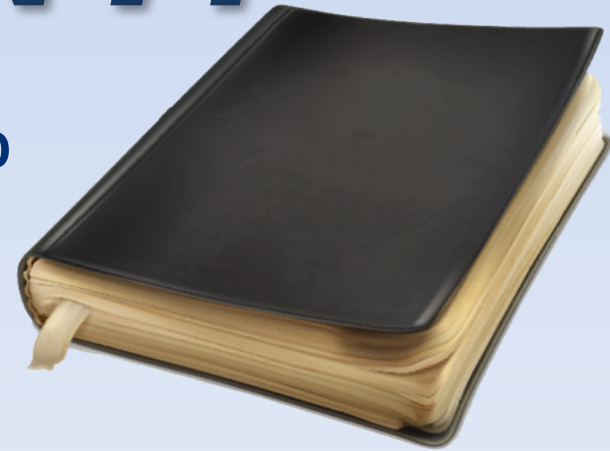


***REVELATION  
MADE  
RELEVANT!***

**FRIDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY WITH FR. WARD**



# Introduction

## BOOK OF REVELATION

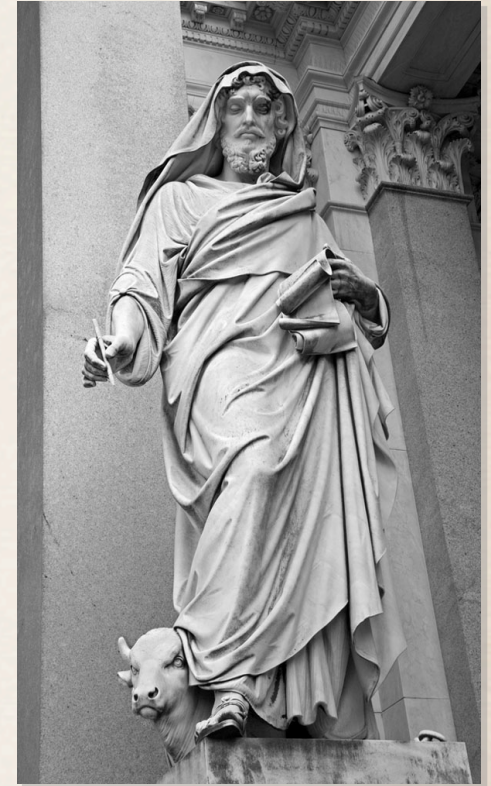
- The book of Revelation contains seven “letters” or messages from Jesus.
- These letters are addressed to churches in seven important cities in the Roman province of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).

City	Revelation
Ephesus	2:1–7
Smyrna	2:8–11
Pergamum	2:12–17
Thyatira	2:18–29
Sardis	3:1–6
Philadelphia	3:7–13
Laodicea	3:14–22

# Introduction

## Author

- John received the revelation from Jesus:
  - “The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” —Revelation 1:1–2



Apostle John













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"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL" EXODUS 20:15

# Ch. 1 Final Words

## REVELATION 1:17-20:

*17“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19“Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”*

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# Introduction

## BOOK OF REVELATION

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# Introduction

## PURPOSE

- In the letters to the churches, Jesus addresses the spiritual condition of each church with:
  - Praises
  - Challenges
  - Promises





# Sevenfold Outline

- The recipient church is first identified with the words, *“To the angel of the church in \_\_\_\_\_ write,”*
- The speaker (Jesus Christ) is mentioned with a reference to one of His identifying features revealed in chapter 1:12-16 in John vision.
- An assessment of the church’s current state is given by the One (Christ) who knows all.





# Sevenfold Outline

- A verdict is pronounced on the church's condition.
- Jesus issues a command to correct and/or encourage the congregation.
- There is then the same general exhortation *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches,”* which may be at the end or the second last from the end of the message.
- Finally, there is a victor's promise of reward to those who overcome.



# Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7





† Cities of the seven churches  
— Major travel route



# Ephesus

## BACKGROUND

- The city was the main worship center for the goddess Artemis.
- Artemis was an ancient goddess of hunting and fertility.
- The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



Artemis, known as the Roman goddess Diana

# Temple of Artemis





# Contemporary model





# Temple Today



# Ephesus

## BACKGROUND

- The city life revolved around the temple of Artemis/Diana and its activities, carried out by thousands of priests and a well-organized temple bureaucracy.
- Social, cultural, and legal pressures were probably exerted for all citizens, including Christians, to conform to pagan worship.



# Ephesus

<b>Strength</b>	Hard work, patient endurance, rejection of evil, perseverance
<b>Fault</b>	Is losing its identity: Forsaking its first love places the church at Ephesus in danger because love and faith are the wellspring of the believer's deeds.
<b>Promise</b>	The church at Ephesus will eat from the tree of life, the tree from the garden of Eden, in paradise.

# Ephesus

## PRAISE

- Hard work
- Perseverance through hardship
- Not tolerating wicked people
- Testing the claims of leaders
- Rejecting them when proven false





# Ephesus

## PRAISE

- The Nicolaitans compromised their Christian identity by incorporating pagan practices in their lives.
- Possibly corrupted the teachings of Nicolas from Antioch, one of the church's first deacons (Acts 6:1–5).

“But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” —Revelation 2:6

# Ephesus

## PRAISE

- The statements build on each other:
  - Working hard and persevering translates into not tolerating wicked people and continuing to believe even though some leaders have tried to negatively influence them.
- Jesus noted their carefulness and praised it.

Working hard/persevering



Not tolerating wicked people



Continuing to believe



# Ephesus

## CHALLENGE

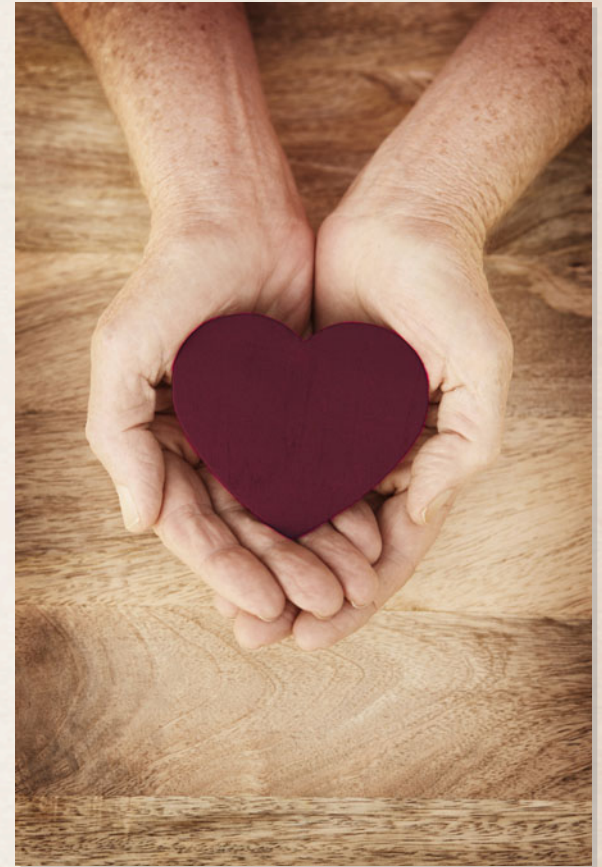
- *Lost Their First Love*
  - “You have forsaken the love you had at first.” —Revelation 2:4



# Ephesus

## CHALLENGE

- “First love” may refer to:
  - The burning love for Jesus that Christians experience when they first believe.
  - The love that believers have for one another.
  - The love that must always be the moving force for believers.
  - The love of witnessing about Jesus to nonbelievers.





# Ephesus

## CHALLENGE

- The solution that Jesus identifies is clear: “Repent and do the things you did at first” (2:5).
- Love is not an option. It’s an integral part of what it means to be part of the body of Christ.



