changed one of His disciple’s names from Simon to Peter, the latter meaning “a rock,” to represent this man’s firm and determined purpose. Jacob means “supplanter,” “one who deceives.” God changed His name to Israel during a severe night of struggle in which He prevailed. Israel means “one who prevailing with God.”

All who are on the Lord’s side will eventually receive a new name, representative of his or her new character in Christ. No one but Jesus and the one who bears the name will be able to fully appreciate its meaning, for the friendship of each saint with the Savior will be as personal as if they were the only two persons in all the universe.

Thyatira

“...unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, which hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire...” (Revelation 2:18). To this church Christ comes with “eyes like unto a flame of fire,” for He is the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce...” (Revelation 2:20). God changed His name to Jacob. Jacob means “supplanter,” “one who deceives.” God changed His name to Israel during a severe night of struggle in which He prevailed.

No one but Jesus and the one who bears the name will be able to fully appreciate its meaning, for the friendship of each saint with the Savior will be as personal as if they were the only two persons in all the universe.

Thyatira

“...unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, which hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce...” (Revelation 2:20). God changed His name to Israel during a severe night of struggle in which He prevailed.

No one but Jesus and the one who bears the name will be able to fully appreciate its meaning, for the friendship of each saint with the Savior will be as personal as if they were the only two persons in all the universe.

Thyatira

“...unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, which hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce...” (Revelation 2:20). God changed His name to Israel during a severe night of struggle in which He prevailed.

No one but Jesus and the one who bears the name will be able to fully appreciate its meaning, for the friendship of each saint with the Savior will be as personal as if they were the only two persons in all the universe.

Thyatira

“...unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, which hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce...” (Revelation 2:20). God changed His name to Israel during a severe night of struggle in which He prevailed.

No one but Jesus and the one who bears the name will be able to fully appreciate its meaning, for the friendship of each saint with the Savior will be as personal as if they were the only two persons in all the universe.
313 we find the fulfillment of this ten-year period of severe persecution. In 303 Diocletian and his assistant, Galerius, passed what has been called the “Edict of Persecution.”

For ten years the edict was enforced. Many Christians suffered imprisonment and death.

Poor Yet Rich

During this time the church was made up largely of those who were poor in this world’s estimation. But Jesus reminds the church of Smyrna that they are rich spiritually. Solomon struck a high note of wisdom when he said, “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches” (Proverbs 13:7). The apostle Paul speaks of being “poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Those who are rich in this earth’s goods are often self-confident to such an extent that they feel no need of a Savior. On the other hand, poverty instills in the human heart a great sense of need. The riches of this world will fade away and be worth nothing someday. But there is another kind of wealth that is eternal: “Heavenly, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?” (James 2:5).

It is the faith by which we receive eternal life that constitutes the true riches that will endure forever.

The Second Death

Jesus promises His people that they will not be hurt of the second death. According to Revelation 21:8, 14-15, and Revelation 22:6, the second death is the final destruction of unrepentant sinners, as well as the devil. As believers in Christ, we need not fear the second death. Jesus tasted “death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). When, upon the cross, Jesus cried out in despair, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46), He was enduring the full penalty of sin on our behalf. He suffered the second death for us so that through faith in Him we might escape its power over us.

Pergamos

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was slain, which was of thy church; But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” (Revelation 2:13-15)

As we look to this period of the church’s history (between A.D. 313 and 538), what is here meant by “Satan’s seat” is clear. This was the time when the obvious evil of pagan Rome was giving way to the subtle yet more deadly deception of the papal Roman Church. Paul had warned that the church would face serious danger in the future. He foretold a major apostasy from the pure faith of Christ which he called “the falling away” (2 Thessalonians 2:3, NKJV).

One power would lead out in this downward course of corruption, referred to by the apostle as “the mystery of lawlessness.” This is the secret society of sin who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-9, NKJV).

Here Paul pointed to a power that would rise to future to his day that would lead many people into a large-scale departure from the truth of Christ. The apostasy would involve the direct leadership of a man who would promote disobedience to God’s law “(man of sin)” and exalt himself to a status of Godhood, establishing himself in the temple of God to receive worship.

Words could not better describe the apocalyptic imagery embodied in the papal church. During the Pergamos period, bishops and popes assumed more and more authority until finally they were worshipped as God, receiving the awesome title, “Holy Father,” and claiming the power to forgive sins. Continuing on with his warning, Paul described pagan Rome as an obstacle that would eventually be moved out of the way and give the place of popcy to a “mystery of lawlessness” (the fall of the second empire) which now restrains [the papal empire]... It will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one [the papal church] will be revealed, whom the Lord will consummate with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8, NKJV).

Satan’s masterpiece of deception would take shape in the form of a counterfeit religious system that would claim to be the true church of Christ. It was already developing in Paul’s and John’s time. The subtle mixture of pagan philosophy with Christian principles was underway and would eventually find expression in the compromised counterfeit of the faith first delivered to the apostles by the Lord Jesus.

So it was that the church began to dwell “where Satan’s seat is.” The faithful began to coexist with an increasingly more and more corrupt version of Christianity.

Antipas, the Faithful Martyr

It is possible that there was an individual by the name of “Antipas” who was martyred in the Pergamos period. However, there is no historical record of such a person. Names were chosen to correspond with character. Jesus promised His people that they would not be hurt of the second death. He confirmed this by raising up faithful men and women who wielded the sword of His truth against the fallen. As believers in Christ, we need not fear the second death. Jesus tasted “death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9). When, upon the cross, Jesus cried out in despair, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46), He was enduring the full penalty of sin on our behalf. He suffered the second death for us so that through faith in Him we might escape its power over us.

The Overcomer’s Reward

To the faithful of the Pergamos church period, Jesus promised “hidden manna” and “a white stone” engraved with a new name. “Manna” was a mysterious, heaven-sent food provided morning by morning to Israel in the desert. It represented the coming Messiah who would feed the world with the spiritual food of eternal truth (see John 6:48-51). The promise of “hidden manna” must mean a special spiritual feasting. “A white stone” with the secret new name implies an intimate friendship unique to Jesus and each person. In Bible times names were far more significant than they are now. Names were chosen to correspond with character. Jesus