

Apocalypse Now (Revelation Revisited)

Session 3 / Wednesday,

REVELATION OVERVIEW

1 September AD 96 / Rome, Italy (sunrise)

2
3 The emperor was having a nervous fit. Only in his mid 40's, Domitian was given to
4 astrology. Some years earlier, an astrologer - at the risk of his own life - had given the
5 emperor a prediction that he would die one day around noon. God would allow it to
6 happen on this day.

7
8 Writer Robert Graves (who wrote the TV script for *I CLAUDIUS*) translated from the
9 original Latin the following scenario of Domitian's last day on earth:

10
11 *Astrological predictions had long since warned Domitian in what year and day he would*
12 *die; they even specified the hour and manner. On the day before Domitian's*
13 *assassination somebody brought him a present of apples. "Serve them tomorrow," he*
14 *told his servants, adding, "if only I am spared to eat them." Then turning to his*
15 *companions he remarked, "There will be blood on the moon as she enters Aquarius, and a*
16 *deed will be done for everyone to talk about throughout the entire world."*

17
18 *With the approach of midnight, Domitian became so terrified that he jumped out of bed;*
19 *and at dawn condemned to death a soothsayer from Germany who was charged with*
20 *having said that the lightning portended a change of government. Domitian then*
21 *scratched a festering wart of his forehead and made it bleed, muttering, "I hope this is all*
22 *the blood required." Presently he asked for the time. As had been prearranged, his*
23 *freedmen answered untruthfully: "The sixth hour," because they knew it was the fifth he*
24 *feared. THE ROMAN DAY OFFICIALLY STARTED AT SIX A.M. Convinced that the danger*
25 *had passed, Domitian went off quickly and happily to take a bath, whereupon his head*
26 *valet, Partherius, changed his intention by delivering the news that a man had called on*
27 *very urgent and important business and would not be put off. So Domitian dismissed his*
28 *attendants and hurried to his bedroom - where he was killed.*

29 THE FULL LIFE OF DOMITIAN BY SUETONIUS IN LATIN / GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

30
31 (See the picture of the statue of Domitian and the dates of his reign on the following
32 page.)

33
34 Thus ended the life of the cruel tyrant Domitian. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO OUR
35 STUDY OF REVELATION?





ROMAN EMPEROR DOMITIAN
BORN OCTOBER 24, AD 51 / DIED SEPTEMBER 18, AD 96

2-A



1 Because - the Bible is the story of REAL PEOPLE in REAL TIME and in REAL
2 PLACES. Shortly after the assassination of Domitian, a group of Roman soldiers
3 approached a ninety-something year old man, a prisoner on the remote death island of
4 Rome, Patmos, located in the middle of the Aegean Sea (between Greece and Turkey).
5 The old man was the APOSTLE JOHN who had earlier been exiled from his home and
6 church in Ephesus, Turkey, by the very emperor who had just been killed in his own
7 home. Domitian meant for John to die; but God meant for him to live. Why?

8
9 On that island, earlier, the grand old Apostle had a fantastic visitor, none other than Jesus
10 Christ Himself! Rev. 1:9-19

11 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the
12 kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the
13 word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. [10] I was in the Spirit on the
14 Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, [11] Saying, I am
15 Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and
16 send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia (Turkey); unto Ephesus, and unto
17 Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto
18 Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (These seven churches were located within a several
19 hundred mile radius on the western side of Turkey.) [12] And I turned to see the voice
20 that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; [13] And in
21 the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a
22 garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. [14] His
23 head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a
24 flame of fire; [15] And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;
25 and his voice as the sound of many waters. [16] And he had in his right hand seven
26 stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was
27 as the sun shineth in his strength. [17] And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.
28 And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the
29 last: [18] I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore,
30 Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

31 [19] Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the
32 things which shall be hereafter;

33
34 The Lord Jesus showed John those things that would happen in the future: Rev. 1:1-2

35 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his
36 servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his
37 angel unto his servant John: [2] Who bare record of the word of God, and of the
38 testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

39
40 The Apostle John was the only one of Jesus' original 12 apostles who died a natural



1 *The Isle (island) of Patmos is located in the Aegean Sea between Turkey on the east*
2 *and Greece on the west. The little town of 3500 there is called Skala.*



16 death. Ten of the others were martyred for their stand for Christ and His message and
17 Judas took his own life when overcome by grief for his treachery against Jesus.