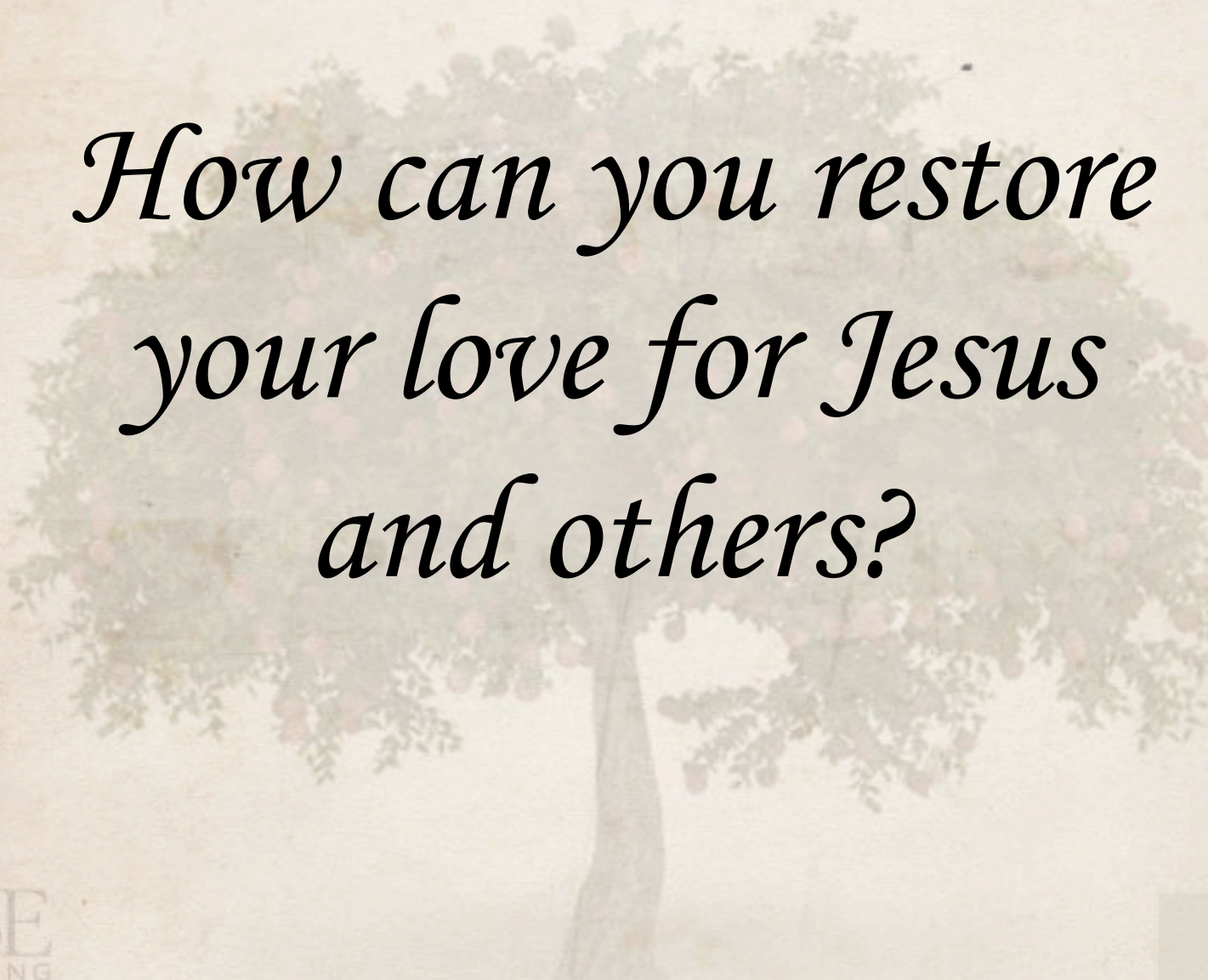
# Ephesus

## JESUS

- The final victory of the Church depends on the faithfulness of the Lamb and the faithful response of his people, especially in times of persecution and suffering.







