



REVELATION

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE LAMB

WEEK 04
Faithful & Faithless
Revelation 2:12–3:6

Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Revelation 2:12–3:6 (or just pick one of the three churches) and reflect on the following questions: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? Why? 2) What does this passage communicate to you about God? 3) How would you like to respond to what God may be desiring to accomplish in you?

Digging Deeper

1. Pergamum was the Roman capital of Asia Minor and a center of emperor worship (likely why it's identified as “where Satan has his throne”). The Christ-followers there would have been under intense pressure to compromise their faith. From reading the message to them (2:12-17), how did they seem to fare? Do we have comparable pressures today?
2. The church in Thyatira was under similar pressures (2:18-29), though the temptation to accommodate would be more economic since the city was full of a number of powerful trade guilds. It is likely person identified negatively as “Jezebel” was teaching that it was OK for Christ followers to participate fully in the life of the guilds, while Jesus said they were going too far and condemned them for accommodating their faith. How do you negotiate between “loving your neighbours” and being “in the world but not of it”? (see John 15:19; 17:14-16).
3. The message to Sardis warns about their dying commitment to Christ and unfinished deeds. Jesus' words from Matthew's “little apocalypse” have similar and repeating themes. Read Matthew 24: 36-51; 25:1-46. Which of these warning parables convicts or encourages you most? Why?
4. The Christian communities of both Pergamum and Thyatira had people among them who were misled into sexually immoral practices and eating food that was sacrificed to idols. These two sins were often connected and for first-century Christ followers may have been related to participation in the meals in pagan temples (see Acts 15:27-29 and 1Cor 8–10). Reflect on possible reasons why purity in these two areas of life were non-negotiable for first century Christ followers. How are these two areas still a challenge for Christ followers today?
5. Which of the promises at the end of each message (2:17; 2:26-27; 3:5) to persevere in their faith resonated with you the most? Why?

For Groups

1. All three of the churches were struggling to stay faithful in the midst of the pagan culture that surrounded them. Are there struggles you face trying to live out your faith while also living and being present to the world around you?
2. Each letter ends with a promise to those who are victorious, i.e., those who stay faithful to Jesus to the very end. But those promises are not fulfilled right away. This is a reminder that God's timeline is not the same as ours. Are there things that you have been praying for and you are wondering when answers may come? Share them with your group and commit to pray for them. Be honest with God about any questions you might have about his timeline and encourage each other to keep pressing on in prayer.
3. There is something unique and personal about the letters to each of the churches. It is a reminder that God sees us and the various circumstances that we are in. When you spend time in prayer as a group, take some time to thank God for the ways that he sees us and invites us into a personal and intimate relationship with him.

Living it Out

1. Each of the letters speak to the importance of deeds. Jesus emphasizes an embodied life of faith — one that is lived out, and not just believed. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus, who searches hearts and minds (2:23), will repay each person according to their deeds? In your experience, has a life of faith centered more on either “right thinking” or “right actions”?
2. These letters also underscore that Jesus truly sees us as we are, forgives us, and loves us. How can you be more authentic in your relationship with God? with others?



FAITHFUL & FAITHLESS: PERGAMUM, THYATIRA & SARDIS

Revelation 2:12-3:6
October 1, 2023 | Tyler Williams

PASTORAL-PROPHETIC MESSAGES

1. Ephesus (2:1-7)
2. Smyrna (2:8-11)
3. **Pergamum** (2:12-17)
4. **Thyatira** (2:18-29)
5. **Sardis** (3:1-6)
6. Philadelphia (3:7-13)
7. Laodicea (3:14-22)

Varying
degrees of
those who
remained
faithful and
those who
have
compromised

PERGAMUM (2:12-17)

- But: some were holding to false teaching:
- “Teaching of Balaam” – a false prophet leading them astray to idolatry and immorality (see Num 22-24; Philo, Josephus, Mishnah; 2Pet 2:13-16; Jude 11).
- “The Nicolaitans” – unclear, but may similarly advocate compromise and participation in pagan feasts (2:16).

PERGAMUM (2:12-17)

- Famous city; its impressive Acropolis housed many temples.
- Seat of government for Asia Minor; as such Emperor worship and the imperial cult were dominant (“Satan’s throne” likely refers to this; see 13:2).
- Remained true despite pressure, persecution, and death (2:13).



PERGAMUM (2:12-17)

- Background: participation in temple feasts where meat sacrificed to an idol (*eidolothutos* ειδωλοθυτος) would be served and sexual immorality (*porneuo* πορνευω) was present (similarly condemned in 1Cor 8–10; Acts 15).
- Underlying this may be a type of docetism or gnosticism (see 1John 4:2; 2John 7).
- Called to repent, otherwise Jesus will come in judgement (“sword of my mouth”; 2:16).

PERGAMUM (2:12-17)

- Instead of idol meat, those who remain faithful will eat manna at the messianic banquet, to which they were invited and given a new name and new identity (2:17).

THYATIRA (2:18-29)

- An unimportant city; famous for its trade guilds (Lydia in Acts 16).
- Doing well loving God and others (2:19).
- But they also tolerated false teaching.



THYATIRA (2:18-29)

- Tolerated the prophet “Jezebel” (2:20; cf. 1Kings 18-21; 2Kings 9; Josephus); perhaps a patron of a house church, who “deceived” and lead people astray.
- Similar background as Pergamum, though more economic pressure to participate in pagan guild feasts.
- While she promised them knowledge of the deep things of God (1Cor 2:10-11), they were really learning “Satan’s so-called deep secrets” (2:24).

THYATIRA (2:18-29)

- She will be judged (2:21-22a); her disciples are called to repent, if not, they too will be judged (2:22b-23).
- The faithful who “hold on” and do “my will to the end” (2:24-26), will reign with God (Ps 2:8-9; see 5:10; 20:4; 22:5; cf. 2Tim 2:12), and receive the “morning star” – a symbol of victory over darkness to be received from Christ himself, the true Son of God who sees all (2:18).

SARDIS (3:1-6)

- City known for its wealth and its fine textiles.
- City had never been conquered through normal warfare, but had fallen prey to surprise attacks.
- The church had a reputation of being alive, but was dead (3:1).



SARDIS (3:1-6)

- Their deeds were “unfinished in the sight of my God” (3:2).
- Jesus summons them to wake up and repent (3:3), for Jesus will come like a thief in the night (Luke 12:39-40; 1Thess 5:2-8; 2Pet 3:10).
- But there were a few in Sardis “who have not soiled their clothes” (see also 7:13-14; 22:14).

SARDIS (3:1-6)

- Those who are faithful will walk with Jesus, dressed in white and their names will never be erased from the book of life (3:5; see 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:7; cf. Exod 32:32; Phil 4:3).

RESPONSE

- Each church was somewhere between being faithful and faithless.
- Some of them tolerated false teaching that encouraged accommodation and compromise with Roman culture.
- Others remained faithful despite pressures and persecution.

RESPONSE

- Jesus knows the real truth of our condition.
- He knows where we live (2:13); he knows our deeds (2:19; 3:1).
- His “eyes are like blazing fire” and penetrate the hidden truth of our motives (2:18; 1:14).
- He is “the one who searches mind [lit. kidneys] and heart” (2:23; Jer 17:10).

RESPONSE

“Authentic Spirituality: Following the Way of Jesus in the Details of our Lives” with Kent Carlson.
November 3-4.

