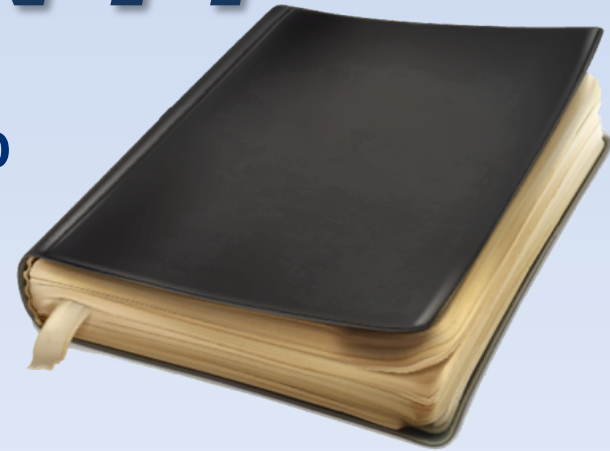


***REVELATION
MADE
RELEVANT!***

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





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"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL" EXODUS 20:15

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

Strength	Hard work, patient endurance, rejection of evil, perseverance
Fault	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.
Promise	The church at Ephesus will eat from the tree of life, the tree from the garden of Eden, in paradise.

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

CHALLENGE

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



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.

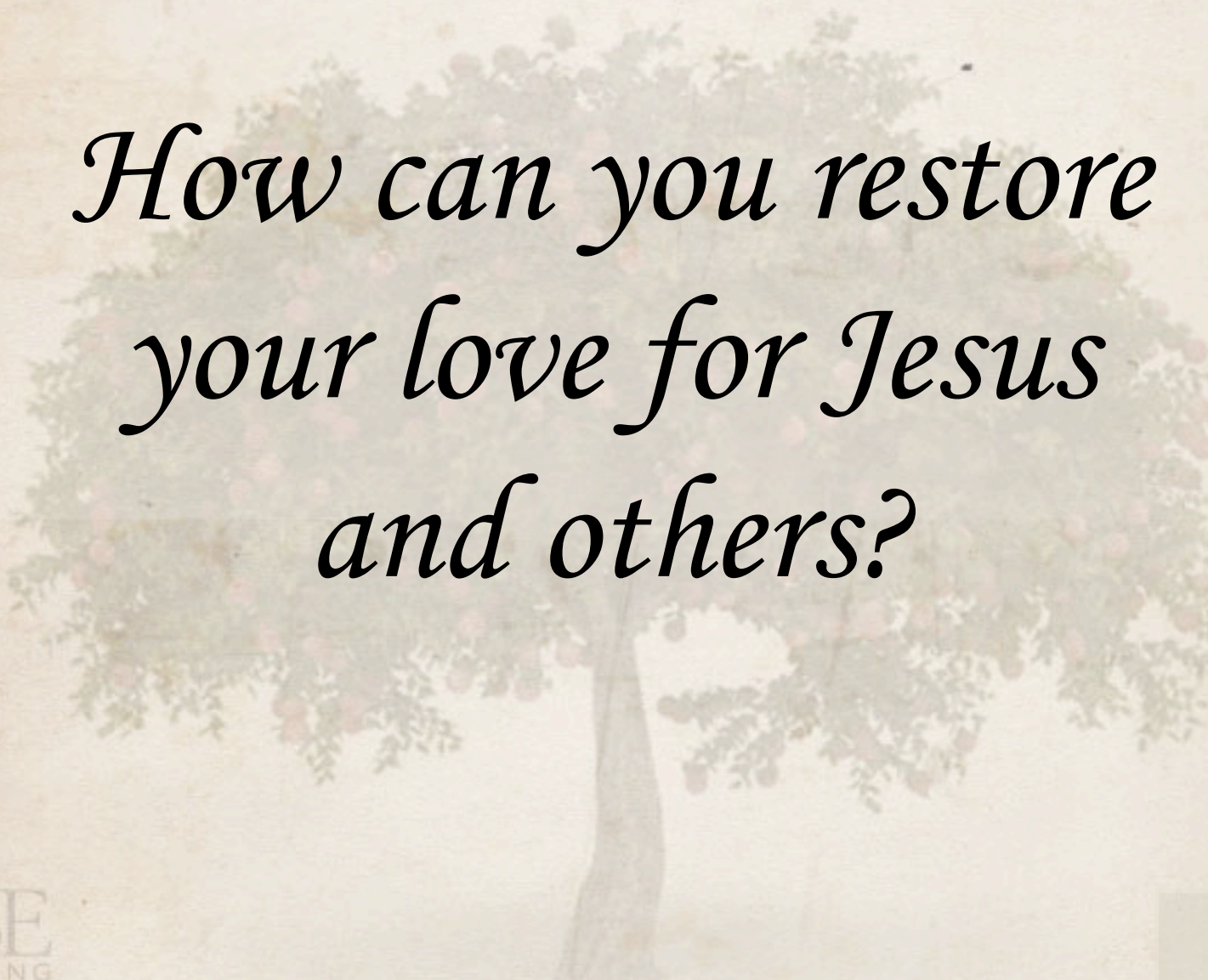


Ephesus

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

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

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

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

REBUKE

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



*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

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

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

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

- 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

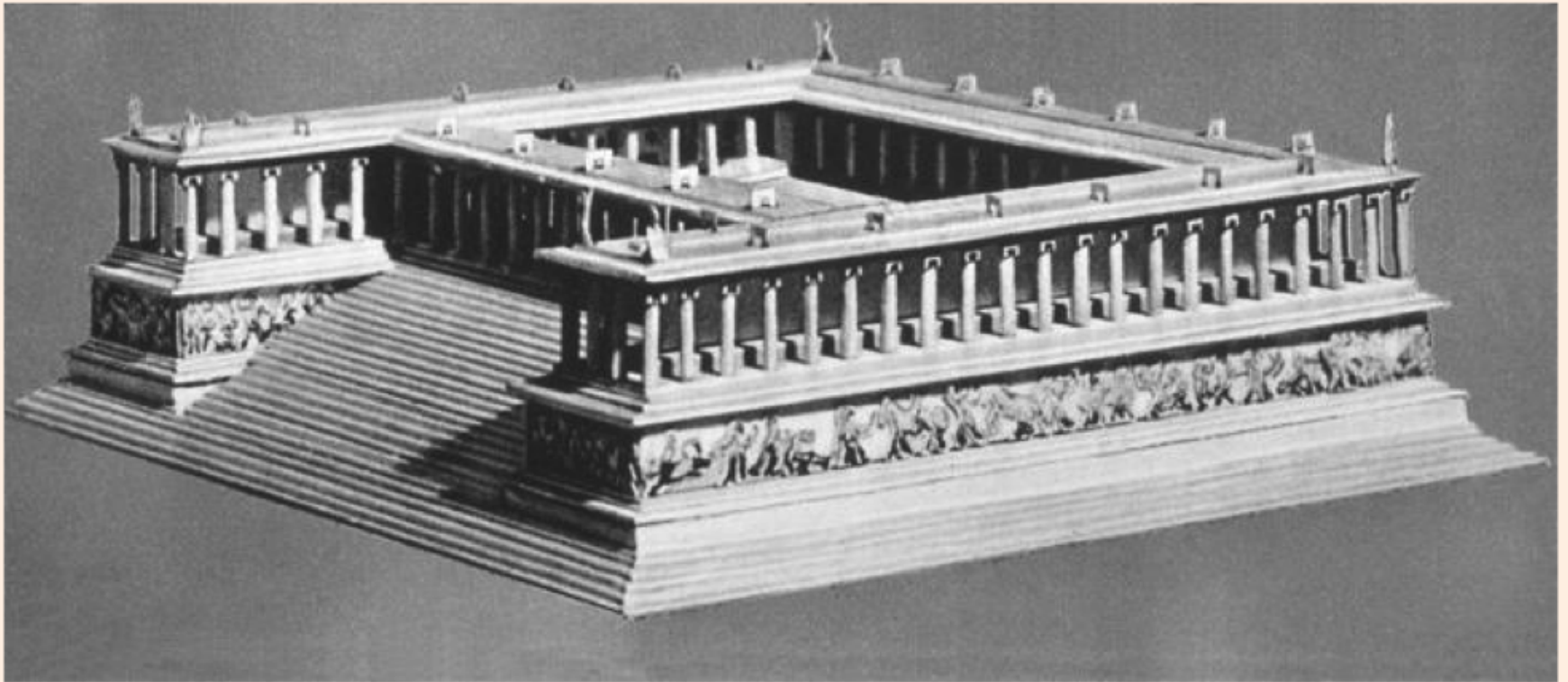
THRONE OF SATAN

- 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.

