

1090 Death and Hades, and the First Three Churches - Revelation (2)
(Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

First of all, we know that people will fall to the ground when they see Jesus who has ascended to heaven forever after resurrection. We also explain why the Bible says that death and Hades have keys. From the seven stars and seven spirits, we can see that the Bible's wording is very precise. Second, what did in the church in Ephesus is what we should do. The verses also emphasize the importance of identifying false apostles, but were rebuking them for abandoning the original love of God. We see that the overcomers can enter the New Jerusalem, and the paradise of God is originally in the city of the New Jerusalem in heaven. The verses also say that all people must have ears that can hear. Third, in the church in Smyrna, it was said that we should lay up treasures in heaven. As for their suffering, it came from Satan the devil, who put them through trials. They were not rebuked, but encouraged to be overcomers with the crown of life and to be immune to the second death. This does not mean that the overcomers are those who participate in the first resurrection. These two cannot be equated! Finally, we talked about the church in Pergamum, which was where Satan lived at that time, so we saw that Satan could not be omnipresent like God. Their good point is that they saw Antipas, a faithful witness of Jesus, being slain, and yet they clung to His name and did not forsake His way. But some people obeyed the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, so it shouldn't be that there is something wrong with the church's teachings as a whole, but they allowed bad teachings to exist in the church. They should repent. Also we see that there were different descriptions for overcomers.

1. Death and Hades, and the Seven Stars and Seven Spirits

"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, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death (G2288) and of Hades (G86). Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 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."(Revelation 1:17-20)

As soon as John saw Jesus, he fell to the ground. Later, the Lord strengthened him so that he could stand up. Jesus' first words were to say not to be afraid, so He fell to the ground out of fear, not for any other reason. After He was resurrected and before He ascended to heaven, He appeared to His disciples, but they did not fall to the ground. But now it is very different! This reminds me of an incident in the Old Testament. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."(Joshua 1:9) This was just one of the many times Joshua was told not to be afraid.

In fact, it is said in other places that people will fall to the ground when they see Jesus who has ascended to heaven forever. This scripture says very clearly, "As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.""(Acts 9:3-6) At this time, Jesus asked him to get up, so "Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus."(Acts 9:8) Because he had a visible and an invisible influence, he could definitely remember that this happened, so Paul would say, "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision."(Acts 26:19) Here we also see that the people who walked with him were not affected by him in the same way, although they also "...had all fallen to the ground, ..." (Acts 26:14) Were they not because of Is it natural for someone to suddenly see a great light and fall to the ground with the same fear as Paul? But they did not see Christ and their eyes were not affected, but Paul saw Him, for he himself said, "...He appeared to me also."(1 Corinthians 15:8)

We immediately noticed that death and Hades are two different words, and from this verse, "I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death (G2288); and Hades (G86) was following with him. ..." (Revelation 6:8) We see that death (G2288) and Hades (G86) refer to ones riding on horses, both with keys, so the keys are in the plural. The book of Revelation often describes a fact, and here is another example, describing Jesus Christ riding on a white horse, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ...And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. ...And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."" (Revelation 19:11-16)

We notice that the wording in the Bible is very precise. It mentions three different things here. John only saw those seven churches, and the current events include all the churches and things that happened at that time, and the third is something that will happen in the future. Regarding the seven churches that John saw, there were seven stars and seven golden lampstands. The seven stars and the seven spirits are different. The seven stars only refer to the seven messengers of the seven churches, while the seven spirits refer to the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit, because "...a Lamb ...having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth." (Revelation 5:6) That is, "...seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." (Revelation 4:5) It is saying the same thing in different ways. When we see that there are seven current churches, there are exactly seven stars.

2. What we saw from the church in Ephesus

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to

the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love (G26). Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'"(Revelation 2:1-7)

The verses emphasize the importance of discerning false apostles. The haters of the Nicolaitans are a good example. But it also reproaches them for abandoning their first love (G26). This refers to God's love which includes human love and more and they failed to meet the requirements of overcomers. Here, we believe that they must have done some things of human love. Like some churches today, they believe that "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (G26)." (John 13:35) But they failed to notice that this love refers to the love of God. There is no mention here that just some people are like this. It should be that there is something wrong with the teachings of the entire church. They have done some things of human love, but they lack the love of God. We must be overcomers so that we can receive rewards and eat from the tree of life. By the way, most of the love spoken of in the New Testament refers to the love of God. Only a few times different words are used, such as this verse, "Let love of the brethren (G5360) continue." (Hebrews 13:1) If you don't read the original text, you won't be able to tell which kind of love it is referring to!

Let's see where else the tree of life is mentioned? First there will be "...the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ..." (Revelation 21:2) From the throne in the city, John "heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them." (Revelation 21:3) So it must be within the city. Then it says, "...only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27) It is the minimum requirement to be in the book of life. Not everyone who is in the book of life can enter the city. We have talked about it, and the Bible tells 'Once we are saved, we are saved forever,' but some Christians, including fallen ones, are outside the city. This is like Demas. He was once a co-worker of Paul and was definitely a Christian who came out of the world, but "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; ..." (2 Timothy 4:10) Obviously Demas has fallen and is now living outside the city. So who can those who can enter the city? The scripture is very clear, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14) Aren't those who rely completely on the Holy Spirit and thus have washed their spiritual clothes the same as the overcomers who can enter the city?

Therefore, the New Jerusalem is in heaven originally, and the tree of life is in the paradise of God. As the scripture says, "Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On

either side of the river was the tree of life, ..." (Revelation 22:1-2) Doesn't this mean that the Paradise of God is in the New Jerusalem?

