



Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin  
March 7, 2021

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons and other material are also available on our local website at [www.gcinewbrunswick.org](http://www.gcinewbrunswick.org) Mr. Bill Hall's sermon who Canadian Director dated February 28 is not available on this website.

Session 11-15 on the study of the book of Acts by Mr. Gary Deddo is now available on our local website under "Members Only". It is an excellent Bible Study. You are encouraged to take the time to study it.

Bible study: This coming Thursday, March 11, 2021 7:30 PM. Continuing to study in the book of James.

The last Sunday in March will be a day of prayer for our nation and the church as Canada (and the world) continues to deal with the pandemic of Covid-19. Last year at this same time, Mr. Williams, at the beginning of this pandemic, he had asked for a day of prayer across all GCI congregations for the same reason.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to [www.gcinewbrunswick.org](http://www.gcinewbrunswick.org) – under "Members Only" and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

- Let us pray according to God's will as per his instructions: "1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)
- **Prayers of Thanksgiving** LifeWay Christian Resources is one of the world's largest providers of Christian resources. The Tennessee-based company sells and distributes Bibles across the globe. "They saw a significant increase in Bible sales during the initial lockdown of 2020 with Bible sales remaining strong since. "People often go to the Bible as a source of hope in times of crisis and uncertainty," says Lifeways CEO Ben Mandrell. (From March/April Faith Today Magazine)
- **Prayer of intercession:** "Pandemic restrictions have worsened persecution of Christians in many parts of the world, according to Open Doors' annual report on Christian persecution. Covid restrictions often confined Christian converts with family members antagonistic about their faith. Minority Christians also have fewer networks to turn to in difficult times. In 2020, 80% of Christians given food aid by open doors reported other food distribution centre had turned them away because of their faith.
- From <https://www.ncregister.com/news> ROME — More than 340 million Christians worldwide have experienced a high level of persecution and discrimination in 2020.

This alarming figure, communicated this month by NGO Open Doors in its annual “World Watch List” (WWL) of the 50 countries where Christians are the most persecuted, has significantly increased compared to the [2020 report](#), which already revealed an unprecedented level of antichristian violence across the planet.

Presented by [Open Doors’ Italian bureau](#) during a Jan. 13 news conference at the Chamber of Deputies in Rome, the report — referring to the period between Oct. 1, 2019, to Sept. 30, 2020 — mentioned in particular a 60% increase in the number of Christians killed because of their faith (4,761 in total, for an average of 13 every day).

As in recent years, Africa remains the deadliest continent for Christians, especially Nigeria, as well as many parts of the sub-Saharan region. While the number of churches attacked or closed has decreased by half compared to last year, the number of Christians arrested and jailed without a process remains very high (4,277) as well as the number of abductions (1,710).

- In spite of all these difficulties, let us thank God because Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The hardship of this world will not last forever (Rev. 21-22). Evil has no future. Let us hold fast to our faith in Jesus and the hope of the resurrection.

**Offerings: (Paraphrase of some information given by Mr. Hall, GCI Canadian Director):** Just a reminder that any donations we receive via either Credit Card or Canada Helps are subject to about a 3-3.5% fee which means any donations we receive for your congregation, are reduced by that amount. Direct Debit (Pre-authorized Payment) or E-Transfers have much lower transaction fees, that we do not back charge to the local congregation. (Cheques do not have a transaction fee). One can send E-transfers to [khorwood@gcicanada.ca](mailto:khorwood@gcicanada.ca) (her full name is Kathleen Horwood) if their bank uses INTERACT. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. There is no need for a password as your offering will directly immediately in the GCI church bank account. Most bank send an immediate confirmation of successful deposit. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below.

You can send your offering directly by cheque to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7S1 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.**

You can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/7735>. All donations received via “Canada Helps” are credited to the members local congregation. It is therefore important that you include your address and other information Canada Helps asks.

**T4 FYI** some may ask about donations they gave via Canada Helps. As a registered Canada Helps issues tax receipts for donations to the church given through their portal (website). (From Mr. Bill Hall, Canadian Director Feb. 6, 2021)

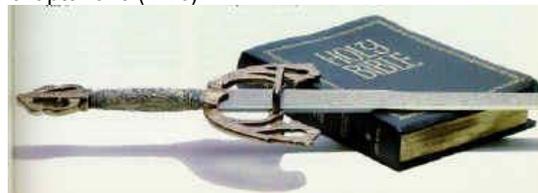
**Important Notice: if you have and are giving your offerings directly to GCI either by regular post, telephone or automatic withdrawal from your bank account, credit card or e-transfers, you will receive a tax receipt directly from the GCI head office in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.**

### **Pergamum: a church in the center of heresy and apostasy (continued from last week)**

#### [The Churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum and Thyatira \(Revelation 2\) | Grace Communion International \(gci.org\)](#)

Christ introduced himself to the church in Pergamum as one who has the sharp, double-edged sword (2:12). This was another reference taken from the “One Like a Son of Man” image in chapter one (1:16).