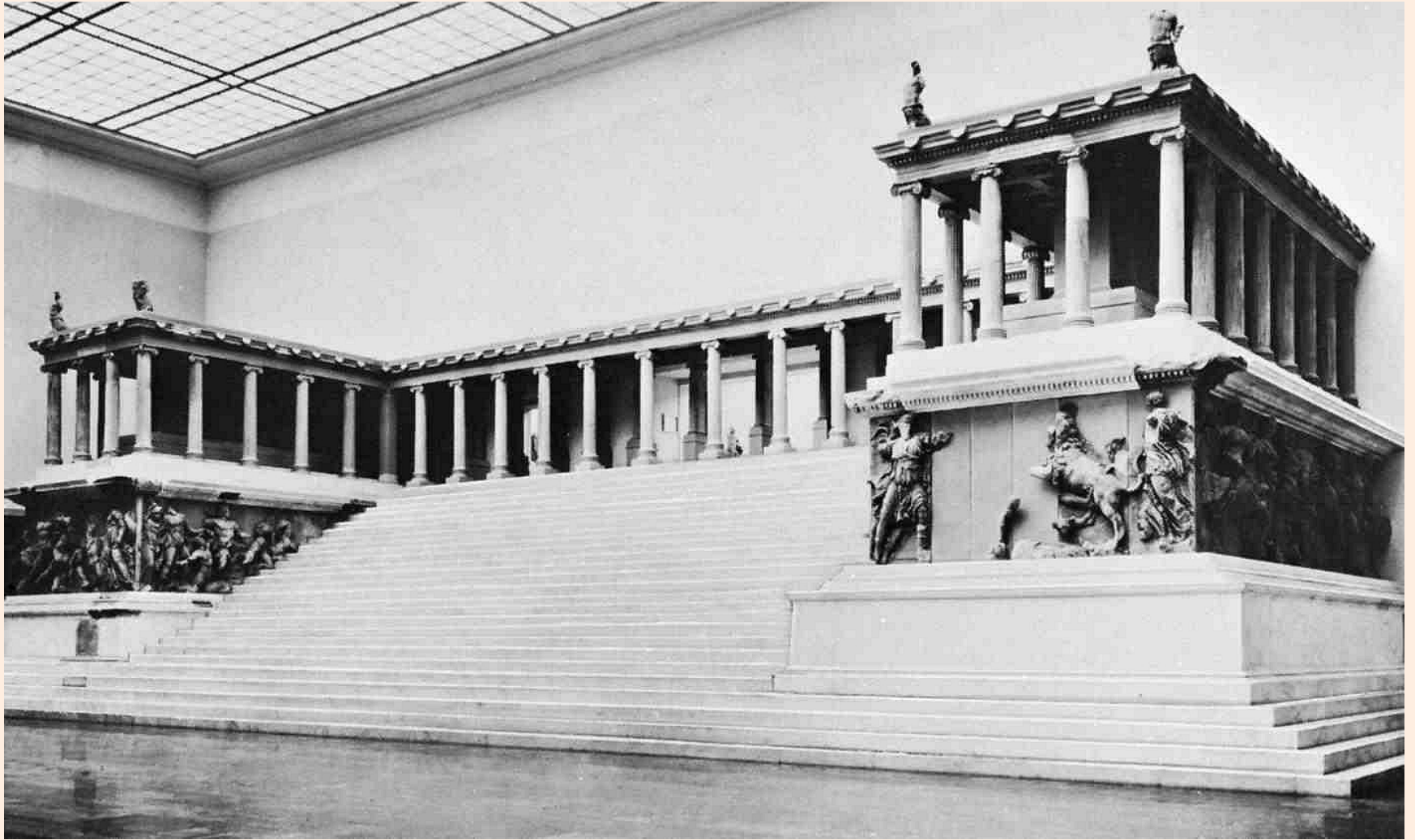


Zeus
(Roman god Jupiter)

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



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

Thyatira

Revelation 2:18–29



† Cities of the seven churches
 — Major travel route

Thyatira

BACKGROUND

- Thyatira was a commercial center, located between Pergamum and Sardis, on an important Roman road.
- Served as a crucial military post for whoever controlled the area.



Ruins in Thyatira
(Akhisar, Turkey)

Thyatira

BACKGROUND

- Well known for its many trade guilds:
 - Craftsmen of wool and linen
 - Makers of leather, bronze, and outer garments
 - Dyers, potters, and bakers
 - Dealers in slaves



