



# **REVELATION**

## **Understanding the Apocalypse**

**Radical Word Bible Study**

**Episode 16**

**October 16, 2025**



**Rick Lancaster**

# REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse

## *Revelation 2025*

### Opening Comments

- **Check Hard Drive capacity.**
- **Switch to PowerPoint (slide 2) once timer reaches zero.**
- **RECORD**
- Welcome to episode 16 of the Radical Word Bible Study.
- I am Rick Lancaster, and we are coming to you live from our podcasting studio in Murrieta, California at Calvary Chapel French Valley.
- We have a service every Sunday @ 9:30 am.
- We are streaming this Bible Study live on Rumble, Facebook, and YouTube.
- The podcast version of this Bible Study can be found anywhere you go for podcasts.
- It is listed under Radical Word Bible Study with Rick Lancaster wherever you get your podcasts.
- If you are listening to the podcast and would like to tune in to the live stream, you can go to radicalword.com and click on one of the links at the top of the page every Thursday at 6:30pm PST.
- If you are interested in staying up to date with what is happening at The Radical Word, click the link in the description for this video.
- Also, I publish a daily devotional that I send out by email.
- I will include a link to that as well.
- Today is Thursday, October 16, 2025.
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- Turn to **Revelation 2** as we continue a series: **REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse.**
- Let's pray now and then get into our text for tonight.
- **Pray**

### Teaching

- **REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse**

- **Review**
- We will pick up where we left off in Revelation 2, but we will first review a few things in Revelation 1.
- In John's introduction, we are told who the first recipients of the book of Revelation were.
- **Revelation 1:4a [Logos]**
- We were also told where John was when he received the revelation.
- **Revelation 1:9**
- **[Map: Seven Churches of Revelation]**
- John was exiled to Patmos because he would stop talking about Jesus and teaching the Word of God.
- And then the seven churches are named.
- **Revelation 1:11**
- These seven churches were not the only seven in Asia Minor at the time.
- The number seven symbolizes that they represent all churches.
- The book of Revelation is not just for these seven churches but for all churches.
- And not just the ones that existed in the first century but for the entire church age.
- Not only that, but the message of Revelation is for all believers in the church age and those who will be believers during the Tribulation period.
- Also, in chapter one was the vision of the glorified Christ.
- We will see many of the descriptions of Christ repeat in the seven letters.
- This reminds us that Revelation is about Jesus.
- Turn to **Revelation 2** and we will look at verses 1 to 3 before picking up where we left off.
- **Revelation 2:1 [Logos]**
- Chapters 2 and three must be studied with the revealed glory of Christ in chapter one in mind.
- Before Revelation deals with Christ's judgment of this wicked, God-hating, Christ rejecting world, He examines the church and calls her to repent and change.

- The word repent appears six times in chapters two and three.
- There are four ways to interpret chapters 2 and 3.
- First, these were seven real churches that existed at the time John wrote the Revelation.
- Because of their location, it is likely that John had visited all seven of them.
- These letters were to challenge the seven churches to examine themselves – to prepare the church for the Return of Christ.
- The second way to interpret these letters is representing the church ages.
- Each church represents a period in the life of the global church.
- Even though all seven types of churches are present in all seven periods of the church age, one type was most evident during its period.
- This style is the most controversial but is worthy of consideration.
- The third way to interpret these letters is in the evaluation of churches today.
- All seven types of church are still present in the world today.
- It is my belief that we are in the last age of the church.
- These letters are as relevant to the state of the church today as they were 2,000 years ago.
- Every church leader ought to read these letters and ask themselves which one Jesus would say that they are.
- One of our core beliefs is that the home ought to be a place where God is worshipped – a small church.
- The spiritual leader of every home ought to examine his home based on these letters.
- The fourth way to interpret and apply these seven letters to the churches is on an individual basis.
- Which one most closely resembles my own personal walk with the Lord.
- The church in Ephesus was a privileged church.
- It is the only one of the seven that is mentioned in the book of Acts.
- History tells us that John lived in Ephesus for over thirty years.
- ‘angel’ = literally ‘messenger’.

