
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

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Revelation 2: 18-29 - "The Church of Thyatira"

General idea: Jesus again makes His point that He is the One who is to be in charge of the church. He is looking at the way we are leading and governing our church, and if we are doing it His way, the world's way, or our way. He sees us when we do it right, acting on faith, and in His Spirit and Truth, and He also sees us when we mess up. He doesn't want us to stray from doing His Church right, because there is no other person, trend, or guide (other than His Word and instruction) that is to direct His Church. It is not our church; it is His Church. He does not want us to lead others astray, be apathetic and do little, chase a fad that is wrong and destructive, teach what is in error, weaken His Word by substituting what we believe would be tolerated and received better, nor does He want us to defy Him, as He is LORD.

This church at Thyatira was struggling to improve and seeking to be better in how they ran His Church. They were seeking to be faithful and diligent, yet, this church had a faction that was defying Him in a big way by allowing debauchery and heinous sin in the midst of His Bride, His Church! On one hand, they were being faithful in their faith. On the other, they were sinning by committing adultery with one another and with God.

Jesus is warning them and us to come around to Him and His ways or suffer the consequences! We have to realize that Jesus holds us responsible for taking the faith He gives us and growing it. Then, we who are in leadership roles have further responsibility to lead with faithfulness and in truth—His Truth. He wants us to hold His Truth from His Word and Spirit tightly in our minds and hearts so it flows through our bodies, and how we are in Christ becomes how we are to others. He will reward us greatly for our faithfulness in the management of His Church and He will chastise and judge us if we are not faithful. If you can't take that responsibility, then do not be in leadership, because we will all be held to account for what we do! And, others could suffer because of our pride and wayward ways.

Vs. 18-23: This church at Thyatira seems to be doing good and being healthy as Jesus praises them for their authenticity and staying close to Him as they held on through tough persecution. But, this church was being very hypocritical, saying one thing while doing another. Perhaps, it was the various factions or the hypocrisy in "saying" faith, yet at the same time participating in sin with sexual promiscuity and engaging in pagan traditions and idol worship. Perhaps, some of the people were engaged in being faithful while sleeping around and justifying it, as some Christians still do today. Others could have been pure and faithful while allowing the sin to go unnoticed, either by not caring or by being afraid to

confront and do something about it. Then, there were people like this Jezebel, who personifies evil, purposely leading people into sin without care for virtue, reprisal, consequences, or God's call.

- *Thyatira*, which is now modern Akhisar, then hosted a major Apollo cult. (Apollo was a son of Zeus and eventually took Zeus' place as the supreme Roman god.) This was a city known for its rich economy, prosperity, and its trade guilds, including a rich Bronze Guild, hence Jesus' play on words. These guilds were similar to *unions* today, but with a cult-like theme. Thus, this city valued wealth above all things. The Christians were being pressured to join a guild, which was a tight-knit group, a "commune" almost, that worshiped pagan idols and participated in the pagan festivals. If a Christian refused to participate in a guild, he was cut off from any social or economic participation in the city, and not even allowed to buy and sell food or support himself and his family—a shadow of one of the roles of the anti-Christ (Rev. 13:17). Such isolation would make it a great temptation to indulge or compromise and allow false teachers to come in and mislead people, which is just what had happened. They had a small, inconsequential Jewish community. Lydia, who was a dealer in purple cloth, was from Thyatira (Acts 16:14).
- *Like blazing fire* refers to God's Sovereignty, strength, and ability and right to judge, and indicated that if they did not repent, they would be judged. (See Rev. 1:14 study and Isaiah 63:1-4; Dan. 10:6 Rev. 14:19).
- *Burnished bronze* is a refined alloy of bronze, copper, and zinc.
- *Your love and faith...service and perseverance*. God honors such things, but we always have to be aware of our weaknesses and things that may cause us to compromise or slip in our faith. In contrast, the Church of Ephesus did not tolerate false teaching, but they were not loving toward God and one another, while this church tolerated false teaching, yet exercised love and faithfulness.
- *You are now doing more than you did at first*. For the most part, many people in this church were fearful and serving the Lord. There may have been a splinter group of people engaged in these sins, but no discipline or censor was taking place.
- *I have this against you*. They were tolerating paganism and even participating in it, thus compromising their faith to external social pressures and internal false teachings. This led to credibility problems with non-Christians and gave God a bad reputation (1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:20).
- *Jezebel* refers to an influential person who was teaching and causing people to sin by "seducing" them in order to cause them to compromise their faith and indulge in fornication. This person was mimicking the appalling character