The sword is symbolic of the penetrating word of God ([Hebrews 4:12-13](#)). More precisely, it is the discerning aspect of the word that “**judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart,**” and from which nothing in creation is hidden. This would have had great meaning in reference to where the members of the Pergamum church lived – in a city filled with the splendor and power of false religion.



The church was reminded that Pergamum’s power structure had wrongly judged or condemned Antipas, a faithful witness, and executed him (1:5). But God will judge the world system itself in opposition to God, of which Pergamum’s power center partakes. Revelation describes God’s judgment on “the world” in great symbolic detail. It is represented by the City of Babylon while God’s people are symbolized by the New Jerusalem. This struggle between the world and the saints, pictured in Revelation, led one commentator to label the book as a “Tale of Two Cities.”



The religious climate at Pergamum was not conducive to the Christian life. That's because "**Satan's throne**" was in the city (2:12). While the phrase has received differing interpretations, it probably refers to Pergamum as a major center of pagan religion, especially the imperial cult. The city symbolized secular power and civil religion working together to do something Satan wanted.

### Problems at Pergamum (2:14-16)

While the church in Pergamum was assaulted from the outside, it also faced serious internal religious deception. This is described as the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (2:14-15). Revelation's use of the Balaam typology underscores the book's reliance on Old Testament symbols. Balaam's story is found in **Numbers 22-24**. He was a prophet who manipulated Israel into falling under God's curse. Balaam's motive was personal gain (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 6). He had been offered riches and power by Balak, a gentile king, to destroy God's people, Israel.

The prophet found a way to accomplish the king's desire. Balaam devised a plan whereby he caused the men of Israel to commit sexual immorality with Moabite women and to sacrifice to their gods in a community meal during a festival (**Numbers 25:1-2**).

Thus he led Israel into sin by causing the nation to accommodate itself to idolatrous pagan religion and its immorality. Balaam came to stand for an evil individual who seduces God's people into sin.

But in what sense were members of the church committing sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols (2:14)? It is generally thought that this phrase refers to food eaten at festivals in which pagan gods were honored, as well as the sexual activities that may have gone on as part of such feasts. However, both expressions could also be understood metaphorically. That is, they would refer to general religious infidelity engaged in by Christians who participated in pagan rites and festivities.

Both a literal and figurative meaning may be in view here in Revelation. Since sexual immorality was sometimes associated with worship in pagan religion, Christians would be taking sexual license as well as committing religious infidelity if they participated in the religious practices of the city.

The Balaamites may have been teaching the converts that participating in temple feasts or other activities in which the gods were invoked was not wrong because it served a good end. The unknown prophets or self-appointed teachers, metaphorically called "**Balaam**," were probably counseling accommodation with the pagan culture. Balaam and the Nicolaitans as well as another heretical group we encounter later – the followers of a prophetess named "Jezebel" – probably all taught generally the same thing. G.R. Beasley-Murray, in speaking of the Nicolaitans, wrote: *They will have maintained that idols are nothing.... Therefore Christians need not hesitate to take part in pagan feasts, whether among trade guilds or in temples.... Nor need they be over-scrupulous about acknowledging the divinity of Caesar, for they can do it in the same spirit as many pagans did – as a gesture of loyalty to Rome, without religious significance. (Revelation, p. 86)*

Revelation does not reveal the specific identity of the Nicolaitans, nor does it define all their beliefs. Irenaeus and other early church leaders claimed that the Nicolaitans practiced unrestrained indulgence (*Against Heresies*, 1.26.3). The Nicolaitans would have taught loose morals, probably under the guise of a deceptive theological rationale.

Following the teaching of the Balaamites and Nicolaitans, some church members in Pergamum had violated the freedom and grace they enjoyed in Christ. They had lapsed into a sinful accommodation with idolatry and immorality. The seriousness of the poor spiritual condition of some at Pergamum was underscored by Christ's warning. He would fight against the heretics with the sword of his mouth (2:16). The mistakes of the Pergamum church are important lessons to all Christians who must struggle to keep their spiritual balance in a darkened world.