- An angel is a divinely created being for the purpose of serving God, often as messengers.
  - While this can be interpreted to say that every church has an angel watching over it (I like that idea), it seems odd to me that Jesus would speak to angels in this manner.
  - It is simpler to interpret this as the messenger/pastor of the church.
  - One of the pastor's roles is to communicate to the church messages from God to them.
  - The main tool we use for that is the teaching of the Bible.
  - Every week I put together a 'message' that was given to me through study, prayer, and the influence of the Holy Spirit.
  - Even though Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, He is also walking among the churches that bear His name (omnipresence).
  - 'holds' = speaks of authority.
  - Jesus has the authority to judge the churches – to determine good from bad.
  - He has the authority to call them to repentance.
  - Another reason I like the image of Jesus holding the pastor of the church (me) in His hand is because that means nothing can come into my life or the church unless Jesus permits it.
  - It also speaks on absolutely security (**John 10:28-30**).
- <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and My Father are one.
- Nothing can come against me or the church that isn't allowed by my Savior and Almighty God.
  - The seven golden lampstands are the seven churches.
  - Jesus is omnipresent within the churches.
  - This also speaks of his authority to judge the churches and call them to repent.
  - Jesus then tells the messenger of the church in Ephesus what he sees.
  - **Revelation 2:2**
  - Jesus knows what is going on in all the churches that bear His name.

- This is a comfort to me when I see churches doing things that I don't agree with, or that I believe are wrong.
- Jesus holds that church and pastor in His hand, just like He does me and CCFV.
- Jesus can see the things that I cannot see.
- Unless God directs me to go to that pastor, my place is to pray for him.
- The church in Ephesus was a working church.
- Things were getting done.
- They were working hard to get the gospel message out.
- And they were putting up with the resistance they were getting from the government without ruining their witness of Christ.
- 'cannot bear those who are evil' - Also, they didn't just wink at the wrong things people did.
- If they saw a believer in sin, they didn't just turn a blind eye to it.
- Paul had some experience with that (**1 Corinthians 5:1-2**).

<sup>1</sup> It is actually reported *that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!* <sup>2</sup> And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

- This was a public sin, and needed to be addressed publicly.
- This doesn't mean you have to drive all the sinners out of the church – no one would be left.
- It means that Christians within the church are held to a higher standard than unbelievers.
- As a pastor I want as many people as possible to come to the church.
- But as a faithful shepherd, I only want the ones who can be a part of God's flock.
- Sometimes that means telling someone 'no', usually because they won't repent of their evil.
- 'have tested...' – It was not uncommon for men to travel around and minister in different churches.
- This was something the apostle Paul did regularly – John did it – Peter did it. It was normal.
- The problem was that not all the guys who were doing it, were doing it for the right reasons.

- Jesus warned His disciples to watch out for these guys (**Matthew 7:15-19**).

<sup>15</sup> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

- Paul talked about them a lot (**2 Corinthians 11:13-15**).

<sup>13</sup> For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

- It is the church's leader's responsibility to examine anyone who we might be considering speaking to the church.
- Just because someone appears popular or has great references, doesn't mean they speak truth.
- Jesus continues.

- **Revelation 2:3**

- 'for My name's sake' – Everything they were doing was in the name of Jesus.
- They weren't trying to make a name for themselves.
- 'have not become weary' – Serving Jesus can be hard work.
- The word 'wearied' has the sense of being fatigued of the soul.
- It can also be resisted and bring persecution.
- The church in Ephesus kept going.
- That is because they weren't doing it in their own strength (**Colossians 1:9-12**).