18
19 **Rev. 1:3-8**

20 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and
21 keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. [4] John to the
22 seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is,
23 and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before
24 his throne; [5] And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first
25 begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved
26 us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, [6] And hath made us kings and
27 priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.
28 Amen. [7] Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also
29 which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so,
30 Amen. [8] I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord,
31 which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

32
33 Two quick observations about this passage:

- 34
35 1. God promises to bless the person who reads Revelation and “gets” the message about
36 the future it contains.
37 2. John, the pastor in Ephesus, Turkey, was apparently the leader or “bishop” of the
38 seven such churches there on the country’s western region:
- 39 ◦ Ephesus (John’s church)
 - 40 ◦ Smyrna (today known as the modern city of Izmir, Turkey - population 3 million)
 - 41 ◦ Pergamum



- 1 ◦ Thyatira
- 2 ◦ Sardis
- 3 ◦ Philadelphia
- 4 ◦ Laodicea

5 Jesus gave John a special “customized” message for each church which we will examine
6 in tonight’s study.

7
8 No one knew the earthly appearance of Jesus better than the Apostle John. He sat next
9 to Jesus at the Last Supper. He saw Him every day for at least three years. But the
10 glorified, resurrected Christ did not look like that any longer (which is why so many could
11 not recognize Him in His post-resurrection appearances.) When did you ever see a
12 painting or depiction of Jesus looking like this:

13
14 Rev. 1:13-17

15 And standing in the middle of the lampstands was the Son of Man. He was
16 wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. [14] His head and his hair
17 were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were bright like flames of fire.
18 [15] His feet were as bright as bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered
19 like mighty ocean waves. [16] He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp
20 two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was as bright as the sun in all
21 its brilliance.

22 [17] When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

23
24 So many of today’s depictions of Jesus - either in paintings or films - make Him look like
25 a sissy-boy, feminine and dainty-featured. Between lines 15 and 22 above is the
26 description given of Him now by the Holy Spirit. When He returns at His second
27 coming, there will be only brief resistance to Him, which He will subdue by a spoken
28 word.

29
30 John saw Jesus with “stars” in His hands - they were the pastors of the seven churches;
31 and the candlesticks represented the churches themselves.

32 JESUS’ MESSAGE TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN TURKEY

33 Why are those messages to 2,000 year-old churches important to us? Because each
34 church represents a “church-age” or period of time throughout the last 2,000 years. That
35 means that you and I are living in the Laodicean period - not a happy thought!

36 The Church in Ephesus

37
38 Rev. 2:1-7 Unto the angel (pastor) of the church of Ephesus write; These things



1 saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of
2 the seven golden candlesticks; [2] I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy
3 patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them
4 which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: [3] And hast
5 borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not
6 fainted. [4] Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy
7 first love. [5] Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do
8 the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy
9 candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. [6] But this thou hast, that thou
10 hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. [7] He that hath an ear, let
11 him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give
12 to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.
13

14 This great church had been started by the Apostle Paul near the end of his second
15 missionary journey: Acts 18:19-20 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there:
16 but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. [20] When
17 they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;
18

19 Ephesus at that time was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire. It was a wicked
20 place, given to the worship of Diana, "goddess of the Ephesians." The temple to this
21 creature, located strategically in Ephesus, was one of the ancient wonders of the world!
22 (Today all that remains of it is one straggly pillar. See the pictures on the next page.)