### Promise to Pergamum (2:17)

Those who conquered in the Pergamum church – who didn't fall prey to this heresy – were promised salvation under the metaphor of the "**hidden manna**" and "**white stone with a new name**" (2:17). Manna is another Old Testament symbol. It was the food God supernaturally supplied to the Israelites during their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness (**Exodus 16:11-15**). In Revelation the manna would refer to the spiritual food by which God gives life to his people. It is, like the fruit of the tree of life, a symbol of salvation and eternal life.

The meaning of the white stone is less clear. Several interpretations are possible. That's because stones were used in a variety of situations in ancient times. A white stone given to a person at the close of a trial meant he was acquitted of his crime. This symbolic meaning for the Christian is clear. Children of God have been exonerated of their sins through Christ's cleansing sacrifice. It is through Jesus' atoning blood that we freely receive our acquittal. The ideal of



Balaam and his donkey

judicial judgment would also link the white stone to the “**great white throne judgment**” (20:11). This is a symbol of God’s final, just and merciful judgment on humanity.

Stones also served as admission tickets to public festivals and assemblies. Metaphorically, this would mean the Christian had been granted admittance to the messianic feast at the Savior’s return (19:18-19). A white stone may also have represented a happy and momentous day for the Christian – the receiving of the ultimate reward of salvation. The English equivalent would be a “red letter day.” An interesting custom in Thrace was the marking of good days by a white stone (Pliny Natural History, 7.40.131; Plutarch: Life of Pericles 64; Pliny, Letters 6:11). God’s intervention in human affairs and the salvation of the church in the resurrection of the dead will be a wonderful and momentous time ([Revelation 19:1-6](#)).

The color white is characteristic of Revelation. It speaks of white garments (3:5), white robes (7:9), white linen (19:8, 14), and the great white throne judgment (20:11). White, in these cases, represents a kind of spiritual purity. The meaning of the “**new name**” written on the white stone appears to have Old Testament roots (2:17). When speaking of Zion – a type of the church perfected – Isaiah repeated the promise of God to his people: “**You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow**” ([Isaiah 62:2](#)).

The new name represents a new status given to the individual by God. We see the custom in the Old Testament. Jacob becomes Israel ([Genesis 32:28](#)); Abram becomes Abraham ([Genesis 17:5](#)); Sarai becomes Sarah ([Genesis 17:15](#)). In the New Testament, Saul becomes Paul ([Acts 13:9](#)). The custom of giving a person a new name to go along with a new status was also found in the Roman world. Octavius became Augustus when he was crowned Roman emperor. For the Christian, the “**new name**” would have great spiritual significance. Christ will give the member a new status. He will be resurrected into the kingdom of God – with a new existence and unparalleled glory ([Romans 8:18-21](#)). The idea of newness in the “**new name**” is another theme in Revelation. We have a new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2); a new heaven and earth (21:1); a new song (5:9; 14:3). And God says at the book’s end, “**I am making everything new!**” (21:5).



#### **Thyatira: the faithful and persevering church**

The person pictured as speaking to the church in this letter identified himself as the Son of God (2:18). While this title is implied elsewhere in the book, it is used only here. Two closely allied titles from John’s vision in chapter 1 began the letter – the figure’s blazing eyes and feet that appear as burnished bronze (1:14-15).

Christ praised the church for its love, faith, service and perseverance. The range of praise regarding Thyatira’s spiritual status was perhaps the widest given to any of the seven churches. It was the only church that is said to have improved its spiritual condition (2:19).

#### **Problems at Thyatira (2:20-23)**

However, the church did need admonishment on one vital issue. The church had tolerated the teachings of a false prophetess. She is introduced only by a metaphorical name – Jezebel. Her teaching is defined in the same way as the teaching of Balaam in the church at Pergamum (2:14). Jezebel, says Christ, “**Misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols**” (2:20). A parallel to the evil queen of Ahab was intended ([1 Kings 16:29](#); [2 Kings 9:30](#)). Both the original Jezebel and this unidentified prophetess threatened to destroy the true worship of God among his people.



Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel in Naboth’s vineyard

The original Jezebel’s sin was leading Israel into idolatry, but she was not accused in the Old Testament of leading a sexually immoral life. Rather, her sin was in teaching others to follow religious immorality and faithlessness to the Lord ([2 Kings 9:22](#)).

