

## Revelation 2:18-29

### To the Church at Thyatira

<p>[18] "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:</p>	<p><b>1. The Church:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thyatira</li> </ul>	<p>[Reminder: The word "church," as used here, may include people who <i>claim</i> to be Christian, but who really aren't.]</p> <p><u>"Son of God"</u> - He has the right to rule the universe. (See 2:27, a quote which relates this concept to Psalm 2.)</p>
<p>These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.</p>	<p><b>2. About Christ</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who he is: the Son of God</li> <li>Two of his characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eyes like fire</li> <li>feet like bright polished bronze</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><u>"Blazing eyes"</u> - This represents his ability to see and understand all things accurately. (See 1:14.)</p> <p><u>"Bronze feet"</u> - This represents his authority and ability to judge rightly. (See 1:15.)</p>
<p>[19] I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.</p>	<p><b>3. Their Strength</b></p> <p>A strong emphasis on actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They were doing many good things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>love                      - faith</li> <li>service                   - perseverance</li> </ul> </li> <li>They were doing these things increasingly so.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Love</u> for God and neighbor summarizes all of our obligations.</p> <p><u>Faith / trust</u> in God, and in his wisdom, strength and power; a willingness to obey him.</p> <p><u>Service</u> - a willingness to put the needs of others ahead of our own interests.</p> <p><u>Perseverance / steadfastness</u> - not giving-up when things get difficult.</p>
<p>[20] Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.</p>	<p><b>4. Their Weakness</b></p> <p>Little concern over what others were teaching (no focus on doctrinal purity).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What they were doing: Ignoring a false teacher, one who was comparable to Old Testament Jezebel</li> <li>What this teacher was doing: Leading God's people astray. [See the note.] →</li> </ul>	<p>People have a tendency to focus on either truth (doctrine) or love (deeds). Jesus requires us to emphasize <i>both</i>: Love in our actions must reflect truth in our hearts.</p> <p>Today, many people have the attitude that each person should be allowed to do whatever he wants, without anyone else "interfering." God, however, says that we, as a group, are responsible for each other. As a group, we must maintain truth and purity in our midst.</p> <p>[Note: This "Jezebel" may, or may not, have been an "officially recognized" teacher. Either way, what she was saying was being learned by the people.]</p>
<p>[21] I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling</p> <p>[22] So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.</p> <p>[23] I will strike her children dead.</p>	<p><b>5. Their Duty</b></p> <p><i>The duty of those who have sinned:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>"Jezebel"</u> (who was teaching error and encouraging others to sin) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[She needed to repent, but already refused to do so.]</li> <li>Therefore, she would suffer severe judgment.</li> </ul> </li> <li><u>Her partners</u> (who tolerated her sin) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They needed to repent.</li> <li>If they don't, they would experience severe judgment.</li> </ul> </li> <li><u>Her "children"</u> (any who followed her example) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They would die.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><u>"Jezebel,"</u> who is encouraging this sin, has rejected the truth, and is unwilling to change (repent). Therefore, there is nothing left for her, except judgment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>She <i>refused</i> to do her duty of repentance.</li> </ul> <p><u>Her partners</u>, who are tolerating and ignoring her sin, are also considered guilty, by God. If they are unwilling to repent (and to exercise the judgment against sin, which God requires of them), they will share in "Jezebel's" judgment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They <i>need</i> to do their duty of repentance.</li> </ul> <p><u>Her children:</u> If this sin is not stopped, there will be people who are led astray, who will never become disciples of Jesus - simply because they were exposed to falsehood, rather than to genuine Christianity. If those who were tolerating the sin (who appeared to be genuine Christians) had done their duty, these people would have had the opportunity to be saved. As it is, they only have death - the worst type possible (eternal) - to look forward to. (See the NOTE, top of next page.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because they were never exposed to the truth, they <i>never learned</i> about their duty of repentance.</li> </ul>

NOTES for v. 23:

1) Those who *withhold* the truth will be judged for doing so, and for the effects of their actions on others. Their judgment will be *more severe*. 2) Those who *never learned* the truth will be judged based only on what they *do* know, and how they respond to that knowledge. (All people have some comprehension of right and wrong built into their consciences, and all have chosen to do things that they know are wrong. But the judgment of those *not* exposed to God's Word will be *not as severe* as that experienced by those who have been exposed to it, and have rejected or ignored it. See Luke 12:48b; Romans 2:12-16; compare to James 3:1.)