24 Our Lord's commendation of this church was remarkable - until it came to the end.
25 Some of the good points:
26

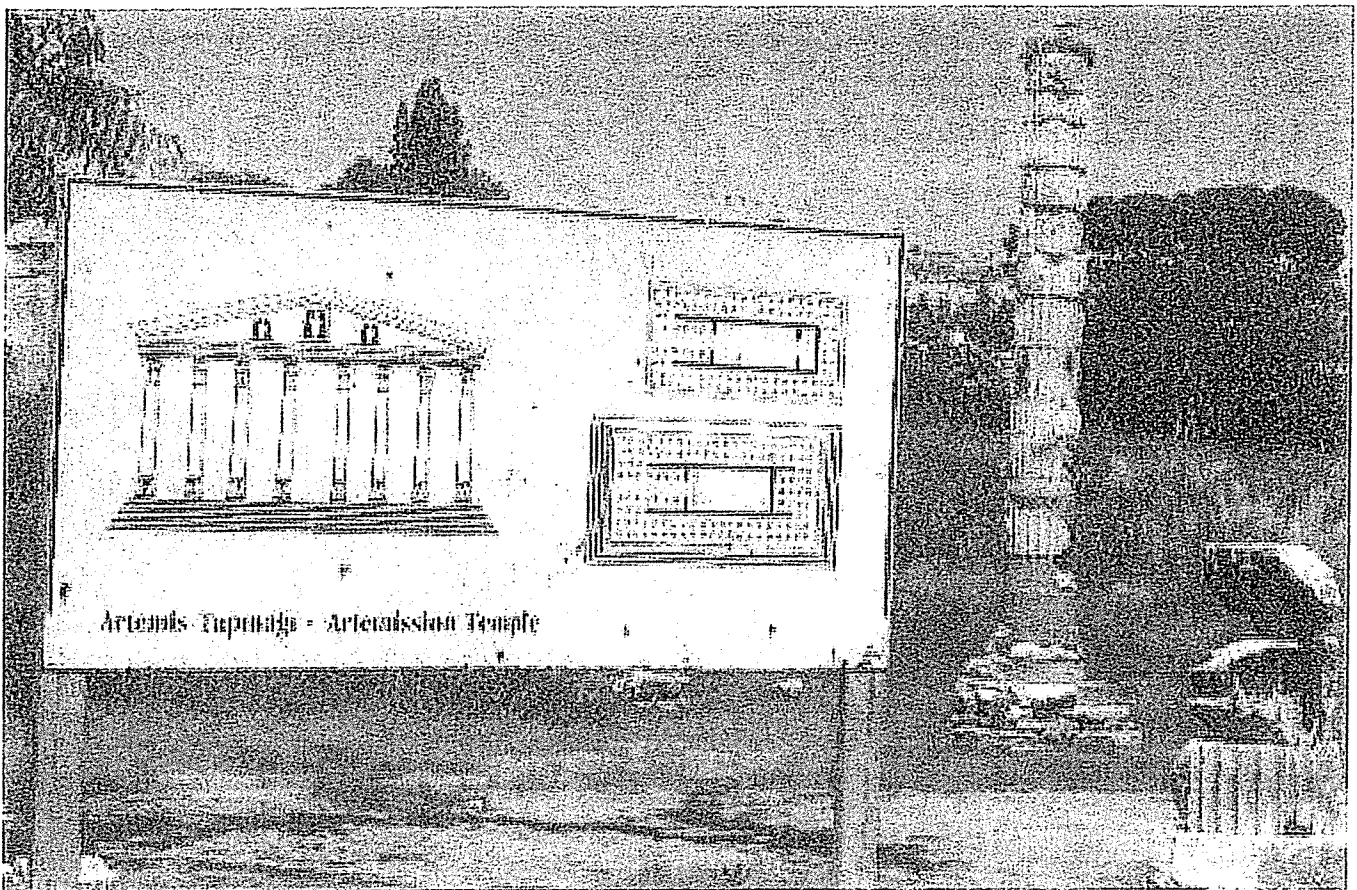
- 27 1. I know thy works and labor
- 28 2. You show patience (in the midst of adversity and persecution)
- 29 3. You do not condone carnality in the congregation

31 But then we come to the stinger: I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU...YOU HAVE LOST
32 YOUR FIRST LOVE.
33

34 The believers there were going through all the right motions; but their PASSION for
35 Christ had leveled off. That early first love was gone.
36

37 How would I feel to come home at night - to see the house neat and clean, a great dinner
38 awaiting me, and my wife sparkling in wardrobe and appearance - only to hear her say, "I
39 am always going to do these things for you....I am not going to leave you for someone
40 else...BUT...I don't really love you anymore. I hope you can live with that." That
41 would break my heart. Her love is more important than a clean house and a great dinner.





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21 That's how our Lord feels about His Bride, the church. All of our activities are
22 important and needed; but our Love for Him transcends all that.