*How can you restore  
your love for Jesus  
and others?*

# Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11





† Cities of the seven churches  
— Major travel route

# Smyrna

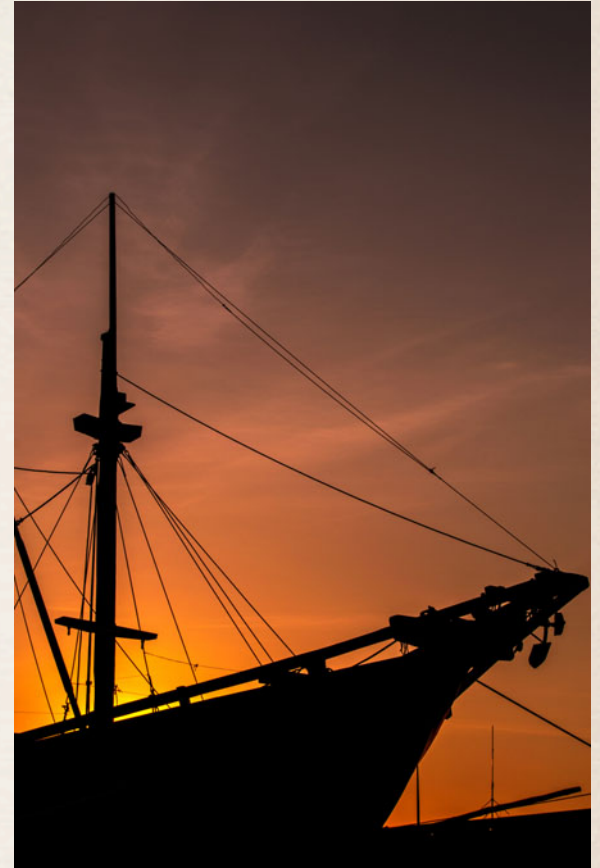
<b>Strength</b>	Endurance through suffering and poverty, yet they are rich.
<b>Fault</b>	None: The church at Smyrna has been faithful in the face of persecution and even martyrdom, but it should not become complacent.
<b>Promise</b>	The church at Smyrna will receive the victorious crown of life and not be hurt by the second death.



# Smyrna

## BACKGROUND

- Smyrna was an ancient and wealthy port—one of the most important Roman cities of the area.
- The birthplace of the poet Homer.



# Smyrna

## BACKGROUND

- Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum were the three main cities in the Roman province of Asia.
- Each one competed to be considered most important.



Ruins at the ancient city of Smyrna  
(Izmir, Turkey)



# Smyrna

## BACKGROUND

- At different times, both Ephesus and Pergamum served as the capital of the province.



Ruins at the ancient city of Smyrna  
(Izmir, Turkey)

# Smyrna

## BACKGROUND

- Emperor worship was central to city life, although the temples to Athena, Apollo, Asclepius, and Aphrodite, also bolstered city pride and the economy.
- It had beautifully paved streets including the “Golden Street” that had a vast array of pagan temples.



Athena



# Smyrna

## BACKGROUND

- Smyrna had a large population of Jewish people.
- Many Jews cooperated with the city leaders persecuting Christians—revealing by their actions that they opposed God.

“I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.” —Revelation 2:9

# Smyrna

## Jesus

- “The First and the Last” occurs three times in Revelation (1:17; 2:8; 22:13).

“These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”

—Revelation 2:8



# Smyrna

## Jesus

- “First and Last” is connected to the self-description of God in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12.
- In Isaiah, it expresses that God is the only true God.

“This is what the Lord says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.”

—Isaiah 44:6

# Smyrna

## Jesus

- “First and Last” indicates:
  - Christ’s divinity.
  - That Jesus is the source and the end of all things.
  - His sovereignty over the entire creation.
  - That he is eternal.





# Smyrna

## Jesus

- “First and Last” may also remind the Smyrna believers that their identity is firmly rooted in Jesus—not in their city being “first” in the region.



# Smyrna

## PRAISE

- “*I know your tribulation and your poverty*” is God’s reassurance that Jesus knows and cares deeply about our hardships.
- “*but you are rich*” refers to their spiritual richness.

“I know your afflictions  
and your poverty— but  
you are rich!”

