

Revelations 2:1-17 Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos

The seven letters follow a certain pattern, there are seven features in each of the letters, it is addressed to the angel of the church of ...

Christ the sender uses borrowed imagery He taught in chapter one.

We believe all seven of these types of Congregations have and still historically co-exist together: some congregations are aflame with missions Philadelphia, some that are paying the price with their lives like Smyrna, some that are cooling off in their devotion like Ephesus, and some rich congregations are taking it easy in Zion like Laodicea.

Five of the seven churches Jesus has a commendation or something good to say before He rebukes and criticizes them.

Sardis and Laodicea Jesus had nothing good to say about them.

All the Churches called to repentance except Smyrna & Philadelphia.

Each Church called to hear what the spirit says to the Churches-plural

All Churches told: "To him that overcomes ... Greek word *NEE-kay* victory "... I will give ..."

The Church at Ephesus:

Ephesus was the third largest City with a population of about 250,000 people in Roman Empire behind Rome and Alexandra. Cay-ster or Kays-tros River empties into the harbor which was connected to the east and west for trade. The city was not the political capital of the region but it was the largest and most important city of the area. The temple of Diana (ART-e-mus) was considered one of seven wonders of the world and housed a huge Idol of ART-e-mus or Diana.

Alexander the Great captured Ephesus in 334 B.C.; but one of his Greek generals, Lysimachus, (lie-SIM-a-cuss) inherited it. By the times of the apostles, it was a thoroughly Romanized city ... with a Culture deeply colored by the pagan associations with the city's past. Artemis, the principal deity the Biblical Diana, actually went back to

the old Asiatic goddess of nature; but by Paul's time her worship had taken on a different character.

The Temple to (Latin) Diana, a sex goddess took 120 years to build and was 3 times larger than the Parthenon in Athens with 27 pillars or columns. The pagan Ephesians alleged the idol fell down from heaven. The idol was probably carved from a meteorite cf: Acts 19 for more information on the idol and temple. Brother Mike Meyerhoffer says as a temptation to Christians: “on a path which has on the stone sidewalk a carving of a foot and a heart and a cross and you walked on the path to fulfill your hearts desires ... at the end of the street a house of prostitution”. They mixed idolatry and sexual immorality together like Israel & Judah did worshiping Asheroth in the Old Testament.

Paul founded the church at Ephesus and worked there over 2 years. Priscilla, Aquilla, Apollos, Timothy and Tychius all ministered there. Great preachers do not guarantee great Churches.

John spent the final years of his life at Ephesus according to tradition of the Church fathers.

Revelation 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;

“... he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand ...” Christ's holding the stars in his hand, is different than in 1:16 where He is described as “having in His right hand seven stars”. But here, he “holdeth” Greek *krat-EH-o* means strength, to seize or retain suggests the utmost concern of the Lord for every single one of the Christians, or angelos meaning: messengers, evangelists, preachers or public readers.

“... walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ...” This indicates the active, constant, and persistent energy in which Christ

as the “good Shepherd” is concerned with the welfare of every church, congregation and every Christian.

Revelation 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:

“... I know ...” This clause appears throughout the letters, reminding all people that,

Hebrews 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

“... works ... labour ... patience ...” Like the other letters, except in cases where no commendation was possible, this letter begins with the Lord's approving and recognition of their good points.

Labor, patience, and no tolerance of evil, tested and rejected false apostles as Paul told them to do in Acts 20 ... they took it to heart.

A century later Ignatius a Bishop at Antioch wrote a letter to Ephesus commending them their love of the truth and preventing any false sect for .

“... apostles ...” In 65-68 AD, when older men like the apostles who would have been in their late sixties or early seventies were common, the claim to be an apostle might be reasonable to some. In 95 AD such a claim would be ridiculous! More evidence early date.

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

“... hast patience ...” Here again is the word which means not merely a passive submission to what must be endured, but the dynamic ability of endurance and faithfulness without discouragement by any or all of their difficulties.

For my name's sake ... The New Testament emphasis upon the name of the Lord is extensive. Salvation is in no other name Acts 4:12; all Christian activities are to be done in his name Colossians 3:17; we are justified in his name 1 Corinthians 6:11; we are baptized in his name Acts 2:38; 19:5; we are called by his name James 2:7; our sins are forgiven for his name's sake 1 John 2:12; we should believe on his name 1 John 5:13, etc. Here, the patient endurance of the Ephesian church was commended by the Lord himself because their faithfulness had regard to the holy name of the Son of God.