23
24 Jesus told the church in Ephesus to "remember your first love;" to "repent of their
25 coldness of heart" and to "do the things you did at first."
26

Tim LaHaye wrote: "The people of the Ephesian church can almost be excused for forsaking their first love, for they did not have a Bible to read everyday to keep their spiritual life alive. Bibles were scarce, having to be laboriously copied by hand. First-century churches were fortunate to have one copy that could be read each Lord's Day; only by memorizing the Word heard at church could most Christians feed their spiritual lives on God's Word between Sundays. We modern Christians have no such excuse—the average Christian today has access to three to ten Bibles at any one time. I have found the best way for believers to retain their first love is to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16), by reading, studying and memorizing it on a daily basis."

REVELATION UNVEILED / LAHAYE / ZONDERVAN PUBL. / PAGES 49 AND 50

27
28
29
The Church in Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey)

Our Lord fully commended this church in Smyrna. Note carefully His glowing words:



1 Rev. 2:8-11 And unto the angel (pastor) of the church in Smyrna write; These
2 things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; [9] I know thy works,
3 and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them
4 which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. [10] Fear none
5 of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into
6 prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful
7 unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. [11] He that hath an ear, let him hear
8 what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the
9 second death.

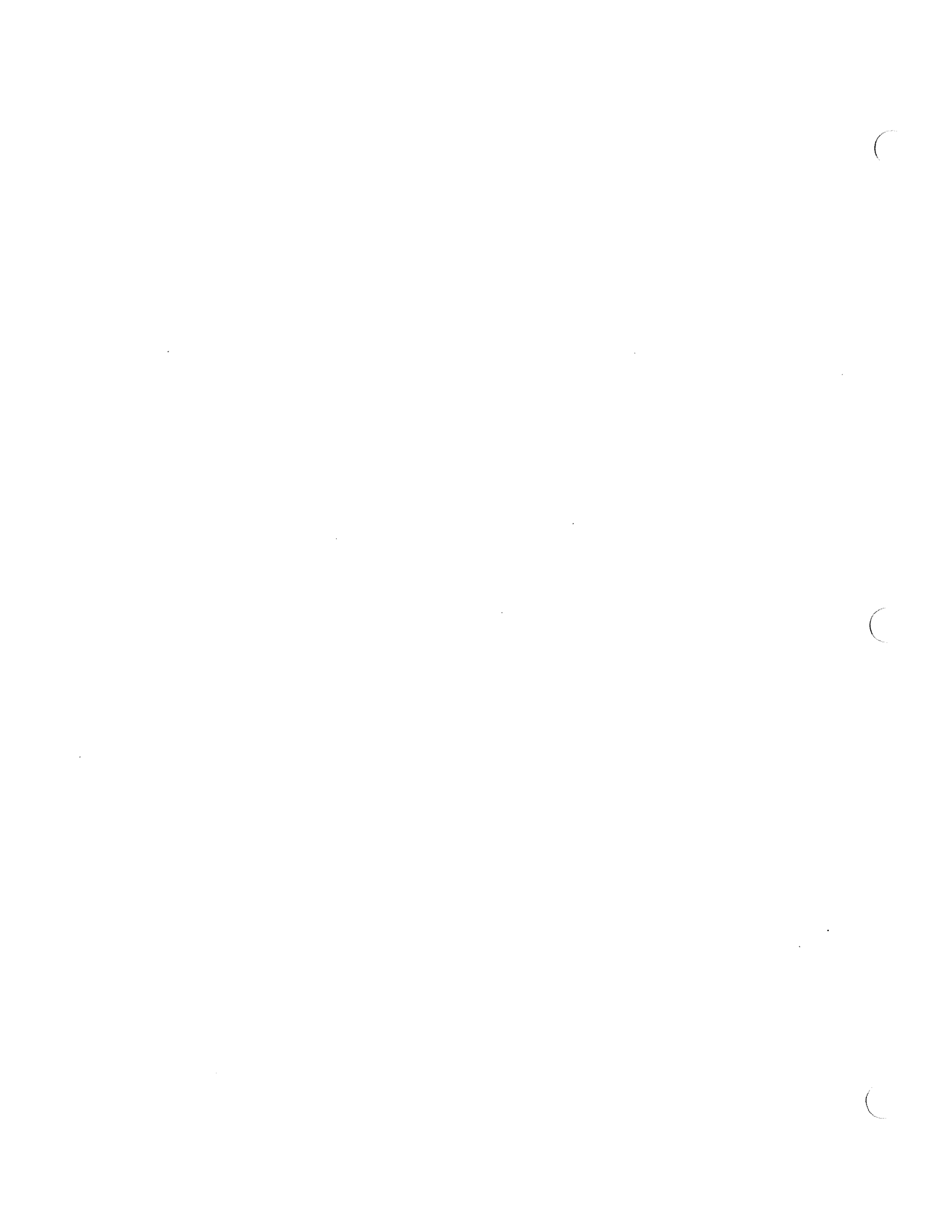
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11 Today, only the believers being massacred in Syria and similar regions by ISIS can
12 fathom the persecution of the church in Smyrna. The church there was tormented in this
13 wealthy city which had no time or patience with the early Christians. Until our current
14 century, in which radical Muslims are hounding Christians to dreadful deaths, this was the
15 greatest period of persecution to that time. The city was founded by Alexander the Great
16 about 300 years earlier. Money was plentiful and most people had no time whatsoever
17 for spiritual matters. To ease the "infringement" of the followers of Christ, the leaders
18 had them butchered.