—Revelation 2:9



# Smyrna

## **PRAISE**

- The richness of their perseverance
- Faithfulness
- Loyalty despite their suffering

# Smyrna

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.”

—Matthew 5:10–12



# Smyrna

## REBUKE

- *None*
- Smyrna had remained faithful, even in the face of persecution and affliction.



# Smyrna

## CHALLENGE

- “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some into prison, that you may be tested and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful, until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” —Revelation 2:10





# Smyrna

## CHALLENGE

- Persecution may mean surrendering their lives for the sake of Jesus' name.
- Jesus is not asking them to do anything he himself was not willing to do.



# Smyrna

## CHALLENGE & PROMISE

- Jesus tells them to persevere because the future holds more suffering.
- But those who are faithful will receive their “crown of life.”





# Smyrna

## PROMISED REWARD

- The “second death” shall not hurt them.



*How can we stand firm even  
when we experience social pressure  
to do something that betrays our  
faith and love for Christ?*



# Pergamum

Revelation 2:12–17



† Cities of the seven churches  
— Major travel route



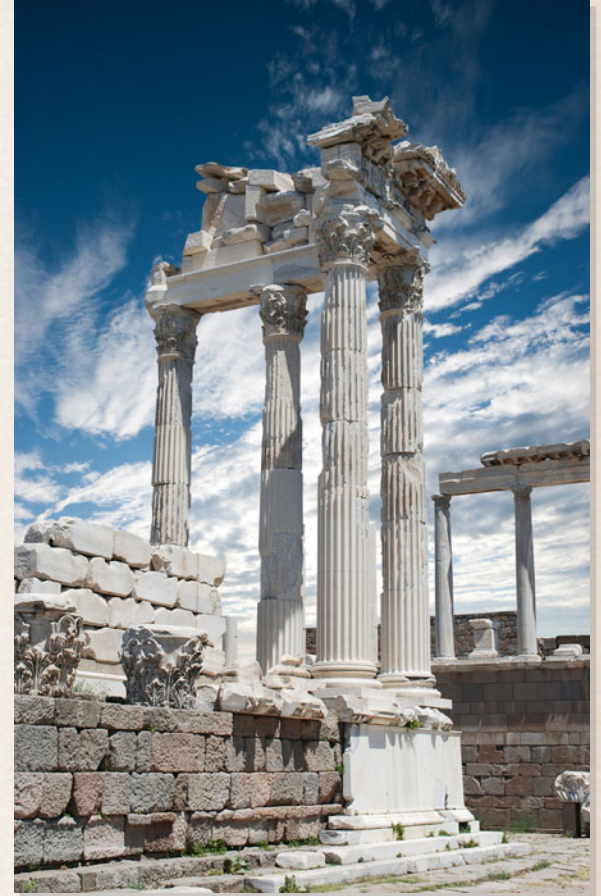
# Pergamum

<b>Strength</b>	Loyalty to Christ / Refusal to deny Christ
<b>Fault</b>	Compromise: The church at Pergamum has tolerated the teachings of people who want to practice idolatry while remaining in the church.
<b>Promise</b>	The church at Pergamum will receive manna (the life-giving bread of heaven) and a white stone (exoneration from guilt).

# Pergamum

## BACKGROUND

- Pergamum was an important center of learning, especially of medicine.
- The site of the Sanctuary of Asclepius, the god of healing.