<sup>9</sup> For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; <sup>10</sup> that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

- Jesus saw good things in this church, but He also saw things that needed to be corrected.
- **Revelation 2:4**

- Most of these letters follow a similar pattern - Jesus commends them for what they are doing right – He then gives them a word of correction.
- There may also be a word of warning - and then He gives a promise to those who respond to Christ's correction and overcome.
- They were working hard, but their heart wasn't in it.
- It wasn't an act of love.
- Jesus commends them for their obedience but then challenges their heart.
- Thirty years earlier they had been different (**Ephesians 1:15-16**).  
<sup>15</sup> Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers...
- Love is like a fruit tree – it must be tended, protected, and nourished so that it can bear fruit.
- If the tree is neglected, it will not bear much fruit, though the tree itself may remain.
- The church remained and did the 'work' of the church, but the work itself became the focus and not an expression of love for God or for others.
- Over time spiritual apathy is common for those who are serving God, unless they intentionally strive to grow their love of God and other people.
- We should note the phrase, 'you have left...'
- This places the responsibility on the pastor and church.
- This is possible when the pastor or leadership in the church starts serving the church rather than serving God by serving the church.
- It becomes all about the work of the ministry and neglects the reason why the ministry is being done – to glorify God.
- I refer to this church as the preoccupied church because they had allowed something other than God to become the reason they were serving.
- They were doing a good job, keeping the doctrine pure and the teachers true.
- God wants our hearts to be in the ministry.
- Jesus then tells them what to do about it.

- **Revelation 2:5**

- This verse begins with a call to remember.
- They had once been a hardworking church that loved Jesus and other people.
- Something had happened and they had abandoned love.
- They were just doing it because they knew God wanted them to.
- Loving others is not always easy.
- Sometimes the ones we are called to love are hard to love or they betray us or take advantage of us.
- There is a natural tendency in us to protect ourselves from harm.
- We will erect barriers and walls to guard our heart from the hurts that come with loving people.
- Jesus expects more from His church.
- Dutiful obedience without love is not pleasing to God.
- Love is how we please God. **Matthew 22:37-38**
- <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and great commandment.
- Serving with loving does not reflect His nature accurately.
- God’s motivation for everything is love.
- Yes, loving others comes with the potential of them hurting us, but protecting ourselves from that possibility makes it much harder to love them.
- Jesus tells them to ‘repent’ = change your heart, mind, attitude back to the right way.
- True repentance comes with a sense that you have offended Almighty God and despised His love for you with your sin.
- It should hurt our heart when we realize we have sinned.
- God has done and promised to do so much for us.
- Repentance is an expression of respectful gratitude for God saving us and promising to take us to heaven.
- In addition to telling them to repent Jesus tells them to ‘do the first works’ – love is a choice, not dependent upon feelings.
- I choose to love Kelly even when I am not feeling like loving her because she has been a brat.

- In the church we are called to do this with everyone who comes into the church, even the annoying people.
- We are to serve because we love God.
- We serve by loving others because God loves us and them.
- This verse also contains a warning.
- If they don't repent and return to their first love Jesus will remove their lampstand.
- The lampstand is symbolic of the church.
- This is a warning that Jesus will not put up with a loveless church forever.
- If they do not repent, He will remove that church.
- This is a promise to un-church a loveless church.
- A loveless Christian might find themselves without a witness to the world, because a loveless Christian is a contradiction.
- Jesus then commends them on another thing.
- **Revelation 2:6**
- The Nicolaitans were a group of people who taught that the deeds of the flesh did not affect the spirit.
- It was a form of Gnosticism.
- Gnosticism was focused on reaching spiritual growth through secret knowledge.
- It generally held that the physical realm was corrupted and on the spiritual could be holy.
- It often attempted to separate the physical from the spiritual.
- This meant that anything done with the body had no influence on the spiritual which led to all sorts of wickedness.
- Forms of Gnosticism still exist today.
- They were also trying to establish a priesthood that exercised control over lay people.
- The Nicolaitans could be the prototype of what would later become the large denominational churches.
- One thing we can learn from this is to learn to hate the things that Jesus hates and to love the things and people Jesus loves.
- Jesus closes this letter with an exhortation and a promise.
- **Revelation 2:7**