19
20 Such a man was the bishop (pastor) of the area, Saint Polycarp, who was executed by fire
21 around 155 AD, many years after Bishop/Saint John was visited by Christ on Patmos. In
22 his 80's, he was warned that his life was at stake and he should flee. J. B. Lightfoot has
23 given us this marvelous account of Polycarp's martyrdom:

24
25 "Those who were looking for him were coming near so he (Polycarp) left for another
26 house. He was followed and when his persecutors could not find him they seized two
27 young men from his household and tortured them into confession. That evening they
28 found him lying down in the upper room of a cottage. He could have escaped but he
29 refused, saying, "God's will be done." He only asked for an hour to pray before they
30 took him on the back of a donkey into the city (Smyrna). As Polycarp was being taen
31 into the arena, a voice came to him from heaven: 'Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man!'
32 His captors at first tried to persuade him to deny Christ. 'Reproach Christ and we will set
33 you free!' The great bishop replied, '86 years have I served Him, and He has done me
34 no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?'"

35 THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP / J B LIGHTFOOT /

36
37
38 As the
39 wood and straw were gathered at his feet for the fire, Polycarp looked to heaven and said,
40 "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of Your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by
41 whom we have received the knowledge of You, the God of angels, powers and every
creature, and of all the righteous who live before You, I give you thanks that you count



1 me worthy to be numbered among your martyrs, sharing the cup of Christ and the
2 resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body. May I be received this day as an
acceptable sacrifice. I bless You and glorify You. Amen.” And the fires were lit and
4 the flame blazed around him.

6 The Ten Days

7
8 In Rev. 2:10, Jesus told the church in Smyrna they would have ten days of persecution. It
9 is better translated TEN PERIODS. Ten Roman emperors came along who were
10 determined to wipe out Christianity. They were:

- 11 1. Nero AD 54-68
- 12 2. Domitian AD 81-96
- 13 3. Trajan AD 98-117
- 14 4. Marcus Aurelius AD 161-180
- 15 5. Severus AD 193-211
- 16 6. Maximinius AD 235-238
- 17 7. Decius AD 249-251
- 18 8. Valerian AD 253-260
- 19 9. Aurelian AD 270-275
- 20 10. Diocletian AD 284-3056

21
22 The last of that bunch, Diocletian, many historians claim was Rome’s worst emperor. He
23 tried every violent trick in his evil bag to destroy Christianity. It was from Trajan on
24 that Christians were hauled into arenas to be tortured, crucified and eaten by wild
25 animals. One church historian has estimated that over 5 million Christians were
26 martyred.