This indicates that we can take the expressions of censure – “**eating food sacrificed to idols**” and “**committing adultery**” – in a figurative sense to mean idolatry. We should also be reminded that the Old Testament presented idolatry, apostasy and infidelity to God in terms of sexual metaphors – as sexual immorality, fornication, adultery and prostitution ([Exodus 34:15,16](#); [Deuteronomy 31:16](#); [Jeremiah 3:6](#); [Ezekiel 23:19](#); [Hosea 9:1](#)). John used adultery as a metaphor of idolatry elsewhere in Revelation (17:2; 18:3).

In the church at Thyatira, this Jezebel probably counseled accommodation with the world. Robert H. Mounce says, “*The fornication of which Jezebel was not willing to repent was her adulterous alliance with the pagan environment*” (The Book of Revelation, p. 104).

Her theology, as spread by her counterparts in the Thyatira church, would be especially attractive to members who were in workers' guilds. To reject guild membership would cause one to suffer economic deprivation. However, to be part of a guild required participation in its pagan religious festivities. The temptation to compromise one's Christian beliefs must have been strong for many church members. Robert H. Mounce explains:

*In a city whose economic life was dominated by trade guilds in which pagan religious practices had become criteria for membership, the Christian convert would be faced with the problem of compromising his stand at least enough to allow participation in a common meal dedicated to some pagan deity. To reject this accommodation could mean social isolation and economic hardship. The Book of Revelation, p. 103)*

To be a member of a guild almost certainly would have meant participating in religious idolatry, immorality and debauchery. Thus, there is a dual meaning to the accusation that the Jezebel group practices "sexual immorality." Revelation's "Jezebel" (as well as "Balaam" and probably the Nicolaitans) suggested the Christian could be in agreement with the world and still be faithful to Christ.

The Jezebel party probably would explain that **"an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one"** ([1 Corinthians 8:4](#)). Participation in pagan worship was really a meaningless activity. They would have reasoned that believers did not need to hurt themselves economically by refusing to accept a few harmless requirements posed by trade guild membership.

"Jezebel is to be counted amongst those to whom the claims of commercial success speak more loudly than the claims of Christ," says William Barclay (The Revelation of John, volume 1, revised edition, p. 107). The Jezebel party apparently presented its teaching in strong theological wine, providing an excusing rationale that seemed to dispel any contrary arguments. Their theology is called **"Satan's so-called deep secrets"** ([2:24](#)).

This phrase is usually explained in two ways. It may be an ironic twist on Jezebel's own claim. Her followers may have claimed to be more spiritually sophisticated. They may have distorted Paul's teaching, claiming to understand God's will more deeply than the "self-righteous" majority who thought it ungodly to pay homage to the emperor as a god and to engage in debauchery ([1 Corinthians 8:4](#); [Romans 14:17](#)). But Revelation says that the Jezebel party is the one that has fallen into the depths of a spiritual pit Satan has dug.

Another explanation for **"Satan's deep secrets"** is that Jezebel, like the later Gnostics, taught that only by descending into the depths of evil could one appreciate the heights of God's grace. Paul had argued against a similar idea in the church at Rome ([Romans 6:1](#)).

A majority of the church at Thyatira did not buy Jezebel's reasoning. However, the church still apparently allowed this group's teaching to continue within its midst. It had the "Corinthian disease," which tolerated sin in the church, possibly in the misguided interest of being big-minded ([1 Corinthians 5:1-7](#)).

The issue has more than historical interest. It concerns us vitally. Says Leon Morris: *"Every generation of Christians must face the question, 'How far should I accept and adopt contemporary standards and practices?' On the one hand, Christians must not deny the faith. On the other, they must not deny their membership of society"* (Revelation, revised edition, p. 71).

Christ had been patient, hoping for a change of heart in the Jezebel faction ([2:21](#)). But the group had refused to repent of their teachings. Thus, the moment of judgment had arrived. Jesus warned that he would cast the compromisers on **"a bed of suffering...unless they repent"** ([2:22](#)). The Greek word here is simply **"bed."** The translators have caught the Old Testament idea behind being on a bed. It meant to be sick or injured ([Exodus 21:18](#)). To be cast on a bed would mean someone had inflicted suffering upon you.

The Jezebel faction – if they remained unrepentant – would become an object lesson and be brought to justice. The fact that God is a God of justice as well as mercy – that being a Christian is serious business – would become evident to "all the churches" ([2:23](#)). Here is another indication that the message to each church applied to all seven. The majority at Thyatira who did not hold to this "gospel of expediency" was counseled to hold on to their spiritual understanding ([2:24](#)). They would have no other "burden" imposed on them.