- ‘He who has an ear...’ - All seven letters end with this phrase.
  - What does it mean? It can’t be referring to physical hearing because the Spirit rarely speaks in an audible voice.
  - Paul spoke on this topic (**1 Corinthians 2:13-14**).
- <sup>13</sup> **These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. <sup>14</sup> But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.**
- Someone who ‘has an ear’ is first a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Second, they are humbled before God, acknowledging His authority to speak into their lives.
  - Third, they are willing to respond to the leading of the Spirit when He does speak.
  - Someone can ‘hear’ the Word of God taught but not be humbled before God and unwilling to respond to the teaching of the Word.
  - That person will not benefit, they will not experience the blessing.
  - Too many churches are focused on creating an environment where people are pleased and entertained, but not brought to a place of humility, repentance, and obedience.
  - It is our responsibility as a church to help people to ‘have ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’
  - This letter ends with a conditional promise, ‘to him (or her) who overcomes...’
  - All seven letters end with a promise to those who overcome whatever the letter is addressing.
  - As Christians, we must never forget that through Christ we are overcomers (**Romans 8:37**).
- <sup>37</sup> **Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**
- Both ‘overcomes’ and ‘conqueror,’ have the same root ‘nike’.
  - This is one of the places where we can extract practical applications from the book of Revelation.
  - Remember, a promise made to the church is a promise made to you.
  - The challenge is to identify what we are being called to overcome and then figure out what that means for each of our lives.
  - To the church of Ephesus Jesus wrote saying that He was pleased with their hard work ‘for His name’s sake’.

- So, to be an overcomer we need to be diligent to work hard for the Lord.
- And not doing just anything, but those things Jesus prepared for us to do (**Ephesians 2:10**).

<sup>10</sup> **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

- But then Jesus gave them a word of correction because they were doing their works without love.
- It was a loveless duty to them.
- So, to be overcomers, we need to stir up the love in our hearts for God and for the good works He prepared for us to glorify Him, bless others, and grow faith.
- And if we realize that our love has grown cold, we must repent immediately and then to return to doing our works as an expression of love.
- And finally, align your heart to God's and love what and who He loves and hate what He hates.
- The promise to overcomers is access to the 'tree of life' in heaven.
- The tree of life was in the garden of Eden.
- They were kicked out of the garden because if they had eaten of the tree they would have lived forever in their fallen state.
- The tree of life is seen again in the last chapter of the Bible.

### **Revelation 22:2**

<sup>2</sup> **In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

- And then later. **Revelation 22:14**

<sup>14</sup> **Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.**

- That is a picture of the super-abundance that we will experience in heaven forever.
- As we study history from the time of the Pentecost, when the Spirit fell upon the disciples and the church started to grow and flourish, we can identify seven periods of the church age.
- The church age runs from Pentecost to the Rapture.

- The church of Ephesus is representative of the first period of the church age which lasted about 100 years after Pentecost. [**Church Ages Chart 2025**]
- This was the time of the apostles, of which John was the last of the original eleven.
- This was the dominant type of church during that time.
- Another will rise to dominance but there are still churches around that are preoccupied by the work of the ministry and not motivated by love.
- This also can be said for the people in the church.
- In every church there are people serving God, but love is not the reason why they are doing it.
- They are the ones who headed for what is called ministry burnout.
- It is often the reason people leave churches.
- They forget why they are there – to love God and to love those God loves through the good works God gave them to do.
- Jesus told the messenger of the church of Ephesus to repent and return.
- Everyone who has spiritual ears to hear can respond to the Spirit's calling, even in a Preoccupied Church.
- Who knows if God might want to use someone to help that church return to its first love.
- He then promised everyone who overcomes, who is victorious, even in a loveless church, eternal life and blessings.
- Ephesus was the Preoccupied Church.
- The next one, Smyrna, is the Persecuted Church.
- **Revelation 2:8-9**
- Angel = messenger – most likely = pastor of church.
- Map of **Seven Churches**.
- Smyrna was another port city on the Aegean Sea.
- One of their primary exports was myrrh.
- An aromatic resin that was used for embalming bodies.
- Myrrh was one of the three things that the 'wise men' brought when Jesus came the first time **Matthew 2:11**.

**And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.**

- The myrrh looks ahead to the reason why Jesus came – to die for the sins of the world.