Thyatira

BACKGROUND

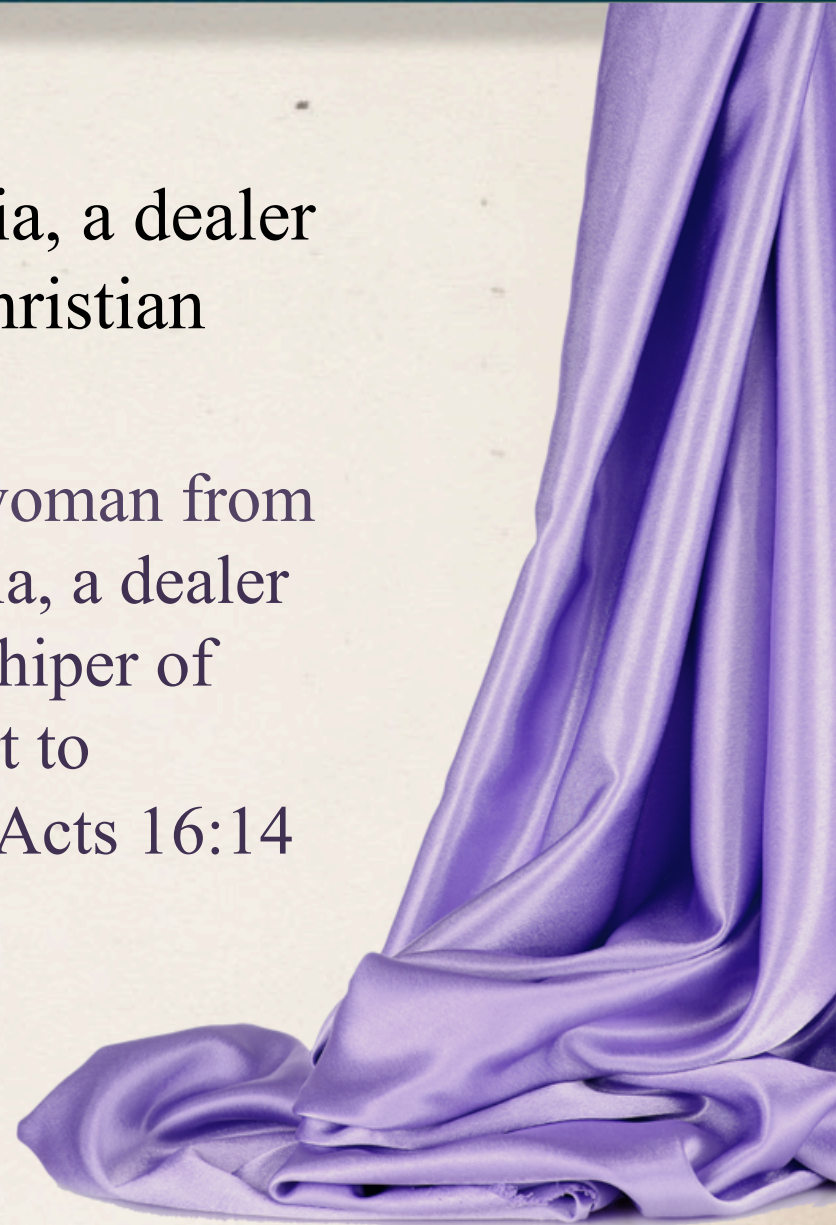
- Trade guilds were associations of artisans who practiced the same craft or sold the same goods.
- The trade guilds of Thyatira were tightly connected to the pagan religion of the area, so they likely opposed Christianity.



Thyatira

BACKGROUND

- Thyatira was the home of Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth and an early Christian believer.
 - “One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.” —Acts 16:14



Thyatira

JESUS

- “Son of God” (2:18) serves important functions:
 - A jab at the reference of the god Apollo and the divine emperors as “sons of god [Zeus].”
 - A reference to the prophet Daniel, who wrote of the “Son of man” and the “Son of God” (Daniel 10:6, 16).
 - A reference to Psalm 2:1–3, which describes the nations gathering against the Messiah, the Son of God.

Thyatira

JESUS

- This description of Jesus' eyes and feet reflects his keen insight and the fact that he is dressed as is appropriate for a priest—in this case our high priest.

“These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.”

—Revelation 2:18



Thyatira

PRAISE

- The church is noted for its deeds, love, faith, and service and for persevering and constantly improving (Revelation 2:19).
- The Lord of the universe is aware of what his people are doing and he cares about their actions!

Thyatira

PRAISE

- Love and faith are the wellspring of the believer's deeds.
- Our actions must be motivated by love and faith.
- Serving the weak and needy as well as witnessing about the goodness and love of God were characteristic of the church in Thyatira.



Thyatira

CHALLENGE

- *Tolerating Paganism*
- Church members who “tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet”—in other words, those who allow pagan practices in the church—will be made to “suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways” (2:20, 22).