<p>Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.</p> <p>[24] Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): [25] Only hold on to what you have until I come.</p>	<p><b>5. Their Duty (continued)</b></p> <p><i>Concerning these judgments against those who have sinned:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This will be a warning to all: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jesus knows all about us.</li> <li>- Jesus will accurately reward each of us, based on what we have done.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>The duty of those who have not committed these sins:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No additional responsibilities (other than opposing these sins).</li> <li>"Keep up the good work!" They must not let go of what they already have. (This would happen if they closed their eyes to sin.)</li> </ul>	<p>If we learned nothing else from this church, we should learn the following:</p> <div data-bbox="995 430 1490 531" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>Ignoring false teaching results in sin, and sin has consequences - not just on ourselves, but on others.</b></p> </div> <p>We cannot ignore sin and expect it to go away - and we are foolish if we think that it <i>won't</i> do any harm!</p> <p>The fact that Jesus will repay <i>each</i> of us should mean something <i>fearful</i>, to those who take their stand against him. They will be rewarded for their <i>evil</i> deeds/actions.</p> <p>For those who belong to Jesus (who do not choose to indulge in sin, or close their eyes to it), this fact should be something to look forward to. The day will come, when they will be rewarded for their <i>good</i> deeds/actions. For them, it can be a <i>comfort</i> to realize that Jesus will someday come.</p>
<p>[26] To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--</p> <p>[27] 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'--</p> <p>just as I have received authority from my Father.</p> <p>[28] I will also give him the morning star.</p> <p>[29] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.</p>	<p><b>6. A Promise to All</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This promise is for <i>all</i> who are willing to judge sin (rather than ignore it).</li> <li>They will one day rule over the nations. [Verse 27 is a quote from Psalm 2:9, and is a description of <i>Jesus'</i> rule. The "overcomers," those who are willing to exercise their authority <i>now</i> (in obedience to Jesus) will also be able to do so in <i>eternity</i>.]</li> <li>They will have Jesus himself as their guide. [The phrase "morning star" appears to connect with Revelation 22:16.]</li> </ul>	<p>Those who are <i>not</i> willing to obey Jesus in this matter will <i>not</i> be among the "overcomers."</p> <p>Those who are willing to follow Jesus' example <i>now</i> (and "to the end"), will be able to keep on doing so <i>for eternity</i>.</p> <p>They will continue to rule with him:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They will rule under Jesus' authority, just as he rules under the Father's authority.</li> <li>They will rule like shepherds, protecting the righteous and destroying the wicked.</li> </ul> <p>Jesus will be with them forever, as the "light" of their lives.</p> <p>This promise is for <i>all</i> who are willing to pay attention to what Jesus says.</p>

If we don't judge sin that exists in our midst, God will. And if he has to, the consequences will be much worse than if we had dealt with it ourselves. The Corinthians learned this the hard way, when they failed to deal with a serious sin that existed within their group: God sent sickness and death to some of those who were guilty. (See 1 Corinthians 11:30-32.)

## Revelation 2:18-29 Supplementary Study Information

### Background about Thyatira

Thyatira was a small trade center that was famous for a unique type of bronze, that was made by the city's bronze guild, using a secret method. The city was also known for a royal purple dye - and this is why Acts 16:14 mentions Lydia, a merchant from Thyatira, who sold purple fabric. [The bronze ties-in well with Jesus' description of himself, as having feet like burnished bronze. Perhaps the purple ties in with Jesus' royalty, as the Son of God. (Purple was often a color worn by royalty and those who were wealthy - examples: Judges 8:26; Daniel 5:7; Mark 15:17; Luke 16:19.)]