- Myrrh was used on Jesus to prepare Him for burial. **John 19:39**

**And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.**

- When Jesus comes back the second time, those who bring gifts will not bring myrrh. **Isaiah 60:6**

**The multitude of camels shall cover your *land*, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.**

- This is a prophecy of the Second Coming.
- Frankincense is an incense.
- It is how myrrh is obtained that makes it fascinating for this study.
- It is a resin that comes from a plant that grows in the Arabian Peninsula and parts of Africa.
- The plant is ‘wounded’ to get the sap flowing.
- The sap is collected and usually hardens quickly.
- Then it is crushed and mixed with other ingredients to make oils or ointments.
- Myrrh symbolically points to persecution – wounding and crushing.
- Where Ephesus was the ‘loveless’ church, Smyrna was the ‘persecuted’ church.
- This letter is written to a church that was going through some difficult times.
- Even the titles that Jesus uses to identify Himself were chosen to encourage a church that was struggling.
- ‘First and Last’ – speaks of His eternity – also His sovereignty over time and events.
- ‘who was dead, and came to life’.
- This church was fearing for its very life.
- Jesus reminding them that an eternal destiny was theirs in Him.
- You will notice as we go through this letter that Jesus doesn’t promise to deliver them from the persecution.
- He will promise to limit it.

- Persecution is a reality of the Christian life. **2 Timothy 3:12**
- <sup>12</sup> **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**
- For most Americans, we know nothing of true persecution.
- Even the things we might call persecution are pretty tame compared to what others are going through even today.
- We occasionally hear about someone in a foreign country being imprisoned or killed for being a Christian.
- For every one we hear about, there are thousands that we don't hear about.
- Right now, even as we enjoy a peaceful time of Bible Study, Christians are being slaughtered simply because of their faith.
- If someone promises that Christianity is supposed to be easy and trouble free – they are lying to you. **John 16:33**
- <sup>33</sup> **These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**
- The Smyrna church is a picture of the second age of the church. **[Church Age Chart]**
- From about 100AD to 312AD great waves of persecution swept through the church.
- Many millions of Christians were killed.
- But even with the persecution, Christianity continued to grow.
- Also notice in this letter that there is no word of rebuke for this church
- **Revelation 2:9**
- 'poverty' = abject poverty – helpless.
- Different than just poor and unable to care for yourself.
- This implies complete helplessness.
- If you compare this to the church in Laodicea... **Revelation 3:17**
- <sup>17</sup> **Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'— and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—**
- Smyrna was a poor church that was rich spiritually.
- Laodicea was a rich church that was poor spiritually.
- Jesus makes it clear that it is much better to be like Smyrna than it is to be like Laodicea.
- It is believed that during this time the Jews in some areas started turning in Christians to the Romans.

- These false Jews were speaking blasphemy against the Christians which is blasphemy against God.

**Blasphemy: abusive words falsely spoken that damage a person's reputation.**

- It took the heat off them, gained favor with the Romans, left them alone.
- 'synagogue of Satan' – had turned away from even the semblance of worshipping God.
- Term can also be applied to any church that teaches anything other than the gospel of Christ.
- Just because something is called a church doesn't make it Christian.
- The Mormons call themselves a church and they are not Christian.
- They claim to be Christian, but they do not believe that Jesus is God the Son.
- This letter was written right before it started to get really tough for Smyrna.
- **Revelation 2:10a**
- About to suffer – how would have like to have heard that?
- Jesus tells them in advance and says, 'do not fear.'
- Literally means 'stop fearing.'
- And you will notice that Jesus doesn't offer an alternative to this suffering.
- Jesus knew it was coming.
- And for reasons only God can possibly understand, it was important for them to endure that suffering.
- I often wonder how much that is going on in the church and in the lives of Christians today.
- There are good faithful Christians that are going through very difficult times.
- Just like the plants that produce myrrh, they are being damaged by the persecution.
- God will take what comes out of that and make something beautiful.
- It is not pleasurable to go through persecution, but if God allows it, He has a reason for it, and He is not under any obligation to explain it to you.

