



# **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 17 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 23, 2025.
- -
- -
- 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**
- Tonight, we will begin with the second of seven letters to churches in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. [**Map: Seven Churches**]
- The second letter is written to the church of Smyrna, named after the product it was best known for – Myrrh.
- The primary use of myrrh is embalming bodies.
- The Myrrh tree is common in that part of the world, though it is not abundant because it is usually found in arid areas.
- The resin of the tree is extracted by cutting the tree and allowing its sap to flow out.
- This is very harmful to the tree and if it is not done carefully, the tree will die.
- That is the symbolism we have in the second letter to the church in Smyrna.
- Let's read the whole thing and then we will look closer at it.
- **Revelation 2:8-11**
- We looked at verses 8 and 9 last week, so we will just review them tonight.
- You can go back to Episode 16 to find that.
- The Jews in Smyrna appear to be turning against the Christian church.
- Jesus warned the disciples (and us) that persecution was likely to come into the lives of believers because the darkness hates the light of Jesus Christ that lives inside us.
- Paul told Timothy... **2 Timothy 3:12**
- <sup>12</sup> **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**
- Jesus told them not to be afraid of the things that would happen to them.
- True Christian faith involves allowing the light of Jesus Christ to shine out of us into the darkness.
- If the darkness hates the light, it may seek to extinguish the light.
- Even today, persecution of Christians is common in some areas.
- In many places in the world. Especially in Africa, Christians are being driven from their homes and lands by Islamist jihadists.
- Seven thousand Christians have been killed in Nigeria this year.

- Churches are burned and the worst possible atrocities are being committed by people who say they are serving their God.
- They are not serving the same God we worship but the being who wants God's worship, Satan.
- Jesus tells them not to be afraid of the suffering that is coming.
- That suffering will test them.
- It will push their faith to the limits and beyond.
- This is one of the reasons God allows things like suffering into our lives.
- Testing challenges us to walk further in our faith than we think we can.
- If you know what you can withstand, you won't need faith.
- I had blood drawn this week for my annual checkup.
- It doesn't bother me to watch them stick the needle in and watch the blood fill the vials.
- I have done it so many times – it requires zero faith.
- Even as she had to move the needle around to find the vein, I knew she would.
- Now, it would be different if I had to have some kind of surgery.
- I have not spent the night in a hospital since the day I was born.
- It would be a test of my faith if the doctor said I needed some kind of surgery.
- As I sit here right now, I believe I have faith to do it without struggling, but I can't actually know that until that moment comes and my faith is tested.
- It is the same with everything we do in this life.
- We can believe we have faith, but we won't know until God brings or allows something into our lives that challenges us to walk somewhere we haven't walked before.
- But even if He does, as Jesus exhorts the believers in Smyrna, do not fear.
- We don't have to be afraid – Jesus is with us.
- Then Jesus encourages the church at Smyrna.
- **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 is struggling tonight.
- Your suffering may have been only for a short time, days, weeks, or months.

- For some, suffering has been a long time, maybe years or even decades.
- The exhortation of Christ is the same, be faithful until death.
- Jesus was faithful right up to His last breath.
- Even as He hung there, crucified by the people He came to save, Jesus asked for God's mercy upon them.
- The reward is the crown of life.
- It is a symbol of victory over the evil that seeks to destroy us in this world.
- The second letter closes with a promise to those who overcome.
- **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.
- First - Fearlessly face the future.
- If God allows some hard thing in your lie, He intends to make something beautiful out of it.
- Second - 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 **Polluted Church**
- **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 is said to have invented in Pergamos.
- It was a very religious place.
- Temples to Athena, Askelpios, Dionysus, and Zeus.
- Askelpios was the Greek god of medicine and 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**  
**<sup>9</sup> 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 physical relations with them – for a fee of course.
- Jesus writes this brief letter to the ‘angel/messenger’ or pastor of the church.
- Jesus identified Himself – ‘sharp two-edged sword.’
- The sword is a symbol of God’s Word. **Hebrews 4:12**  
<sup>12</sup> **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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**
- It is also used that way as part of the armor of God. **Ephesians 6:17**  
<sup>17</sup> **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.
- God’s Word teaches us how to live a life separated from the world being in the world.
- That is what it means to be holy – literally, to be set apart.
- We are in the world but not a part of it.
- In describing Jesus’ Second Coming in **Revelation 19:15**.  
<sup>15</sup> **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.
- He has the right, authority, and power to determine what is right and what is wrong, and to punish those who are wrong and reward those who are right.
- But before Jesus deals with their issues, He gives them a word of commendation.
- **Revelation 2:13**
- Jesus begins by acknowledging that they live in a very difficult place to be Christians.
- ‘where Satan’s throne is’ – Pergamos was home to several pagan temples.