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

The danger of legalistic heresy hunters is that they often lose their first love. Hating falsehood is not Loving Jesus.

The first love of every true church is our Lord himself; and what is indicated here is the departure (in heart) of the Ephesian church from their Lord who had redeemed them.

Matthew 23:38-39 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Love for God and others, if you love God you'll love His kids, compare Mary and Martha, we can get so busy doing the things of God, like Church work we forget to love Him and His people which is the work of the Church.

A rock-hard conservative church religious machinery set in motion.

Matthew 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

This happened to this church because of lawlessness in society.

Easy for us to do. New believers tend to have spontaneous works of love, over time can lapse into religious routine.

Galatians 6:9-10 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. **10.** As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith

Doing good things but for a different reason than love, easy to convince ourselves we are spiritual can be replaced as love for motivation. Common but not good.

I Corinthians 13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. **2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. **3** And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Revelation 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.

There are actually three "R's" in this passage: Remember ... Repent ... Reform by "do the first works".

Repent and do the first works ... This is one of the most important clauses in the whole passage; it is the key to understanding what had happened. What were those first works which the Ephesians had stopped doing? They were the commandments of the Lord.

Revelation 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, (NICK-o-lay-tans) which I also hate. (2 theories are)

"... Nicolaitanes ..." some say were followers of Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch. Irenaeus (i-ren-NA-us) said that, "They are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to be a deacon, or a "server of tables" by the apostles. cf: Acts 6:4-7. Early church fathers thought he taught an early form of Jewish Gnosticism.

Antinomian (AN-tee-No-mee-an) the view that Christians are released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law. Which means after you are saved, you can do whatever you want and still be saved ... like once saved, always saved is taught today.

Not sure what Nicolaitans doctrine was, but we may have a hint cf:

Revelation 2:14-15 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 stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

Another theory is that Nicolaitans is a combination of 2 words:

Nicos - meaning dom-in'-A-tion, dominion, or to exalt, one over another

Laos - meaning the people, where the word lay-people comes from.

In other words, a division of the church into bishops with clergy, ruling over people or laity, where the former lords over the priesthood of the believer cf: I Peter 2:5 & 9..

Revelation 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.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear ...” So! People do not receive spiritual information regarding their salvation from any inner impulses, dreams, impressions, or inner strivings of the soul, but by listening to the words given by the Holy Spirit inspired scriptures. This shows that God's revelations are spoken to man, not put into his heart through some mysterious spiritual power.

Churches here is plural. All churches take heed, not just Ephesus.

There is no room for an introverted church. All congregations need to know what God is saying to other churches.

“To him that overcometh ...” The Greek verb nee’-kay means victory in this phrase can also be translated conquereth, or conquers. It occurs only twice in the Gospels Luke 11:22 & John 16:33 and only once in the writings of Paul Romans 12:21. However, it is found in Revelation in all seven of these letters to the churches, and John also used it repeatedly in II John II John 1:2:13 &14, and I John 1:5:4-5.

The promises to overcomers are images taken from the last chapter of this book. New heavens, earth, Paradise, and Tree of Life. Paradise is from a Persian word meaning pleasure park came to mean Heaven.

“ the tree of life ...”, not to be taken literally, represents eternal life.

“ the tree of life ...” The Hebrew word in Genesis 2:9 was rendered by the Septuagint (LXX) translators with a Greek word which means, wood or tree; and the New Testament writers used that very same word (tree or wood) for all five passages where it occurs in the N.T.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

Acts 13:29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

I Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed

“... will I give to eat of the tree of life, ...” So for Christians the “tree of Life” is the cross upon which Jesus died being reckoned or counted to them.

Suggests that not everyone in the church will overcome the world.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

I John 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Here ‘believeth’ is used as a Synecdoche which is a figure of Speech in which a part represents a whole. “I like your wheels man” your car.

Later Revelation speaks of disciples, or Christians overcoming Satan.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

This could simply mean repent of sin, or lovelessness ... or He will remove their candlestick or lampstand.

Turkey has very few churches. It appears Jesus came and removed most if not all their candlesticks.

Preterist generally believe these letters were for those congregations to whom they were addressed and also represented the Church through out the world in whole or part. Some would think they were fulfilled just in John’s day; some would think the principles laid out would carry on through history. The Idealist view would think they would see these letters applicable until the end of time.

Among the historicist and some futurist ... Ephesus is thought to represent the church of the apostolic age, until the end of the first century.