### Verse 18

#### THE SON OF GOD

This is the only time in the book of Revelation, that Jesus is described as the "Son of God." The term "like a Son of man" (a quote of Daniel 7:13) is found twice (in 1:13 and 14:14).

- During Jesus' ministry on earth, he occasionally used the term "Son of God" (John 11:4, for example). However, he more frequently used the term "Son of Man."

Jesus is both "Son of God" and "Son of Man."

- As "a son of man," he has the authority and right to judge the "sons of men" (compare to John 5:27). He has experienced all the types of temptations that "sons of men" experience, and has done so without sinning (Hebrews 4:15).
- As the "Son of God," he has the right to be the judge (since he is the owner of the universe), and he has the ability to judge accurately and fairly. (This is further expressed in the rest of this verse.)
- Matthew 26:63-64 uses both of these terms ("Son of Man" and "Son of God") in the same context.

In this passage, the following two characteristics are mentioned from the perspective of Jesus being the Son of God. (Note that, in 1:13, they were mentioned from the perspective of "Son of Man.")

#### EYES LIKE FLAMING/BLAZING FIRE

A reference back to 1:14. See also 19:12. Jesus "sees" (knows and understands) all; nothing can escape his awareness. He has a "penetrating" knowledge - he searches the heart and judges accurately and righteously.

- Fire is often used in reference to purification: After the evil is "burned away" in judgment, only what is pure will remain.

#### FEET LIKE BURNISHED BRONZE

A reference back to 1:15. A focus on judgment; perhaps also on his strength and his sovereignty (as king) over all the peoples of the earth. Jesus is the righteous judge.

- The "feet" are often associated with authority and judgment. Compare to Joshua 10:24; Psalm 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:25; and Ephesians 1:22.

### Verse 19

#### I KNOW

Literally, "I see," but used in the sense of perceiving or understanding. Jesus introduces all seven letters with this word, but here it is reinforced by the description Jesus gives of himself, as having eyes like blazing fire.

#### DEEDS

In five of the letters, Jesus' first comment is that he knows their deeds - a focus on their *actions*. For the churches of Smyrna and Pergamum, Jesus says that he knows what is happening to them - a focus on their *circumstances*. [For these two churches, the KJV translation also includes a reference to their deeds, but the main focus is still on their circumstances.]

This word *deeds* is used five times in Jesus' letter to Thyatira. The entire letter has a strong focus on the church's deeds or actions.

- Verse 19 (twice) - A reference to the people's deeds/actions: God knows their deeds/actions, and he praises the church because their deeds/actions are increasing. They were doing *many* good things.
- Verse 22 - A reference to Jezebel's *ways* (deeds/actions): Those who were ignoring or tolerating her ways (allowing her to continue) needed to repent.
- Verse 23 - A warning that God will judge each person according to his own deeds/actions.
- Verse 26 - A promise of blessing to those who do *God's* deeds/actions (= those who obey him, those who do his will).

Jesus praises the Christians at Thyatira, because the deeds/actions he refers to were increasing in excellence. He specifically points out that they were growing in their expression of love, faith, service and perseverance/endurance (each described below).

- This was *genuine* spiritual growth and its outworking in their lives. (This is how genuine salvation expresses itself.) It was not a pretension - such as what was present in the church at Laodicea - Revelation 3:14-22.
- Note that *God* defines which deeds/actions are good and which are evil - summarized here by these four words: love, faith, service and perseverance. We don't invent the definition, based on things that *we* want to do - and woe to those who try! See Isaiah 5:20.

## LOVE

A commitment-type love, which places God first in our lives, and others ahead of ourselves.