- The largest was the temple of Zues, the so-called king of the Greek gods – the god of sky and thunder. **[picture: altar of Zeus]**
- It is not clear if this is the throne Jesus is referring to or some other one.
- 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 spiritual ruler of this world.
- John also wrote about this. **1 John 5:19**
- 19 **We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one.***
- Mankind was originally given dominion over the world in the Garden of Eden.
- That dominion was lost to Satan at the fall of man.
- When Jesus comes back, He will reclaim His rightful place as the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- At the time John wrote Revelation, Satan's headquarters appear to be in Pergamos.
- He has moved his headquarters many times over the last 2,000 years.
- I don't want to guess where it might be today.
- It might be somewhere in Nigeria or maybe New York City or San Francisco.
- 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.
- Even though they may not denied Christ, 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.
- Eventually Balaam shows up – had the gift of prophecy.
- I have always wished I had more information about Balaam.
- He was not a Jew and yet he received messages from God.
- Which he would share with others for money.
- God doesn't allow Balaam to curse Israel – blesses instead.
- But later Balaam taught Balak how to get the Israelites to curse themselves.
- He told Balak to get all the pretty girls of Moab to entice the men of Israel to corrupt themselves.
- First, they had relations with them, then they invited them to their feasts for their false gods.
- The doctrine of Balaam is if you can't curse them, corrupt them.
- There were people in the church in Pergamos that were engaging in the pagan feasts of the various temples of the city.
- These feasts involved eating the animals that were sacrificed to the false gods.
- Paul taught that Christians should not eat meat they knew was sacrificed to false gods.
- Not because these gods were real but because it would cause people of weaker faith to compromise their faith.
- They were encouraging others to do it also.
- This is the go along to get along philosophy.
- These pagan feasts might also include sexual immorality.
- Another area of compromise was in Caesar worship.

- These guys were saying it was okay to go ahead and place a pinch of incense on the altar and say ‘Caesar is Lord’.
- Just as long as you didn’t really mean it, you were okay with God.
- This would make them acceptable to the Romans and prevent persecution.
- Compromises like this are almost always gradual.
- It is a glacier moving down toward the ocean.
- A glacier is the result of thousands of relatively small layers of snow building up over a long period of time.
- Eventually, the weight of the snow forces the glacier to start moving down the mountain.
- Its movements are almost imperceptible, but underneath the ice, the ground is being crushed and ground to nothing.
- Even small amounts of compromise must be identified and rooted out.
- There are many ways we see this manifesting in the modern church.
- When a church turns the musical part of worship into a show or concert, it is the world creeping into the church.
- The introduction of man’s ideas into the teachings is another way.
- A church that teaches to make people feel good, rather than drawing them to holiness is another.
- Inclusion has been a big issue with some churches in recent years.
- They want to include everyone in their worship of God.
- It is a misguided attempt to bring the culture into the church.
- The result is a church that begins to resemble the culture.
- The culture does not belong in the church.
- The church should be going out into the culture and changing it, not the other way around.
- They had another issue.
- **Revelation 2:15**
- The church in Ephesus was commended because they rejected the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.
- This doctrine established an ecclesiastical hierarchy within the church.
- Jesus seems content to establish the church with deacons and elders.
- The Nicolaitans promoted a more extensive authoritarian leadership system.