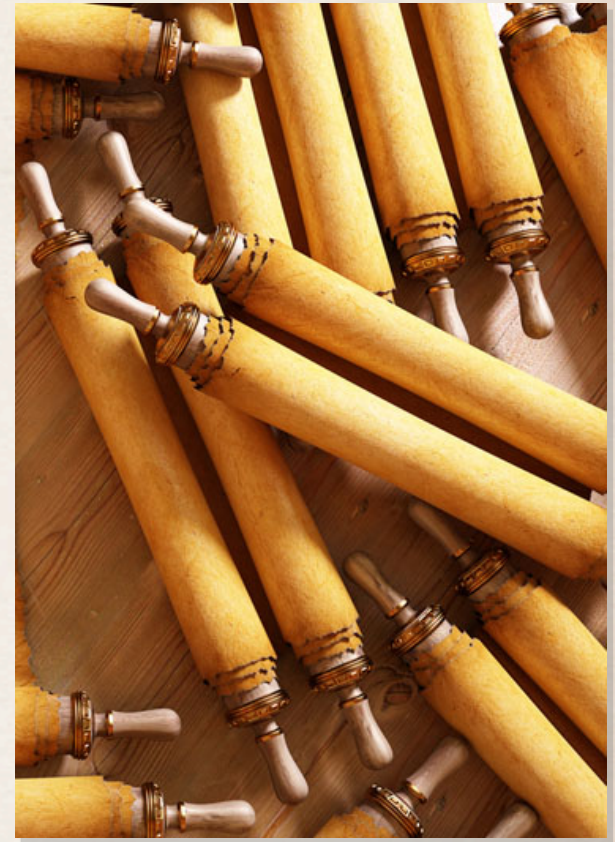
Ruins at Pergamum  
(Pergamon, Turkey)



# Pergamum

## BACKGROUND

- Home to the second largest library in the ancient world—smaller only than the library of Alexandria in Egypt.
- An administrative center for the province.



# Pergamum

## BACKGROUND

- It was also famous for its emperor worship and its great altar to Zeus, which many scholars believe was actually the “throne of Satan” mentioned in verse 13.



Zeus  
(Roman god Jupiter)



# Pergamum

## BACKGROUND

- The word *parchment* is derived from the name Pergamum.
- Although not invented in Pergamum, parchment refers to an animal skin that has been prepared in such a way that it can be written on.



# Pergamum

## BACKGROUND

- It became a common medium for all sorts of documents, including letters and books.
- Although generally not used today, parchment is still the only material used to make a Jewish Torah scroll.





# Pergamum

## JESUS

- “These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword” (Revelation 2:12).
- This description is further clarified in verse 16: “the sword of my mouth.”



# Pergamum

## JESUS

- It is related also to a prophecy about the Servant in Isaiah suggesting divine judgment:
  - “He made my mouth like a sharpened sword.” —Isaiah 49:2





# Pergamum

## JESUS

- Rulings for the entire Roman province of Asia originated in Pergamum.
- This image of Jesus shows that he is the true ruler and judge of the Church and all humanity.

# Pergamum

## PRAISE

- Although the church struggles in a difficult society, the church is praised because of its loyalty to Christ.
- As the death of Antipas suggests, they are willing to die for their faith.

“I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.”

—Revelation 2:13



# Pergamum

## CHALLENGE

- *Compromise*
- Despite their faithfulness, some were led astray by the Nicolaitans and the followers of Balaam.

“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam. ...

Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” —Revelation 2:14–15

# Pergamum

## CHALLENGE

- In the Old Testament, Balaam was a pagan prophet hired to curse Israel.
- But God had Balaam speak only what God put in his mouth (Numbers 22:35), and Balaam ended up only blessing Israel.



Balaam on his donkey  
confronted by the angel of the  
Lord



# Pergamum

## CHALLENGE

- Unfortunately, Balaam eventually led Israel to idolatry.
- By the time that the New Testament was written, Balaam was considered to be a prime example of a person whose teachings should not be followed (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11).



Balaam on his donkey  
confronted by the angel of the  
Lord

# Pergamum

## CHALLENGE

- Darkness and lies have no power over light and truth.
- Lack of repentance will cause judgment.

“I will soon come to you and  
will fight against them with  
the sword of my mouth.”