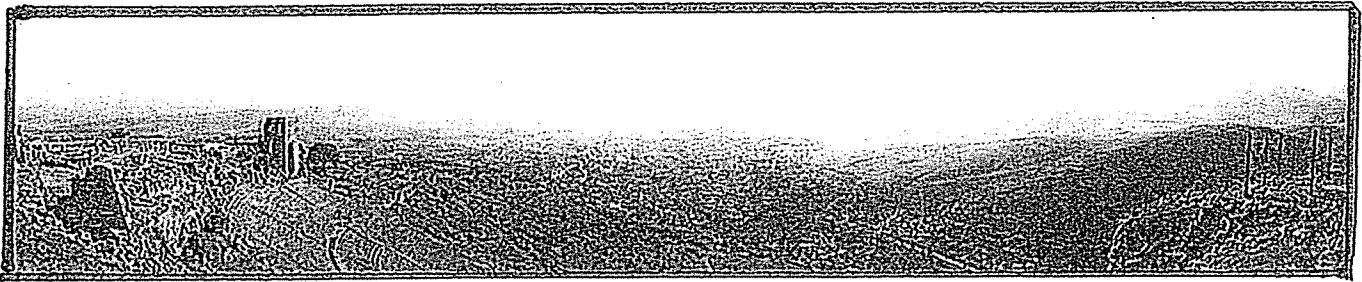
27
AND YET THE CHURCH THRIVED AND CHRISTIANITY SPREAD! It was only
when the persecution stopped and Emperor Constantine in 312 AD officially “named”
every Roman Empire citizen a “Christian” that the church began to suffer. As we see in
the following church in Pergamum.

28 The Church in Pergamum

29
30 Rev. 2:12-17 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith
31 he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; [13] I know thy works, and where
32 thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast
33 not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr,
34 who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. [14] But I have a few things
35 against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who
36 taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things



1 Pergamum was the capital city of Asia (Turkey) until the close of the first century.
2 Rev. 2:13 claims it was the city "where Satan lives." Babylon had that dishonor
3 until its "glory faded" into historical memory. Then Satan looked for this location
4 - now only a forgotten outpost in Turkey:
5



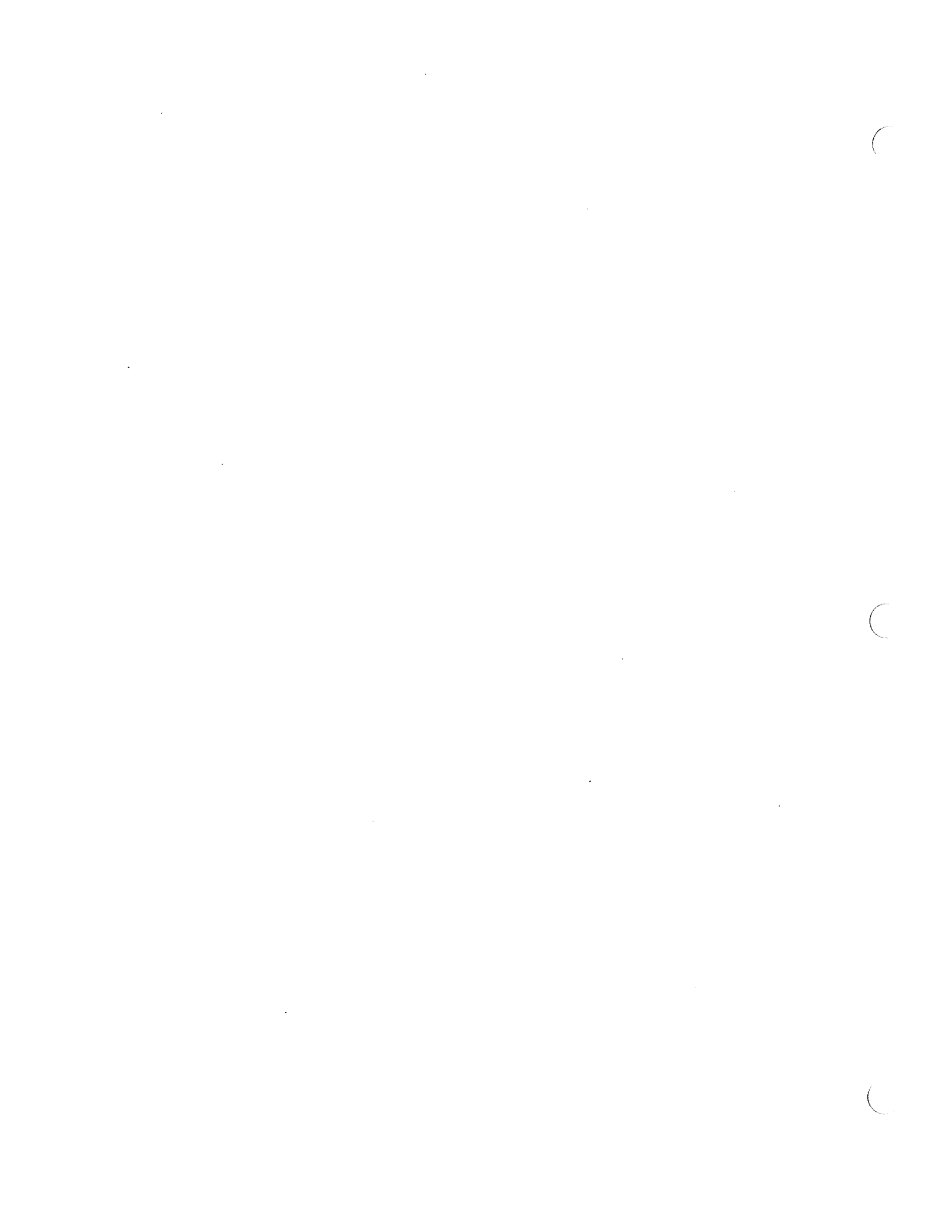
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14 sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. [15] So hast thou also them that
15 hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. [16] Repent; or else I will
16 come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
17 [17] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To
18 him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a
19 white stone, and in the stone a new name writtem, which no man knoweth saving he
20 that receiveth it.
21