- This system led the way to the establishment of bishops, cardinals, and popes.
- It created a clergy that was no longer a part of the body of the church.
- The clergy was set up to rule over the church.
- Jesus' model was that a man was called to be a shepherd from among the flock, but never stopped being a part of the flock.
- The model of this church is leaders among equals.
- Calvary Chapel was originally modeled after the model that Paul established in Acts.
- Even though there are thousands of Calvary Chapels, they do not assert any authority over any individual church, unless that church wanders from the doctrine established by Chuck Smith.
- Jesus calls them to repent.
- **Revelation 2:16**
- The word 'repent' is expressed in the form of a command.
- The church in Pergamos was compromising with the culture it was a part of.
- This relates to the period of church history between 312 and 606AD  
[Church Age Chart]
- An event took place in 312 that changed Christianity forever.
- Shortly before 312 the 10<sup>th</sup> wave of persecution from the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive Caesar had just ended with his death.
- A power vacuum was created within the kingdom.
- Constantine was one of the men vying for control of the Roman Empire.
- He recognized that there was a very large Christian population that had not chosen a side.
- He claims that he received a vision from God and was converted to Christianity.
- After 200 years of persecution Christians from all over the Roman Empire sided with him hoping he would bring them relief from the persecution.
- Constantine did succeed in taking control over the Empire.
- Then he passed the Edict of Toleration – forbidding persecution of Christians.

- Then he made Christianity the state religion.
- Soon after all babies born into the Roman Empire were baptized into Christianity = beginning of infant baptism.
- Then priests from all the other religions started getting baptized into the Christian church.
- With them came many of their doctrines and practices.
- Some of those things include:
- Prayers for the dead.
- Making the sign of the cross.
- 375AD – worship of saints and angels.
- 394AD – first mass instituted.
- 431AD – worship of Mary begun.
- 500AD – priests dressing differently than the people.
- 525AD – Extreme Unction – Last Rites.
- 593AD – Doctrine of Purgatory introduced.
- 600AD – mass conducted in Latin.
- 600AD – prayers directed to Mary.
- All these doctrines have roots in pagan worship practices and have no basis in Scripture.
- It was during this period that the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ diminished in the preaching in the church.
- It didn't align with the doctrine of Balaam, and so was replaced by other doctrines more suited for a pagan Christian audience.
- The sin of the church of Pergamos was to allow the sins of the world to enter the church, and to put church leaders between people and God.
- Jesus tells this pagan Christian church to repent.
- He warns them that if they don't change their ways, He will judge them with the 'sword of My mouth'.
- God hates compromise. Especially within the church.
- Revelation includes a description of the judgment God is planning against this wicked, God-hating, Christ-rejecting world.
- This is a warning not to align yourself with the things God plans on judging and destroying.

- Jesus concludes this letter with a word of encouragement to those who overcome.
- **Revelation 2:17**
- At the end of each letter, Jesus directs His comments to individual believers.
- Jesus promises to give three things to him who overcomes.
- In this context overcoming means not marrying the things of God to the things of Satan.
- Not marrying the church to the ways of the world. **2 Corinthians 6:14-16**

**Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."**

- Jesus is calling His church to purity.
- He makes that clear in His exhortation to husbands. **Ephesians 5:25-27**

<sup>25</sup> **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.**

- The first of the three things = 'hidden manna.'
- The manna was food God provided supernaturally to the nation of Israel as they wandered around in the wilderness.
- After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the manna stopped.
- The only trace of it that was left was in a jar in the Ark of the Covenant.
- That was kept under the Mercy Seat in the Tabernacle/Temple.
- Speaks of God providing for the faithful.
- Jesus also referred to Himself as the Bread of Life in John 6.
- Jesus Himself is our daily source of nourishment and strength.
- Be faithful and Jesus will nourish and strengthen you.
- The second thing is a 'white stone.'
- This is fascinating – white stones were used a number of ways.
- One of those ways was for a secret ballot.