- Love is the primary characteristic of a disciple of Jesus - John 13:35. Without it, everything else loses significance - 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.
- Our two primary obligations are summarized by this word: (1) Love for God and (2) love for neighbor (including our enemies) - Matthew 22:37-40; 5:43-48. In one way or another, everything in life is related to this word - 1 Corinthians 13.

## FAITH (TRUST)

In most passages, this word focuses on our trust in God. This is a trust that is reflected in our actions and by our faithful obedience to him - faithful even though we may be tempted to choose a different way. This trust goes beyond our *initial* acceptance of what the Bible says about God. It impacts our day-to-day choices and values.

- Faithfulness or trustworthiness, as a character quality, is required of a servant (disciple) of Jesus. It is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), so if the Spirit is in us, it must/will characterize our lives. [God is faithful and trustworthy. As his servants, we must also be faithful and trustworthy.]
- Most likely, this word connects with the *first* of the two great commands regarding love for God and neighbor. (See above.)

## SERVICE

A willingness to serve others, to take care of their needs, and to do things for *their* good. This focuses on the second greatest command - our obligation to love our *neighbor*.

- Sometimes this service can have an emphasis on *spiritual* matters. Acts 6:4 mentions the "ministry" (service) of the Word of God. [In this context, the person might be called a "minister."]
- At other times, this service focuses on helping others who have *physical* needs. Acts 6:1 mentions the "distribution" (serving) of food to the needy widows. [The word "deacon" is related to this word. It normally refers to a church leader who focuses on the physical needs of the people: He is a "server."]

## PERSEVERANCE

Patient endurance and steadfastness. They were willing to continue in their "spiritual walk," even when the journey became tough. They did not give-up quickly. They remained steadfast, even when they did not immediately see the desired results.

- Perseverance is an integral part of salvation - Romans 2:6-7; 5:3-4; 15:4.
- Our ability to persevere is made possible by God - Romans 15:5.

## YOUR PRESENT DEEDS/ACTIONS - GREATER THAN WHAT YOU DID AT FIRST

When the Spirit causes us to be "born again," we begin a new life. Spiritual life, if it is genuine, will *grow*. This is one of the reasons that Jesus praises the Christians at Thyatira for what they were doing. (They were doing what Paul exhorted the people at Thessalonica to do. See 1 Thessalonians 4:1.)

Some other verses which focus on growth or increase:

- Growth in one's salvation - 1 Peter 2:2.
- Grace and knowledge - 2 Peter 3:18.
- The increasing presence (and expression) of godly character traits in one's life - 2 Peter 1:3-11. [Note that three of the four characteristics listed above (faith, love and perseverance) are directly mentioned in this passage.]

## Verse 20

YET

Their good, great as it was, does not "cancel" the evil that was in their midst.

## I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU

Regretfully, there were others in the church, whose deeds/actions were not so pleasing to God (verses 20-22). They needed to repent of their sinful deeds (verse 22) and begin to do *Jesus'* deeds (verse 26). Why? Because each of us will be judged according to our deeds/actions (verse 23).

- Judgment based on our deeds/actions is a common theme in Scripture. See, for instance: Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12; Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; Revelation 20:12; 22:12.
- This does not mean that salvation is the result of deeds; rather the deeds are the result of salvation! When God saves us, he *enables* us to do the things that please him. (He also gave us the desire to do them.) In salvation, he *created* us for good works! (See Ephesians 2:8-10.)

## YOU TOLERATE THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL

There was sin in the church, and people were not doing anything about it. Someone was having a strong, destructive influence on the church, comparable to the influence that the Old Testament Jezebel had on the northern kingdom of Israel. It may have been a specific influential woman - perhaps even a female leader or (some have suggested) a pastor's wife. However, as a principle, this statement by Jesus would be applicable in any church, to *anyone* (regardless of gender) who did such things. Some believe that the name "Jezebel" referred to an entire faction of people (in addition to a leader).