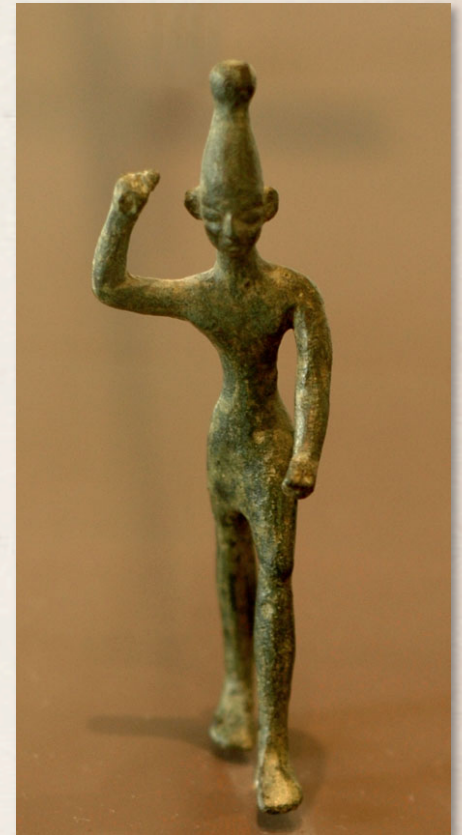
“I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”

—Revelation 2:23

Thyatira

CHALLENGE

- In the Old Testament, Jezebel was the wife of King Ahab of Israel (1 Kings 16:31).
- She led her husband and Israel to worship the pagan gods of her native land.



Statue of Baal, a Canaanite god in Old Testament times

Thyatira

Strength	Deeds, love, faith, service / Patient endurance / Constant improvement
Fault	Toleration of pagan practices: Has justified teachings that have led to idolatry.
Promise	Will receive authority over the nations and will receive the morning star, thus taking part in the new heavens and the new earth.

Thyatira

CHALLENGE

- As used in Revelation 2, the name *Jezebel* probably refers to an actual person who received the name as an epithet.
- This person apparently taught heretical ideas accepted by the church.



Statue of Baal, a Canaanite god in Old Testament times

Thyatira

CHALLENGE

- Church members who have remained faithful to Jesus and his teachings will not have “any other burden” imposed on them, “except to hold on to what you have until I come” (2:24–25).
- Despite their idolatry, Jesus promises a good future if they repent.

*Why is it so hard to forgive
ourselves and keep going
when we have done wrong?*

Sardis

Revelation 3:1–6



† Cities of the seven churches
— Major travel route

Sardis

BACKGROUND

- Sardis was built high above a plain, making it militarily important.
- Located on an important highway, making it, at least for a time, a center of commerce.
- Served as the capital of the powerful and wealthy Lydian Empire (modern Turkey).



Ruins in Sardis, Turkey

Sardis

BACKGROUND

- Source for nearly pure gold and silver coins and the start of modern currency.
- Center for the manufacture of carpets and woolen goods.
- Site of a large synagogue, and a bathhouse-gymnasium complex that covered over five acres.



Sardis

JESUS

- This description in 3:1 echoes 1:4, where the seven spirits refer to being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 3:1

“These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.”

Revelation 1:4

“Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne.”

Sardis

JESUS

- The stars are the seven messengers sent to the churches with the full authority of God to carry out their tasks.
- Jesus comes to the church with the fullness of God's authority.



Sardis

JESUS

- The number seven in this instance does not refer to completeness, but to ultimate divine authority.



Sardis

CHALLENGE

- *The Church is Dead!*
- The diagnosis is a critique on their idolatry, since they might have practiced the cult of Cybele, a death cult.



Cybele in chariot

Sardis

Challenge

- They are stagnant—going through the motions and participating in practices that no longer hold their interest.
- Some believers have actually “soiled their clothes,” a possible reference to the sin of idolatry (3:4).

Sardis

CHALLENGE

- “Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.” — Revelation 3:4 (See also 7:9–17)
- The challenge is to wake up from spiritual stupor and recall what they had learned.

Sardis

PRAISE

- Some of the Sardis believers remained true to the faith.
- Because they are free of guilt, and walk with Jesus they will be clothed in white and their names will never be erased from the Book of Life (3:4–5).



Sardis

CHALLENGE

- Remember what they believed, loved, practiced, and shared with others.
- God's people are instructed to remember and act upon that memory and to hold it fast.

Sardis

Strength	Faithfulness, but only of a few
Fault	Is dead: Engaging in idolatry has made their garments dirty and caused the church to be spiritually dead.
Promise	Will walk with Jesus, and their names will remain in the book of life.

Today the church also must stand guard of things that, although good, can distract us from God and become idols: money, properties, prestige, education.

How can you put Jesus first in all things in your life?