- Besides, you would probably not understand it any more than a toddler doesn't understand why they can't have ice cream for dinner.
  - We should also note that the persecution is not a result of some sin in the church.
  - It is just bad stuff happening to good people.
  - Jesus has nothing negative to say to this church.
  - We should note that not all suffering is persecution.
  - Persecution is that suffering that comes as a result of others being opposed to your faith.
  - It is not unusual for persecution to come for no apparent reason.
  - That is because it is often demonically motivated.
  - The Devil hates God and he hates humans because they are made in the image of God.
  - He may tolerate those who have no faith in God, but he still hates them and works to destroy them. **John 10:10**
- <sup>10</sup> **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.**
- The thief is Satan.
  - Jesus tells them what is going to happen.
  - **Revelation 2:10b**
  - The devil = literally 'accuser' with the idea of false accuser.
  - Thankfully, in the future, there is a plan to deal, once and for all, with Satan. **Revelation 12:10**
- <sup>10</sup> **Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.**
- These Christians will be falsely accused possibly by the Jews in Smyrna and the Romans will some of them into prison.
  - It is recorded that when Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna was martyred in 155 AD, that the Jews hated him so much that they violated the Sabbath to collect wood to burn him alive.
  - 'that you may be tested' = proven.
  - What will be tested – their faith – proven to whom.
  - God allows our faith to be tested so that we will see our faith more clearly and so that others can see it.

- God doesn't test our faith so that He can determine how much we have – God already knows.
- I can't know how real my faith is until it is tested in the fire of suffering, tribulation, or persecution.
- When my faith is tested it is also purified and strengthened. **1 Peter 1:6-7**

<sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup>that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

- When my faith is tested, God is glorified, honored, and praised.

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- It is not always easy to praise God when that is happening.

- **Revelation 2:10c**

- 'ten days' – not literal.
- History shows that there were ten distinct waves of persecutions under ten different emperors.
- Days is being symbolically here to indicate periods of time.
- Jesus' point is that there was a definite end to the persecution.
- And we need to know this in our own lives.
- If we do encounter real persecution – it will not go on forever.
- Jesus is the 'First and Last' – omnipotent, sovereign control over everything.
- Even in our suffering we can know that it is not going to go on forever.
- Then Jesus gives them an exhortation.

- **Revelation 2:10d**

- Jesus tells them to be faithful until death, and they will receive the crown of life.
- James refers to this crown also. **James 1:12**

<sup>12</sup>**Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

- Jesus introduced Himself to this church as one who had died and was alive.
- Jesus was faithful until death, He was raised up to be alive forever.
- Now He is exalted to the right hand of the Father in heaven.
- There is always a cross before there is a crown.
- Every believer is called to be faithful until death.
- Being faithful is something we should do whether we are suffering or not, whether we are enduring persecution or not, whether we are in a time of tribulation or a time of peace – be faithful until death.
- When we think about being faithful until death we might think of the word martyr.
- We use that term when someone dies for their faith.
- The literal meaning of that word is witness.
- Death is not in the definition.
- But a faithful witness will be faithful until death.
- Let this word be an encouragement to any who are struggling tonight.
- **Revelation 2:11**
- To be an overcomer in the church of Smyrna, they needed to be faithful to Christ and to the gospel message.
- They were surrounded by false prophets and some of those were causing them to be persecuted.
- God would call us to be overcomers also.
- Fearlessly face the future.
- If God allows some hard thing in your life, He intends to make something beautiful out of it.
- Be faithful until death.
- There is a reward in heaven for your faithfulness.
- No matter how hard your circumstances might be, endure.
- Be faithful, your faith is being tested.
- Your faith is being proven so that God will get more glory, honor, and praise from the lips of men and women.
- Phrase ‘second death’ refers to the result of the final judgment on unbelievers.
- Their fate is to be cast into the lake of fire – into hell.
- We will talk about that at length when we get to chapter 20.