Smyrna

Revelation 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;

Smyrna has become the modern city of Izmir, Turkey, and one of the most important cities along the Aegean Sea. Smyrna was about 40 miles north of Ephesus. Izmir in the Turkish language means the “city of infidels” because of the persistence of a small band of Christians since the first century ... Smyrna, even today, may have a few faithful remnants of Christianity. It is interesting to note that the Lord had no condemnation for this persecuted church.

Smyrna was very polluted, contaminated, and overrun with idolatry. They were the first city to build a temple to Roma, the goddess of Rome, “Dia de Rosa”. The whole Roman culture was antagonistic against those that did not believe in their gods and their religion. It is amazing to note that the Jews, who were once God’s “own chosen people,” joined with pagan idolators and stirred up the idolaters, the pagans against the Christians who believed in Yahweh.

“These things saith the first and the last” Once again Jesus has again taken one of the titles of the LORD *YHWH* (Yahweh), and applied it to Himself showing the Divinity of Christ. O.T. cites 1st & last *YHWH* cf:

Isaiah 41:4 Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I *am* he.

Isaiah 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is no God*.

Isaiah 48:12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

“... which was dead, and is alive; ...” Some commentators have seen this identification of our Lord as peculiarly appropriate for a city which, itself, had lain in ruin ... dead for all the middle centuries of the first millennium BC until 195 BC when it was rebuilt ... but had become once more an alive favored city.

This was truly a hostile environment in which the church of Smyrna lived. How tragically the Jews the once “chosen people” of Israel appeared as the devil’s tool in such a situation as this.

Revelation 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.

“... thy ... poverty, (but thou art rich) ...” Jesus said of the poor cf:

Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

James 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

“... them which say they are Jews, and are not ...”

Romans 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 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.

Galatians 3:27 & 29 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. & 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Despite the claims of modern commentators to the effect that no provincial persecution against the church by the state of Rome existed until the times of Domitian (duh·mi·shn) 95 AD, thereby supporting a late date for Revelation ... there is a great corpus of facts which point squarely to the times of Nero for just such an outbreak. The impact of the Neronean (ne-RO-ne-an) terror was mentioned both by Clement and by Tacitus (TASS-it-es), "thousands being put to death" Tass-it-es said:

“first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; then on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on

**the charge of burning the city, as of "hating the human race."
(refusing to sacrifice to Caesar) In their very deaths they were made
the subjects of sport: for they were covered with the hides of wild
beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire
to, and when the day waned, burned to serve for the evening lights.
Nero offered his own garden players for the spectacle, and exhibited
it as a Circus game ... For this cause a feeling of compassion arose
towards the sufferers, though guilty and deserving of exemplary
capital punishment, because they seemed not to be cut off for the
public good, but were victims of the ferocity of one man."**

**"synagogue of Satan." ... This clause along with "them that say they
are Jews, and they are not" shows that Christians and the Church
have preempted the title of the "chosen people" . Jesus said cf:**

**John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father
ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in
the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he
speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**

**Christians are the real Jews, the true sons of Israel, as in Romans
2:28. The Jews' meeting place is here designated "a synagogue of
Satan." Although James used "synagogue" as designating a place of
Christian worship, James was probably quite early, or possibly a
name used only for a Jerusalem synagogue that has become
Christianized. From the first, early disciples, Christians preferred the
word "church," which in time came to stand for the place of assembly
cf: Matthew 16:13ff. ek-klessia Jesus uses it for His body of disciples.**

**Smyrna had the largest Jewish population of any Asian city. If this
was written prior to 70AD then it was a period in which the main
adversaries of Christianity were the proud Jews. The Jews were the
main persecutor of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Rome only acted as their
"godfather" in putting Him to death. The book of Acts is filled with the
persecution of the Jerusalem church by the Jewish authorities.**

Note in Acts Chapters 1 thru 11. Just a few examples are Stephen the first Christian Myrtar:

Acts 7:58-59 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

In Acts 12:2-3, Herod kills James with the sword, and imprisons Peter to please the Jews. On Paul's first Missionary Journey, the Jews raised their head cf:

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 50- But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. (& at Iconium)

Acts 14:2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren & 5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

at Lystra 14:19; at Thessalonica 17:5 & 13; at Corinth with Gallio 18:5-6, & 12-13; in Asia, Acts 19:13, at Ephesus 19:33; at Macedonia & Greece 20:3 & 19; Agabus the prophet 21:11; in the temple 21:27 & 22:30; in Jerusalem 23:12; before Felix at Cesarea 23:27, 24:5, 18, &

27; Festus the new governor 25:2, 7 & 15; before Festus & King Agrippa 25:24, 26:2 & 21.