22 Satan had learned his bitter lesson that persecuting Christ's Bride, the Church, only
caused it to flourish more and more. After Diocletian's attacks against believers, he was
24 followed by Constantine. History records that when his throne was threatened,
25 Constantine saw a vision (yeah, right!) Of a fiery cross and heard a voice saying, "In this
26 sign conquer." Some historian will relate that Constantine became a believer, but, if so,
27 only a shabby kind since he did not know the Scriptures and had little, if any, concept of
28 the faith of our fathers. He issued an edict of "toleration" for Christianity and eventually
29 declared every Roman citizen "a Christian." That, of course, is nonsense. Only
30 individuals allowing Christ to be Lord, Master and Savior are true believers.
31

32 The Rise of Paganism

33
34 It was during this season of history - AD 300-600 - that so much of ritual religion was
35 formed:
36

- 37 AD 300 – Prayers for the dead
- 38 AD 300 – Making the sign of the cross
- 39 AD 375 – Worship of saints and angels
- 40 AD 431 – Worship of Mary begun
- 41 AD 500 – Priests dressing differently from lay people



1 AD 593 – Doctrine of purgatory introduced

2 AD 600 – Prayers directed to Mary

3
4 How This Affected Christians' Belief In The Return Of Christ

5
6 As the Church became rich and powerful, the belief began that the world was getting
7 better and better, that Christ's kingdom had already come and that Jesus would return at
8 the END of the thousand year reign on earth. IT IS ALSO WERE THE DREADED
9 HERESY OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY BEGAN – that is, that the promises to the
10 Jews and Israel were not given to the Church.

11
12 One heresy prompts another because once TRUTH is set aside for superstition people
13 have no guide for their lives. In the church at Pergamum, two horrendous heresies
14 began:

15
16 THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM

17
18 In the Old Testament book of Numbers, chapters 22-31, we read the story of a man
19 named Balaam, a false prophet if ever there lived one. His vile teachings enticed
20 Israelites to intermarry with idolaters, to eat food sacrificed to demons, and to immorality.