of Jezebel in the O.T. who was the most wicked woman depicted in the Bible. Jezebel personifies evil, greed, manipulation, and opposition to God without fear of Him or consequences. She was a harlot to God, as in betraying Him with occult practices and monstrous evil. She also led the false prophets who fought against God's ways while saying they were God's representatives and falsely claiming His authority, as she led the people into idolatry and sin (1 Kings 16:29; 31; 19:1-2 to 21:24; 2 Kings 9:22; 30-37; Neh. 6:14; Ezek. 13:17-19).

- *Prophetess*. This was a female who declared or interpreted oracles from dreams or visions, either from God or from self delusions.
- *Bed of suffering*, as opposed to a bed of fornication. Sickness can be caused by sin as a form of punishment (1 Cor. 11:29-30).
- *Commit adultery* means betraying God, as to say, *Jesus is my Savior, but I do not need to trust in Him, and I do not need to obey His precepts and morals. I am saved by Christ alone, by faith alone*. However, *I will not allow to touch my daily life. I can do as I see fit* (Judges 17:6; James 2: 14-26). This is called *antinomianism* in theology, meaning anti-law. It is an unbiblical belief that denies the righteousness of God and sees our grace as allowing total freedom in all that we do or can do, and using it as a license to sin. Thus, we do not need to be obedient to God, His precepts, civil law, or any moral standards, nor do we need to bear fruit. God says this is evil as it portrays evil as being good (Rom. 6:1-2; 14-15; 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2; Gal. 5:22-25; Jude 4).
- *Suffer intensely/tribulations*. Some commentators mistake this phrase's meaning, as it says "they will suffer," as pertaining to the great tribulation. The two are unrelated because the word meanings and context do not correspond.
- *Unless they repent*. God gives us ample provision and time to turn from our evil and wayward ways to His True Word, His best Way (Jer. 23:22-23).
- *Strike her children*. "Children" refers to her *followers*, not literal kin, as Jezebel was a spiritual mother to spiritual corruption (Psalm 7:9; Pr 24:12; Isa. 57:3-8; Jer. 11:20; 17:10).
- *I am he who searches hearts and minds* refers to God's omnipotence and omniscience. *Hearts* denotes the center of our rational thoughts; *minds*, in the Greek, literally means "kidneys," and denotes our will and trust in Him.
- *Repay each of you* refers to judgment that is based on how we lead our lives with responsibility (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Rev 18:6; 20:12-13; 22:12).

Busyness to God does not always denote faithfulness to God!

Vs. 24-29: This church had the same problem as did Pergamos with compromising as well as rationalizing their actions as OK. They sought both sin and Christ, not caring or realizing that the two cannot co-exist. We are called to overcome; and when we do, because we are capable of overcoming with His empowerment, we will be blessed and powerfully used for Christ's glory.