Revelation 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.

Luke 12 :4-5 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

Fearlessness does not mean a total absence of dread but refusal to succumb to intimidation. Testing should cause rejoicing Cf:

Matthew 5:11-12 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (trials)

“...ten days ...” Some commentators among them are Historicists & Futurist etc. believe this to allude to 10 actual waves of persecution or to ten emperors who persecuted the Church during the first three centuries after Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

“... I will give thee a crown of life ...” This and all similar promises given to these seven churches simply mean eternal life with God in heaven. Eating of the tree of life, receiving the white stone, or the morning star, etc., all mean the same thing.

Revelation 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.

“... shall not be hurt of the second death ...” Christ did not mention here “the first death”; but it is the death of the body to which all must submit. The second death in 20:14 is “the lake of fire” ... that of the soul, the absolute exclusion from God who is the source of life.

Christ did not utter any words of criticism or condemnation of this suffering church, offering only His love and encouragement.

Almost a hundred years later Polycarp, a disciple who was taught by the apostle John, who also was known as a Bishop of the church in Smyrna, suffered a notable martyrdom about 155 AD. When asked to simply burn incense and say Caesar is Lord, Polycarp, who was a very old man, said, “86 years have I served Him and He has done me no wrong, how can I blaspheme my King and my Savior.”

The text is a story of the martyrdom of Polycarp in the form of an eyewitness letter to other churches in the area.

Among the historicist and some futurist Smyrna is believed to represent the Church during the period of persecution under the Roman Emperors from Nero, 64 AD more focused and deliberate under Domitian 95AD, and many of his successors, to Diocletian (Di-o-CLEE-shun) whose last great persecution lasted 10 years from 303 to 313 AD. Constantine issued the edict of Milan (mih-LAHN) in 313 AD, which stopped the persecution of Christians.

The historicists who have a year for a day interpretation, believe the 10 days (v:10) of tribulation, promised to the Smyrna church corresponds to the 10 years of this final persecution under Diocletian (Di-o-CLEE-shun).

Pergamos

If Ephesus was the New York city of Asia then Pergamos was its Washington D.C.

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

The name Pergamum means citadel, but the word parchment, meaning paper of Pergamum, (PER-gah-mum) also derives from it. When the supply of papyrus was interrupted from Egypt, Pergamum invented the method of making paper from the skins of animals; and had the second largest library in the world with 200,000 volumes. Later the library moved to Alexandria and consolidated with the library there.

By Christian times, Pergamum had become the chief center of the Roman emperor-worship, no less than three temples being erected there to Roman emperors. The first temple to Caesar Augustus with many other temples also, to Zeus, Athena, (ah-THEE-nah) Dionysus, (die-o-NI-sis) and Asklepios (as-KLEH-pee-os), (the serpent-god of healing). People would journey to Pergamos seeking healing of their illnesses. In this sense it was a “Lourdes” of the Ancient World. The temple of Zeus (Soter Theos), the "saviour god," had a huge altar 40 feet high carved like a great throne into the face of the mountain dominating the city, perhaps suggesting Jesus' words, "where Satan's throne is".

Revelation 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.

I know where thou dwellest ... Repeatedly, this affirmation of the omniscience of the Lord emphasizes the truth that all things are open and naked to the eyes of the Lord.

“... Satan’s throne” may allude to the Roman Authority seated in Pergamos, or to the other demonic idolatrous practices occurring there, or

Conical hill behind Pergamum, which was the site of many temples, most prominent among them was the throne-like altar of Zeus which,

in itself, would have been sufficient to arouse the thought of the devil's throne.

Holdest fast my name ... See under Revelation 2:3.

And didst not deny my faith ... The usage of "faith" in this verse is significant, Faith here standing for The Faith, as it so frequently does in the New Testament, meaning the Christian religion ie: The Faith.

Even in the days of Antipas ... who was killed ... Nothing is known of this Christian martyr except what is written here. His name means "against pressure" so he lived up to his name. Referring to him as my faithful martyr, Jesus dignifies him with the same eulogy as is used to refer to Jesus in Revelation 1:5, where the word "martyr" is translated "witness" in most versions. The inference is that he died for his faith and that the event was known widely in the church. Since the city was a Roman Capital, the persecution was probably carried out by the Roman Authorities instigated probably by the Jews.