- White was a 'yes' vote and black = 'no'.
  - Sometimes these stones were round like a marble.
  - It is where we get the term 'blackballed.'
  - Another way was in a judicial way.
  - When a judge or jury was deciding a case.
  - 'white' = acquitted, 'black' = condemned.
  - A third way was in the form of an invitation.
  - Winners of athletic competitions were given white stones which would get them into the celebration feast.
  - All three of those applies to those who overcome – keep the ways of world out of their life and church.
  - We are accepted by God.
  - We are acquitted of all our sins.
  - And we are invited to join Jesus at the celebration of His victory at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.
  - The third thing overcomers will receive is engraved onto that white stone.
  - 'a new name' – in heaven – no more connection to our past.
  - In this life, we can never really separate ourselves from our past.
  - But in heaven **Romans 8:1** will reach its fullest reality.
- There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.***
- The church in Pergamos was a compromised church.
  - The ways of the world were making their way in the church and the lives of the people.
  - Satan will never stop trying to corrupt Jesus' church.
  - One of the ways that he has been doing that is through marriage.
  - Satan is at times subtle and patient.
  - One of his latest attacks on the church has been going on for over 70 years.
  - In the fifties, it was the universal belief that marriage was between one man and one woman for one lifetime.
  - Alternative sexual lifestyles were viewed as an aberration, and they were rarely seen.

- The sixties brought on the sexual revolution and the feminist movement.
- And then gradually over the last fifties years alternative sexual lifestyles have become increasingly prevalent in the media.
- So much so, that you can hardly watch something in movies or tv that doesn't include someone in that lifestyle.
- Even children's shows include someone in the alphabet mafia trying to convince our children that it is normal and right to deny God's perfect design.
- People have been programmed to belief that a large percentage of the population practices some kind of alternative sexual lifestyle.
- Once the culture largely accepted this as common Satan started working to change the laws.
- The Defense of Marriage Act was struck down by the Supreme Court, which opened the door for same-sex marriages.
- The next wave of this attack should not surprise us.
- The first prong of that attack came with the recent focus on 'hate speech.'
- The next wave of this attack was to attempt to silence Christians and churches from speaking out against same-sex marriage.
- At the same time, they will attempt to force churches to conduct same-sex weddings.
- I have believed for some time that DOMA would be struck down.
- I believe it is one of the clearest signs that we are in the end-times.
- I can't tell you how fast things are going to happen.
- But I can tell you this – some churches will conduct same-sex weddings – but not this church.
- Some churches already welcome people practicing all kinds of sexual lifestyles into all levels of service within the church, including the pastorate – but we won't, not ever.
- No gender ideology is making its way into churches.
- I don't even want to think about what comes next; it will be worse.
- We will always welcome anyone who shows up.
- And we will do our best to love them with the love of Christ.

- Some churches will avoid sections of Scripture that speak against those lifestyles – but not this church – if God thought it was important enough to record it in His book, then I am going to preach it when I come to it.
- All sinners are welcome in this church, but if I am faithful to God, they will not be comfortable coming here and continuing in their sin.
- They shouldn't be comfortable in their sin – it is separating them from God, who created them to be in an intimate, communion fellowship with Him.
- I don't know what that means for my future or the future of faithful Bible-teaching churches, but that is not my concern, it is Christ's.
- This church belongs to Christ; it is His responsibility to take care of it.
- Let's be faithful – let's examine our lives and our church and make sure there is no place where the world has crept in. **2 Corinthians**

### **13:5**

**<sup>5</sup>Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.**

- The church of Pergamos was a pagan Christian church – they were attempting to be politically correct.
- Some Christians try to live that way - trying not to offend the culture by living just like the culture.
- That makes them pagan Christians.
- The Pagan or Politically correct Christian needs to repent or else they will find themselves being resisted by Jesus.
- Hold fast to His name and do not deny the faith with compromise.
- Jesus wants His church to be pure – if we are going to get ready for Him, we need to purify our life and faith – don't compromise with this world that God is preparing to judge.
- The next church gets one of the harshest of all condemnations from Christ.
- But that will be for next week.
- -
- -
- -
- **Switch to last PowerPoint slide.**

- **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.
- -
- **Stop recording.**
- Let live stream know I will be online for a few minutes.
- **Switch to Post Stream scene.**