- As believers, we have no fear of that.
- If you have been born again by the Spirit, the only death you might have to face is the death of the body.
- Hopefully, we will miss that when Jesus comes to snatch His church out of the world.
- We have seen the first two churches.
- **The Preoccupied Church – Ephesus**
- **They were told to repent and return to their first love.**
- **The Persecuted Church – Smyrna**
- **They were told not to be afraid of the future and to be faithful until death.**
- Next we have the **Politically Correct Church**
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- Chapters 2 & 3 are given to call the church to purity before the Lord returns for His bride.
- The first two letters are to churches that were still relatively pure in their doctrine and practices
- Jesus rebuked Ephesus not for her works but for her lack of love
- Tonight we are going to look at two churches that are totally different
- The first of these is the church of Pergamos
- **Revelation 2:12**
- Pergamos was another city on the Aegean Sea
- It was the capital of the area known as Mysia
- It at one time had the second largest library in the world with over 200,000 documents
- Second to Alexandria – parchment was invented in Pergamos
- It was a very religious place
- Temples to Athena, Askelpios, Dionysus, and Zeus
- Askelpios was the god of healing – represented by a serpent around a staff
- Modern medicine still uses that for their symbol
- Satan is often represented as a serpent **2 Corinthians 11:3**

**But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**

- The serpent in the Garden was Satan **Revelation 12:9**

**So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

- Dionysius was the god of drunkenness you can imagine what their worship was all about
- In Pergamos was the first temple of the cult of Caesar worship
- Worshipers would drop a pinch of incense on an altar and then say ‘Caesar is Lord’
- That alone made life a little difficult for Christians
- The temple of Zeus was massive- included a statue showing Zeus fighting and defeating monsters
- His worshipers referred to him as Zeus the Savior
- Most of these temples included priests and priestesses that assisted worshipers by having sex with them – for a fee of course
- Jesus writes this brief letter to the ‘angel’ or pastor of the church
- Jesus identified Himself – ‘sharp two-edged sword’
- The sword is a symbol of God’s Word **Hebrews 4:12**

**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

- It is also used that way as part of the armor of God **Ephesians 6:17**  
**And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

- The sword of the Word of God serves two purposes
- First it serves to separate God’s people from the world
- In describing Jesus’ Second Coming in **Revelation 19:15**

**Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

- So the sword is also seen in judgment
- And that is the context here in our verse
- As Jesus addresses this church, He does so as the One who has the sword of judgment
- But before He deals with their issues, gives them a word of commendation

- **Revelation 2:13**

- Jesus begins by acknowledging that they live in a very difficult place
- ‘where Satan’s throne is’
- Some like to think that Satan lives in Hell, that is where he rules and reigns
- That is wrong on a couple of points
- First, no one is in hell right now – will not be occupied until chapter 19
- Satan doesn’t end up there until the end of the millennium in chapter 20
- Right now he is the ruler of this world
- At the time John wrote Revelation, his headquarters were in Pergamos
- He has moved them many times over the last 2,000 years
- Don’t want to guess where it might be today
- But I believe that there is a place in the world where Satan has erected a new throne
- Imagine having a church in the city where Satan’s headquarters are
- And this is what Jesus says to them
- ‘you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith’
- They would not deny Christ, even when things got really tough
- ‘Antipas My faithful martyr...killed’
- ‘martyr’ = literally ‘witness’
- Nothing is known of this man
- Legend says that he was cooked inside a bronze bull
- But all is not good in Pergamos

- **Revelation 12:14**

- The first thing Jesus speaks against is that the church had allowed some into the church with the doctrine of Balaam
- Back in Numbers 22 – 24 – Israelites are approaching the Promised Land
- The Moabite king Balak is afraid of them and sends for Balaam to curse them
- We all know the story of Balaam and his talking donkey
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- **Closing Comments**
- For those of you watching the live stream, thank you for your participation.
- If anyone has any questions, please connect with me.
- You can email me at [rick@radicalword.com](mailto:rick@radicalword.com).
- You can also connect with me on social media.
- Let's close with a word of prayer.
- God bless you all. Until next time, go be radical with Jesus.