Where Satan dwelleth ... In all probability, like the expression above, "where Satan's throne is," this is a reference to the pagan emperor-cult which was centered in Pergamum. "It was a power which was then testing the church and had effected the death of Antipas."

Revelation 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 stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

The doctrine of Balaam ... "Evidently this error of Balaam was the chief teaching of the sect of the Nicolaitans." "The teaching of Balaam is merely John's name for the teaching of the Nicolaitans" The nature of their teaching is clear enough. They advocated participation in pagan worship, eating things sacrificed to idols, and committing fornication, essential ingredients of all pagan worship. Significantly it is the "works," the behavior of the Nicolaitans, that is condemned in the Ephesian church; but at Pergamum, the practice of

immorality has become an established teaching by some who openly advocated free grace for all, perhaps on the basis that some kind of compromise with paganism was inevitable. Balaam, repeatedly mentioned by New Testament writers, is usually held up as an example of evil. His error is set forth in Numbers 25:ff & 31:16.

Revelation 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, (NICK-o-lay-tans) which thing I hate.

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In other words, a division of the church into bishops with clergy, over people or laity, where the former lords over the priesthood of the believer. cf: I Peter 2:5 & 9

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

The admonition here is that, "The church as a whole must repent of its too tolerant attitude to those living in sin and error. They had taken no corrective action and had applied no discipline. Cf: I Corinthians 5:1ff Such a "broadminded" indifferent attitude toward gross sins is not grace and would have to be repented of by the congregation.

“... I will come unto thee quickly ...” The one thing clear is that, when John speaks of an imminent coming of Christ, he is not necessarily thinking of the Parousia (the Second Advent). As we have seen in the first chapter what is meant by "come or coming" is that a divine judgment against them will be speedily enforced. This may be understood in either of two ways, or both: (1) Their effectiveness as a true church would soon disappear unless they repented. (2) or A supernatural, divine visitation against them would be executed, as upon Ananias and Sapphira cf: Acts 5:1-10, "some physical illness or a mortal sickness unto death. If this is correct as would seem to be indicated by the more specific reference to Jezebel Revelation 2:20-23, then the very fact of such judgments, were associated with the earliest years of the church. If that is being threatened here it would again be internal evidence of an early date for Revelation.

Make war against them with the sword of my mouth ... This is a symbolical reference to the word of God as the principal weapon employed in the destruction of error, and a reminder that the Sword of Christ was more to be feared than the sword of Rome.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged 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

Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that over cometh 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.

I will give ... of the hidden manna ... The great feasts in the idol-temples were nothing to be compared to the feast of one who eats of "the bread of life" in the Kingdom of God and that eternal reward ...

The Pagans commune with demons at the idolatrous meals accompanied by their fornication, cf: I Corinthians 10:14-22

I Corinthians 10:20 But / say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Some Jews of Jesus' day thought He was Jeremiah (Matthew 16:14). When Jesus fed the multitude with loaves and fishes they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14). Jesus was the true manna that came down to give life to the world

John 6:32-33 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John remembered the words of Jesus who identified Himself as the true manna that came down from God out of heaven. It is here called "hidden" because it was a secret unknown to the pagan world. As FF Bruce said, "This is another expression meaning eternal life. Many of the other expressions similarly used, such as the white stone, also have that same meaning.

White stone ... It is not necessary to find the meaning of this in ancient superstitions. Small stones were used as tickets to public functions, especially feasts; and what is meant is simply that the ones who overcome shall receive, "a ticket of admission to the heavenly banquet, a very permanent ticket to an eternal feast."

Luke 13:29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

Luke 14:16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

The reference to the new name known only to the recipient ...

The idea is conveyed that outside the Christian experience no one can really know what God is, or what He gives. The redeemed and victorious alone understand what it means to belong to God.

Regarding the stone's being white, Cox said that it was, "not the black stone of their condemnation, but a white stone to their exoneration, admitting them to the secret places of the Most High.

Among the historicists and some futurists, Pergamos is seen as representing the imperial church after Constantine 313-606 AD.

Pergamos means "married to power.". It was here that the institution of the papacy had its inception. In 313, the Decree of Coronation made Rome ("where Satan's throne is") the center of Christendom.

The church of this period was seduced into immorality and worship of idols through the rise of the papal system.

Sources: Mike Meyerhoffer's notes, George Faull, Gene West, Foy Wallace, Burton Coffman, B. W. Johnson Adam Clark, the Narrow Path, Bruce Gore Commentaries, Revelation 4 Views, KJV Bible, Wikipedia, theWord.com