- Many people connect this "Jezebel's" actions with those of the Nicolaitans - see 2:6, 15.

The word translated as "tolerate" has a range of meanings: "to send away, to leave alone, to permit." As used in this verse, they weren't "sending her away," in the sense of getting rid of her, but they were "leaving her alone," in the sense of ignoring the sin that was being committed. Indirectly, they were "permitting" her to continue in her deceptive way. They were closing their eyes to the problem... but Jesus, who has "blazing eyes" (v. 18), wasn't.

Note that the focus of Jesus' praise (v. 19) is on their *actions*. It may be that they had a lack of emphasis on *teaching* (*doctrine*) - which would have made it easier for false teaching to creep in among them. They may have been content to focus on their own *good* actions and to ignore the *evil* she was doing (or teaching). If she was a leader, they may have been wary of saying anything against her.

- In the issue of "teaching vs. actions," people have a tendency to emphasize one of them and to ignore the other. The church at Ephesus appeared to have the *opposite* problem, with a greater focus on *teaching* (*truth*), and a neglect of *love* (*actions*).
- We need a strong emphasis on *both* teaching and actions.

Their unwillingness to deal with the problem implied acceptance of her ways. Others would see that they permitted her to be an influence, and could ultimately be led astray because of it.

- There is no such thing as "neutrality." We must expose those who try to introduce sin and error into the church. For a group to welcome such a person into their midst (instead of opposing him) implies acceptance of that person's ways. In God's eyes, those who welcome such people are *sharing* in their sins - see 2 John 1:7-11 (especially v. 11). [2 John 1:10 makes reference to receiving such a person onto one's house. This refers to accepting him and having fellowship

with him. This passage is quite significant when considering this issue, because in John's day, most "churches" (groups of Christians) met in people's houses.]

- God requires the church to judge sins and disputes that may exist within it - 1 Corinthians 5:12; 6:2. When a church refuses to do so, it brings Jesus' condemnation upon itself - such as what the church of Thyatira was now receiving.

### CALLS HERSELF A PROPHETESS

This was a false claim - just like the claims of various other people or groups mentioned in these seven letters to the churches:

- 2:2 - Those who claimed to be apostles, but were not; they were tested/examined and found to be false.
- 2:9; 3:9 - Those who claimed to be Jews, but were not; they were liars; they were a "synagogue of Satan." [The word "Jew," as used here, is not a reference to mere biological ancestry. Rather, it is being used here in the sense of a *genuine* Jew - one who is willing to accept what *Moses* taught - which means that he would accept *Jesus* for who he is. Compare to John 5:46.]
- 3:17 - Those who claimed to be spiritually healthy, but were actually the opposite.

People can call themselves anything they want, and even convince themselves that their claims are true. But Jesus' penetrating eyes can see past their pretension and self-deception.

This "Jezebel" claimed to be a spiritual leader, one who spoke on God's behalf. As a supposed "prophetess," she may have claimed to be revealing truth that the apostles and other leaders had not revealed - "new" (or perhaps "deeper") "spiritual truths." [Verse 24 describes her teachings or ways as "deep," and as having their origin in Satan.]

- Communicating God's message was the primary function of a prophet. Since This "Jezebel" did not communicate *God's* message, she was, by definition, a false prophet.

### BY WHAT SHE TEACHES, SHE MISLEADS MY SERVANTS

In the church at Pergamum, the people who held to Balaam's sinful teachings may have *indirectly* encouraged others to sin (by way of example). Here at Thyatira, "Jezebel" *directly* teaches others to commit the sins that she herself is doing. She even claims to have divine authority to do so! (Compare to the Old Testament Jezebel, who tried to extinguish worship of the true God - and she did so in the name of her false gods.)