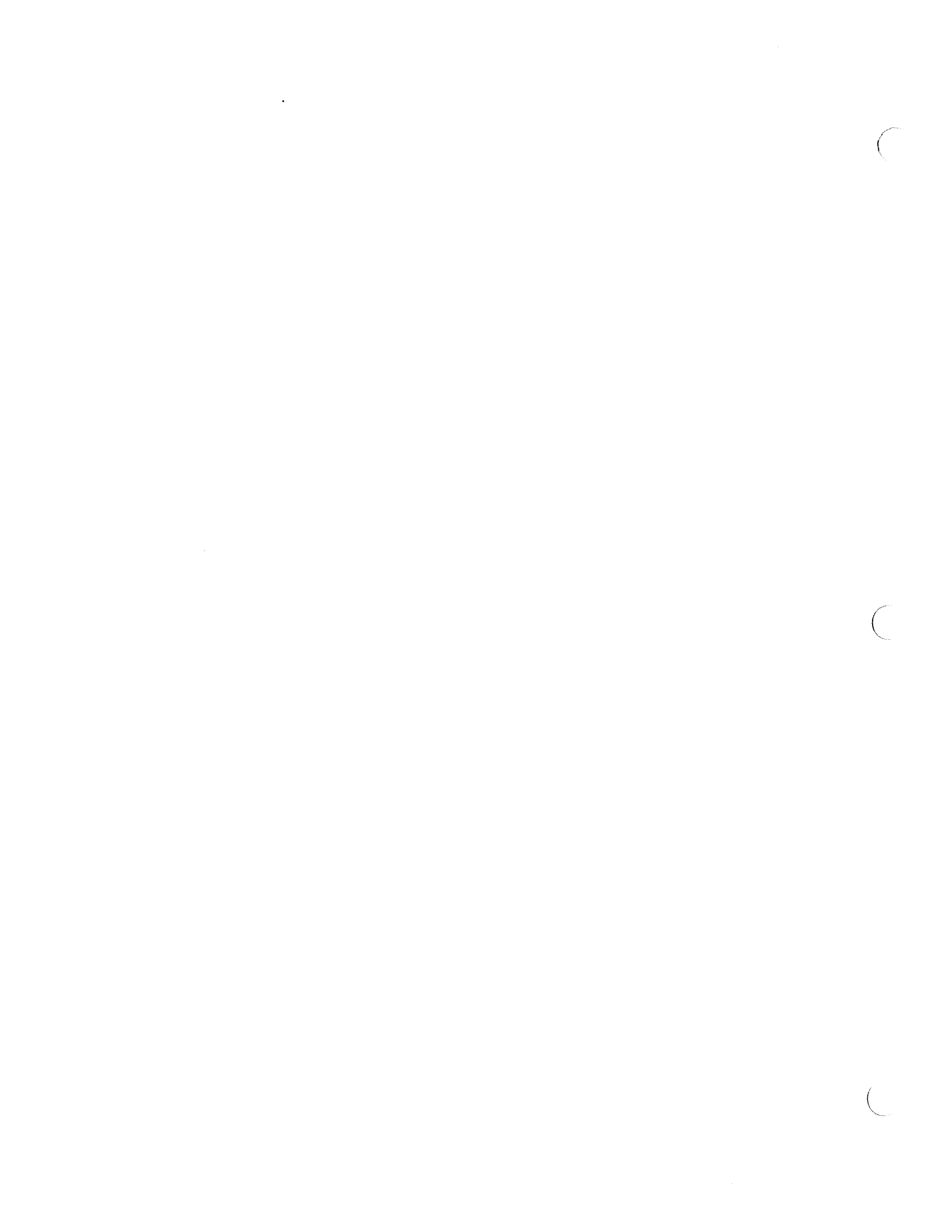
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22 So what happened all those centuries later in Pergamum? Believers were faithful to
23 basic doctrine but attempted to unite their biblical beliefs with paganism.

24
25 THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS

26
27 This teaching instituted a strong ecclesiastical hierarchy ruling over laity. The average
28 John Q Christian was told to blindly obey the dictates and decrees of the clergy, whether
29 or not those dictates were based on Scripture. What did Jesus think of this? "Which
30 also I hate," He said in Rev. 2:6.

31
32 Jesus told the people (through His message to His Apostle John) to quickly - to
33 immediately - abandon those negatives and get back to the "white stone," that is, the truth
34 of the simple Gospel

35
36
37 Next week: The last four churches of Asia and the entré into eternity.



THRACE

The Seven Churches of Revelation

Philippi

ASIA (TURKEY)

AEGEAN SEA

Pergamum

Thyatira

Smyrna

Sardis

Philadelphia

Ephesus

Laodicea

Athens

PATMOS

RHODES

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