—Revelation 2:16





# Pergamum

## VICTOR'S REWARD

- Hidden Manna.
- A White Stone
- A New Name



*“I will give some of the hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.” Rev. 2:17*

# WHY is it said to be HIDDEN?

- ☞ According to Tanach, manna was originally deposited in the ark
- ☞ It would be restored when the ark would be restored in the end time
- ☞ The real ark would never be restored (Jer. 3:16), but Jewish tradition said Ark and temple vessels hidden, restored in messianic era



*How can we stand firm for what we believe while at the same time remain loving and caring toward others?*

# Pergamum

## THRONE OF SATAN

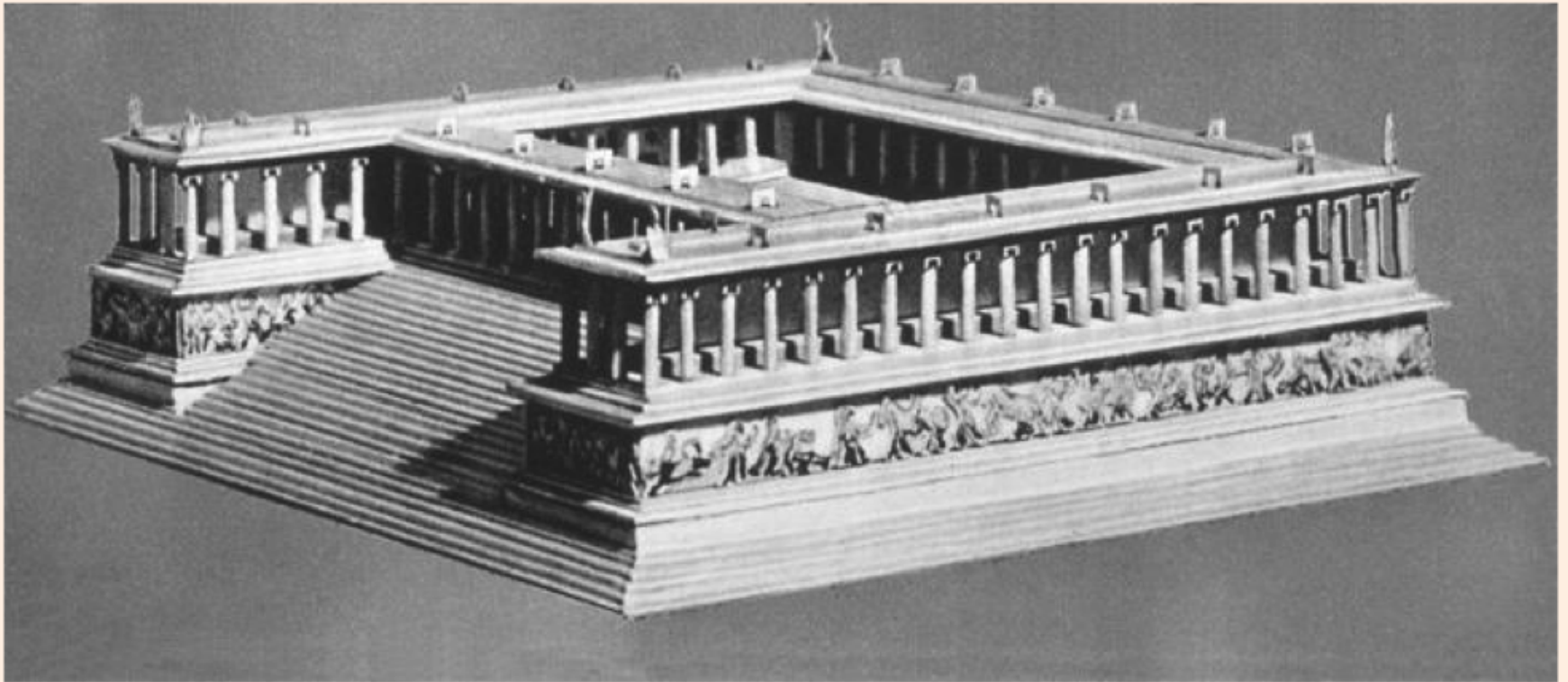
- The Altar to Zeus, was discovered by the German archaeologist, Carl Humann in 1871 which led to excavations in 1878. It was eventually housed in a giant museum in Berlin.
- It's "resurrection" coincided with the rise of the German Empire, Anti-Semitism, Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party.



