

The Corrupt Church

Rev. 2:18-29

Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 574–575.



Leap
of FAITH
Hebrews 11:1



Revelation 2:18–29 (NKJV)

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

19 “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

25 But hold fast what you have till I come.

26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father;

28 and I will give him the morning star.

29 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

- The longest message was sent to the church in the smallest city! Thyatira was a military town as well as a commercial center with many trade guilds. Wherever guilds were found, idolatry and immorality—the two great enemies of the early church—were almost always present too.
- The city boasted a special temple to Apollo, the “sun god,” which explains why the Lord introduced Himself as “the Son of God” *(the only time in Revelation this title is used)*. John had to deliver a message of severe warning and judgment to this congregation, which explains the description of the Lord’s eyes and feet.

Approval

(v. 19)

The believers in Thyatira were a busy lot! They were involved in sacrificial ministry for the sake of others.

What's more, their works were increasing and characterized by faith, love, and patience; so the church was not guilty of mere "religious activity."

The Love Of The Church

Mark 12:30–31 (NKJV)

30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

31 And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Great Work Of The Church

Matthew 25:34–36 (NKJV)

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

Accusation

(vv. 20–23)

- Alas, the Lord found much to expose and condemn in the assembly at Thyatira. No amount of loving and sacrificial works can compensate for tolerance of evil.
- The church was permitting a false prophetess to influence the people and lead them into compromise. It is not likely that this woman was actually called “Jezebel,” since such an infamous name would not be given to a child. The name is symbolic: Jezebel was the idolatrous queen who enticed Israel to add Baal worship to their religious ceremonies

(see 1 Kings 16–19).

The Spirit Of Jezebel Was In The Church

- The seductive teaching of Jezebel was similar to the “doctrine of Balaam” that the Lord condemned in the church of Pergamos (*Rev. 2:14*).
- She taught believers how to compromise with the Roman religion and the practices of the societies, so that Christians would not lose their jobs or their lives.

The Spirit Of Jezebel Was In The Church

Psalm 1:1 (NKJV)

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

We Must Be Uncompromised.

Comparison & Contrast

- It is interesting to contrast the churches at Ephesus and Thyatira.
- The Ephesian church was weakening in its love, yet faithful to judge false teachers; while the people in the assembly at Thyatira were growing in their love, but too tolerant of false doctrine.

Comparison & Contrast

- Both extremes must be avoided in the church.
- “Speaking the truth in love” is the biblical balance (*Eph. 4:15*).
- Unloving prevailing attitude and loving compromise are both hateful to God.

- Not only was the church at Thyatira tolerant of evil, but it was proud and unwilling to repent.

Isaiah 14:13–15 (NKJV)

13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

- The Lord gave the false prophetess time to repent, yet she refused.
- Now He was giving her followers opportunity to repent. His eyes of fire had searched out their thoughts and motives, and He would make no mistake. *(Like Nebuchadnezzar)*

Daniel 5:20–23 (NKJV)

20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.

21 Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.

22 “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.

23 And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.

- The Lord threatened to use this assembly as a solemn example to “all the churches” not to tolerate evil.

1 Peter 4:17–18 (NKJV)

17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

18 Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

- Jezebel and her children (*followers*) would be sentenced to tribulation and death!
- Idolatry and compromise are, in the Bible, pictured as fornication and unfaithfulness to the marriage vows (*Jer. 3:6ff; Hosea 9:1ff*).

Jeremiah 3:6 (NKJV)

The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: “Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot.

Hosea 9:1 (NKJV)

Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples, For you have played the harlot against your God. You have made love for hire on every threshing floor.

- Jezebel's bed of sin would become a bed of sickness! To kill with death means "to kill with pestilence".
- God would judge the false prophetess and her followers once and for all.

Revelation 2:22 (NASB95)

‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of *her* deeds.

Admonition

(vv. 24–29)

- Not everyone in the assembly was unfaithful to the Lord, and He had a special word for them. They had separated themselves from the false doctrine and compromising practices of Jezebel and her followers, which Christ denounces as “the depths of Satan”.

Admonition

(vv. 24–29)

1 Peter 1:13–16 (NASB95)

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

Hold Fast

- The Lord had no special demands to make; He simply wanted them to hold fast in their resistance to evil.
- “Till I come” refers to Christ’s return for His people, at which time He will reward them for their faithfulness.

Hold Fast

Revelation 3:3 (NKJV)

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Revelation 16:15 (NKJV)

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

The Rapture

- This is the first mention in Revelation of the Lord's coming for the church, the event we commonly call the Rapture.

The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (NKJV)

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

The Rapture

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

We Will Rule Over Nations!

- The believers in Thyatira are promised authority over the nations, which probably refers to the fact that God's people will live and reign with Christ (*see Rev. 20:4*).

We Will Rule Over Nations!

Revelation 20:4 (NKJV)

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Kingdom On Earth

- When the Lord sets up His kingdom on earth, it will be a righteous kingdom with perfect justice. He will rule with a rod of iron (*Ps. 2:8–9*).

Psalm 2:8–9 (NKJV)

8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' ”

Rebellious men will be like clay pots, easily broken to pieces!

- Jesus Christ is “the Bright and Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16).

Revelation 22:16 (NKJV)

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.

- The promise in Revelation 2:28 suggests that God's people shall be so closely identified with Christ that He will "belong" to them!

Revelation 2:28 (NKJV)
and I will give him the morning star.

Depths Of Darkness

- In Isaiah 14:12, Satan is named Lucifer, which in Hebrew means “brightness, bright star.”
- The compromising people in Thyatira were following “the depths of Satan,” which would lead to darkness and death.
- God’s overcomers, on the other hand, would share the Morning Star!

- As you review these first four messages to the churches, you can see the dangers that still exist for the people of God.
- Like Ephesus, we can be zealous and orthodox, but at the same time lose our devotion to Christ.

- Or, like Thyatira, our love can be increasing yet lacking in the kind of discernment that is necessary to keep the church pure.

Philippians 1:9–11 (NKJV)

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

- Like Pergamos and Thyatira, we may be so tolerant of evil that we grieve the Lord and invite His judgment.
- Would we have selected Smyrna as the most spiritual church of the four? Probably not, yet the Lord did!
- We need to remind ourselves not to judge God's people by wrong standards, because only the Lord can see the heart.

1 Corinthians 4:4–5 (NKJV)

4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

- God's exhortation to these churches (*except Smyrna*) is, "Repent! Change your minds!"
- It is not only lost sinners who need to repent, but also disobedient Christians. If we do not repent and deal with sin in our lives and in our assemblies, the Lord may judge us and remove our lampstand (*Rev. 2:5*).
- How tragic it is when a local church gradually abandons the faith and loses its witness for Christ!

Revelation 2:29 (NKJV)

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’