- *Her teaching...Satan's so-called deep secrets* possibly refers to an early Gnostic teaching, that says that for us to defeat evil, we have to physically fight with Satan and steal back a secret word of knowledge that unlocks a higher level of being. And, also to defeat evil, we have to experience evil deeply. This is a very twisted mindset (Acts 15:28-29)!
- *I will not impose any other burden on you.* We do not need to add works to our faith for salvation; rather, we are called to be faithful in *response* to what He has done for us.
- *Hold on...I will give authority* is a quote from various Psalms that teaches the promise God gives us, the promise of a Messiah Who was fulfilled in Christ, and that He is in control. This also refers to putting on God's armor so we can fight temptations and flee from evil; we evade the lusts of our heart and world by running *from* it, not *toward* it (Eph. 6:11-18; James. 3:15, 17; 4:4, 7-10)!
- *Until I come* refers to God's impending judgment to this church, not necessarily to His "second coming." This is used to argue a position that Christ has already come, the "Full Preterist" view. However, it more likely means you will not bear the judgment, as "when I come" refers to the judgment of chastisement, not final judgment. This is also a commendation to those who remained faithful and were not drawn to the lure of Jezebel.
- *I will give authority over the nations*, a quote from Psalm 2:8-9, refers that we partake in His authority and rule as His representatives and holders of His promise. This also means that Jesus is Sovereign and greater than any nation, government, power, or authority (Matt. 25:21-23; Luke 19:17; 1 Cor. 15:41; Col. 1).
- *Morning star* referred to the planet Venus, and was a depiction in Judaism meaning the advent of dawn or a new day or age. This is also a name for Jesus' first coming, messiahship, and, in this passage, His radiance and glory. It also alludes to the kingship of Israel and refers to His Second Coming. The pagans believed that people's lives were ruled by the stars. This testifies that Jesus is the Ruler, not the stars. Jesus is giving Himself to us (Num. 24:17; Psalm 84:11; Mal. 4:2; 2 Peter 1:12-21; Rev. 2:28; 22:16; 22:16)!

- *He will rule them* refers to being a caring shepherd, and at the same time, God's strength, authority, and right to rule (Rev. 12:5; 19:15).

It is amazing how patient and longsuffering our Lord is. He accommodates us to the point of giving us time to realize our wayward ways and giving us room to make mistakes, yet, still calls us back into His arms of love and care. Even to this evil person who was manipulating His children and causing them to sin heinously, God was giving time and grace. But, she is the one who refused to heed His Lordship and precepts. Such sin will pile up and compound, leaving us disillusioned and empty; then, if we still refuse to repent, all we will have is chastisement, and then, judgment. God is not calling us to repent to smite us, but to better us; He wants the best for us just as a good parent wants the best for his or her child. He does not want us to sin, because it destroys us and causes others to do so, too. It is like watching people you love do something really stupid like use drugs; you know it will harm them, but they refuse your counsel and treatment programs, and thus, end up destroying their lives, the lives of their children and friends, and then dying as a result. We do not say, *I told you so*; rather, we weep for them, as God weeps for us when we mess up. Try not to be the person for whom others and God weep; rather, take responsibility and initiative and be the person who builds his or her church and life on His Word and authority.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. In this church, if a Christian refused to participate in a guild (that also practiced cultism, sin, and godlessness) he was cut off from any social or economic participation in the city, and not even allowed to buy and sell food or support himself and his family. What would you have done, and why?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is the One who is to be in charge of your church? How does your leadership honor this fact? How should they honor

Christ as Lord over the Church?

3. How do you feel that Jesus is looking at the way you are leading and governing His church? What gets in the way of good self-examination or accountability to see if you are doing it His way, the world's way, or your way?
4. Does the fact that Jesus sees when we direct His church right, acting on faith, in His Spirit and in His Truth, and He also sees us when we mess up, give you fear or confidence?
5. What happens when a church decides to weaken His Word for what they believe would be tolerated and received better so as to attract more people? (There is nothing wrong with using methods and programs to attract people, this is good. The wrong comes when we compromise His Word and Truth.) How does this defy Him as LORD?
6. What does it take for a church's leadership, perhaps your church, to realize that Jesus holds us responsible to take the faith He gives us and personally grow it, and further, to lead with faithfulness and in truth, His Truth?
7. How would a church cause people to have a rotten memory of themselves to their former members or community and to Christ?
8. What would your church look like if the leadership took more responsibility and initiative to build the church and their lives on His Word and authority?
9. How does the fact that Jesus will reward you greatly for your faithfulness in the management of His Church make you feel? How does it motivate you? What about that He will chastise and judge you if you do not?
10. What does it mean to your faith that our Lord is patient and longsuffering, He give us the time to realize our wayward ways and the room to make mistakes, yet still calls us back into His arms of love and care? Why would someone not want to come back to Him?
11. Have you seen churches divided by various factions? How does this defy Him? What can the leadership of your church do to make sure this does not happen, but if it does, to solve it?
12. What can you do to make sure you hold on to His Truth and remain faithful? What causes you not to be faithful? What can you do to guard yourself from sin?