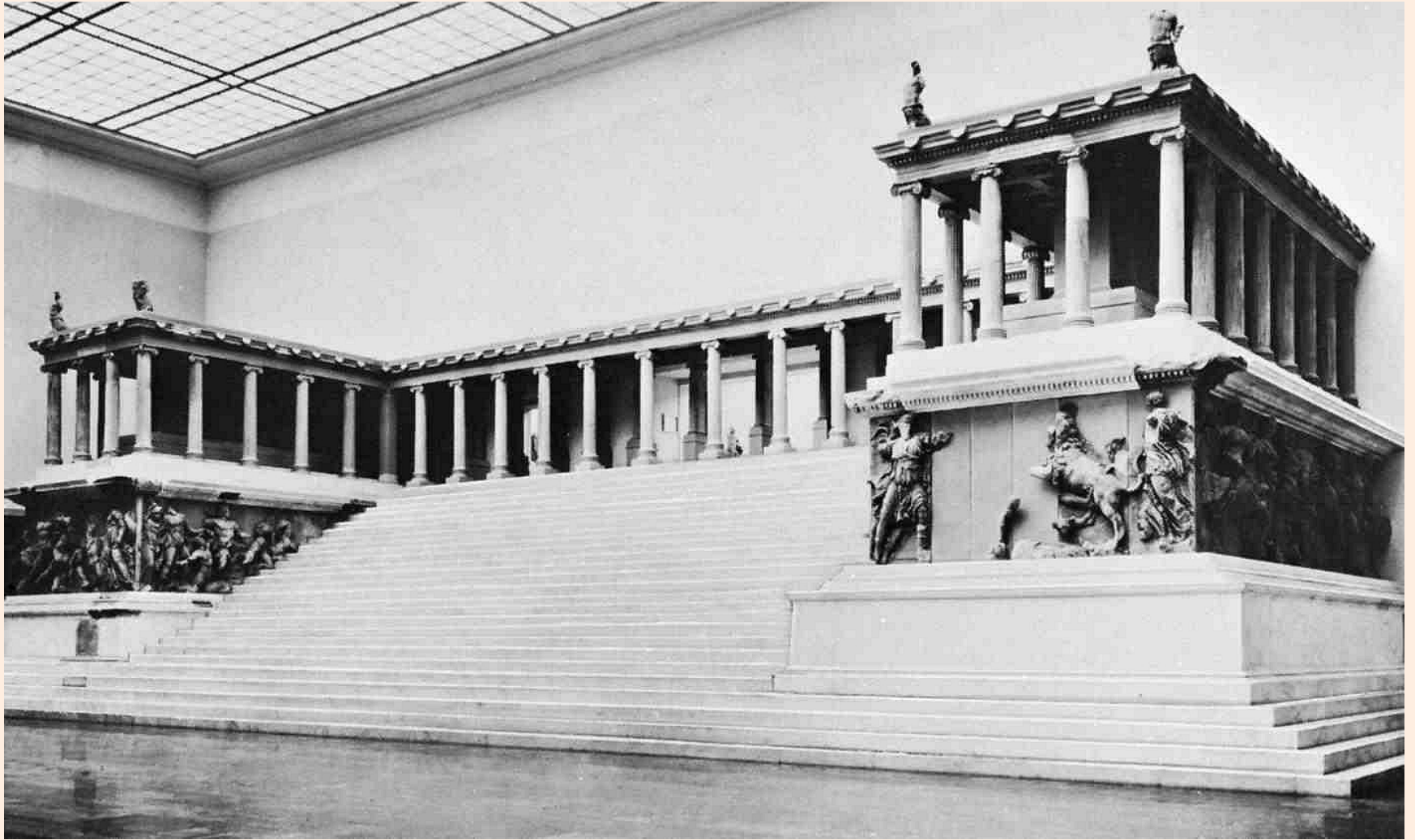
Zeus  
(Roman god Jupiter)



# Altar of Zeus



# Altar of Zeus





# Altar of Zeus



# Altar of Zeus - Nuremberg



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-C12701  
Foto: o.Ang. | September 1937



# Altar of Zeus in Berlin