The New Testament only mentions paradise three times. Except this time, the first time is "And He said to him (criminal, robber), "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."" (Luke 23:43) We see that paradise is a place with Jesus, which was still in heaven at that time, so people in general can enter it after death. The criminal is the one who had faith and the associated faith behavior. We mentioned this point before, so we don't repeat the discussion here. Needless to say, the scriptures clearly say that He entered after His death on the cross. The second time it says, "was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak (G1832, the original text repeating the word twice)." (2 Corinthians 12:4) By the way, there is no comparatives and superlatives in Greek. Two occurrences are equivalent to comparatives and three times are superlatives. We know that Paradise is in the third heaven because the scripture also says, "I (Paul) know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven." (2 Corinthians 12:2) This person should be Paul himself, because he said, "And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows." (2 Corinthians 12:3) It is mentioned here that the paradise at that time was indeed in heaven. We can see the consistency of the Bible is everywhere! We noticed that he was not like ordinary people who could not enter the paradise only until after death, but he had to be raptured. He knew that the hidden words were not allowed for people to speak, and he did not mention the event again and those words. Thus the Bible does not clearly say whether he could understand it at that time, although we guess that he could understand it at that time, otherwise his trip was basically in vain, and he only knew that he could be caught up to the third heaven. I believe he knew not to speak and chose not to speak. He was not like the seven peals of thunder, "...a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." (Revelation 10: 4) The voice said clearly what said by the seven peals of thunder cannot be revealed and John obeyed.

Among the sentences spoken by Holy Spirit includes this one, "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."" (Revelation 14:13) Yes, there are things that can last forever! So the Bible says, "'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'" (Matthew 6:19-21) Set your mind on things in heaven, not on earthly things.

3. What we saw from the church in Smyrna

"'And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and

the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'"(Revelation 2:8-11)

Doesn't this mean we should store up treasures in heaven? Such a person may be poor on earth, but rich in heaven. As for their suffering, it was also pointed out that it came from the devil Satan, who put them through trials. The ten days mentioned here should be ten days. Don't say, the scripture says, "...with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day."(2 Peter 3:8) Therefore, ten days refers to ten thousand days, and calculations obviously cannot be used here. But they should know, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."(1 Corinthians 10:13) If there is a need, God Himself will work. This is similar to how God wanted to bless Job (see Job 42:10-17), but before blessing him, he allowed Satan to test him (see Job 1:1-2:7). In the end, God personally made the promise which opened a way out for Job, that is, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said."(Job 38:1). The scripture also stated and clearly told them that these slanderers were Satan people.

They were not blamed, but they were encouraged not to be afraid, to be faithful until death, to be overcomers with the crown of life, and not to be harmed by the second death. This does not mean that the overcomers are those who participate in the first resurrection. They cannot be equated! The Bible says very clearly about those who participate in the first resurrection, "...the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection."(Revelation 20:4-5) We all want to be part of the thousand-year kingdom, but these clearly say about the former, and the latter will only happen after Jesus returns. So don't listen to the lies of some people and think that If you are a true Christian, you will definitely be in the thousand-year kingdom!

4. What we saw from the church in Pergamum

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the

Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it."(Revelation 2:12-17)

This is where Satan lived at that time. They saw Antipas, a faithful witness of Jesus, being killed, but they still adhered to His name and did not abandon His way. Therefore, this church was not easy. This also shows that Satan is not omnipresent and has a dwelling place, so it is said, "...Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8) The book of Job is consistent with this when it says, "The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.""(Job 1:7)

The first mention of this fallen prophet Balaam in the Bible was when Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab (see Numbers 22:4-5). Balaam came to curse the Israelites, but in the end he failed. "Then Balaam arose and departed and returned to his place, ..." (Numbers 24:25) Later, we see, "While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab." (Numbers 25:1) Although the Old Testament did not clarify that this came from Balaam at that time, it is clearly stated here that Balaam taught Balak to place a stumbling block in front of the Israelites. The fate of this fallen prophet was very bad. We see, "even all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses struck with the chiefs of Midian, Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the princes of Sihon, who lived in the land. The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor, the diviner, with the sword among the rest of their slain." (Joshua 13:21-22) The Bible does not clearly say why Balaam came back, but we know that he came back because he was finally killed there.

Let's talk about only some people who obeyed the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, so it should not be that there is something wrong with the church's teachings as a whole, but they allowed the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans to exist. As the result, they should repent or would get the punishment they deserved. The scripture says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) We see how important repentance is! You must first repent before you can achieve the forgiveness mentioned above, but it does not mean that you can avoid punishment! Take David as an example. In the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, "David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD!" Nathan said to him, "The LORD has taken away your sin; you will not "As for death."" (2 Samuel 12:13) As soon as he knew that he had sinned, he repented immediately. He wrote Psalm 51, repented before God, and handed it over to the choir director. So he did repent in front of others and did not hide his sins. For his sins, his repentance cannot be said to be incomplete, but he still has punishments, "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'" (2 Samuel 12:11-12) This was great sins, and God did the punishment correspondingly. God has absolute sovereignty and does not have

to punish us. He looks at people's hearts and can decide how to deal with sins. He has His principles, but we don't know them all. Sometimes we get into trouble because of our own sins.

We also see different descriptions of the rewards for overcomers. Here it is said that they had the hidden manna and the white stone. On the white stone was a new name that no one else knew. That is, "He who overcomes ...I will write on him ...My new name."(Revelation 3:12)