe. 1:19**).
2) The Millennial Kingdom is the day (**Ps. 46; Isa. 60:1-3; Mal. 4:1-2**).
3) The morning star appears to those who watch for it just before the night is through, before the sun rises. This may refer to the catching away of the believer prior to the darkest night (the Tribulation) just before the dawn.

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).