#### **Promise to Thyatira (2:24-28)**

The church members at Thyatira were encouraged to continue in the faith – **"until I come"** ([2:25](#)). They were to be overcomers and do Christ's will to the end. *"This is the nearest we have in the seven letters to a definition of the conqueror,"* says G. R. Beasley-Murray. *"He holds fast the traditions of faith and life delivered to the Church and the coming of Christ (v. 25) and he keeps Christ's works till the end (v. 26) – whether that 'end' be the Lord's parousia or his own death"* (Revelation, p. 93).

The promise of salvation is described as “**authority over the nations**” (2:26). The overcomer will “**rule them with an iron scepter**” and “**he will dash them to pieces like pottery**” (2:27). These statements were taken from [Psalm 2:9](#).

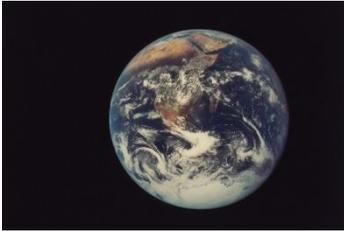
Some scholars feel that the original wording gives a somewhat different meaning than the English. Ruling should be understood more in the sense of shepherding. Wielding an iron scepter should be seen more in the context of a shepherd’s staff or club, used firmly but with tender loving care. If so, there is still the problem of how to understand the companion phrase, “...**he will dash them to pieces like pottery**” (2:27). The sheep are given guidance; the enemies are shattered.

Whatever the case, the meaning is clear: The now powerless church existing under human government will have power over the nations under Christ. The saints will inherit the earth, as Christ said ([Matthew 5:55](#)). And they would judge the world in whatever way that “judging” is to be understood ([1 Corinthians 6:2](#)).

The church at Thyatira was also promised the “**morning star**” (2:28). Several explanations have been offered for this symbol. Perhaps Christ is in view here, if we are guided by his symbolic self-description at the end of Revelation: “**I, Jesus...[am] the bright Morning Star**” (22:16). To “have” Jesus as the Morning Star would mean to be in his glorious presence – to be with him. This would explain the promise that in the resurrection the saints glorified will be with Christ, wherever he is ([John 14:3](#)).

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### Devotional: Whose World Is It? (gci.org)



By Timothy Brassell  
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In the light of who Jesus is revealed to be, and what he has accomplished on our behalf that every person might share in his relationship with his Father by the Spirit ([John 17:3](#), [John 16:13-15](#)), we must not underestimate the priority of the Who question. As “Christians” we don’t believe that just anyone could be and do who Jesus is and what he did in his birth, life, suffering and death, resurrection, ascension and coming again, right? We don’t believe that just anyone could achieve the same outcomes, Jesus is the

unique and only begotten of the Father ([John 3:16](#)). He is the only human mediator between God and humanity ([1 Tim. 2:5](#)). He is the only one to whom every knee will bow and tongue confess that he is Lord, right? ([Phil. 2:9-11](#)). This Who is in contrast to the popular “What?”, “How?”, “When?”, “Where?” and “Why?” questions that often claim priority. You know what I mean: What will be done about these troubling political and social issues!? How long will the world continue to suffer racial discrimination and injustice!? When will this physical, mental or emotional pain end? Where is the man or woman with the real leadership solution to this COVID mess, and why is it taking so long to get understood, organized and solved?

With that basic understanding of the good news (that Jesus – God himself – is our good news), do you see the qualitative difference the “whose” question can have on your faith, hope and loving? Regarding the politics and social issues of this world, *whose world is it?* Regarding all physical, mental and emotional pain, *whose body and soul is it?* With regard to COVID and the disturbance of death it has brought to far too many in this world, *whose resurrection from death makes alive?* I’m sure scriptures come to mind with regard to those questions, but let me conclude with one set that holds all these together at once:

**“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. Then the one seated on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new.” He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.”** ([Revelation 21:1-7 CSB](#))

Just so we’re clear, knowing whose world it is does not guarantee a life without troubles, pain or suffering for a time in this present evil age, (and that is why I included the reality of death here and now) but it is a sign of where things are headed because of whose world it is. So, *whose troubles, pains and sufferings are they, really? Whose world is it? Whose \_\_\_\_\_ is it?*

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For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor’s contact information: email— [evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)