Warnings and other statements related to false teachings:

- Man-made teachings - Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Colossians 2:22.
- Teachings taught by demons - 1 Timothy 4:1.
- Teachings that "blow us around," like wind - Ephesians 4:4.
- Contrasted with "sound teaching" or "good teaching" - 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1.

Note that teachers will one day face a stricter judgment - James 3:1.

To "lead astray" - to mislead, to deceive (by means of those false teachings).

- People who are misled *do not know it*. (They may have known it at first, but by repeatedly failing to deal with the problem, their sense of awareness would have deadened.)
- The only way to avoid (or to get out of) deception is to allow the Word of God to *open* and *change* our minds - compare to Matthew 22:29 (where the word "deceive" is often translated as "mistaken" or "in error").

Deception has been occurring ever since the very first sin (Genesis 3:13). It can happen to both saved people (as in this verse) and unsaved people. In the end times, deception will have a major role in what happens:

- Some verses which focus on the role of deception in the end times: Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24; 1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 13:14; 18:23; etc.
- Those who are unwilling to accept the truth of Scripture will be judged by God himself. God will send them a "delusion": If they are determined to reject God's truth, he will let them believe the devil's error - 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. Note that, having rejected the truth, *they won't know that they have accepted the devil's error*. They will think it is the truth.

### "MY SERVANTS"

This refers only to those who are *Jesus'* servants. It does not include this "Jezebel," who is considered an infiltrator. She is an enemy who tries to mislead God's servants.

About being a "servant" or "slave" of Jesus: Jesus is the "Lord" or "Master" of *all* genuine Christians. (The word "Lord" means "Master.")

- The word "slave" occurs approximately 120 times in the New Testament. In perhaps half of these instances, the word is used to describe our relationship to God (if we belong to Jesus).
- All people who are *not* slaves to God are *still* slaves to sin and the devil. This slavery can occur in many forms, some very obvious, involving direct opposition to anything good; others less obvious, perhaps even involving an appearance of righteous conduct. (Sometimes the devil uses people who openly *oppose* what is right; at other times, he uses *counterfeits* who imitate it with something false.)
- Jesus frees us from this slavery to sin, so that we can become *his* slaves, slaves to true righteousness. *He did not free us so that we could indulge in further sin, and call it "freedom."* See Romans 6:16-20; Galatians 5:1, 13; 1 Peter 2:16; 2 Peter 2:19.
- Note: We are also called "sons" of God (through adoption - Ephesians 1:5) and "brothers" of Jesus (Hebrews 2:11-12). The word "slave" focuses on just one specific aspect of our relationship to Jesus.

## SO THAT THEY COMMIT SEXUAL IMMORALITY AND EAT FOOD SACRIFICED TO IDOLS

She was misleading others into thinking that these sins were acceptable practices; she tried to get people to *continue* in their pagan ways, rather than abandoning them.

*What was she teaching?*

- She may have taught them that these practices were more "spiritual" or even "free" - though they would have actually turned the people into slaves of depravity and sin (2 Peter 2:19).
- In this passage, sexual immorality is mentioned first; in 2:14, at the church in Pergamum, things related to idolatry came first. This could suggest that the sins crept into these two churches in different ways. In the one, they may have first gone into *spiritual* compromise, which eventually led to *physical* (sexual) compromise. In the other, they may have first gone into *physical* compromise, which eventually led to *spiritual* compromise.
- [See also verse 22, where the word "adultery" occurs. See also the notes on 2:14 (the church at Pergamum), for more about these two types of sins (sexual immorality and idolatry).]

*How were these "servants" affected?*

These people are not the "children" of verse 23, but "servants" of Jesus, who still have time to repent. They do not fully *accept* her teachings as their own perspective; rather, they *tolerate* them. However, in God's eyes, tolerating sin is a form of participation in them. It also suggests (to others) an acceptance of those evil ways, and encourages others to adopt them as their own. (This is one of the ways she would get "children" - verse 23.)

These people have now been warned by Jesus. They may have "fallen asleep" in a state of deception, but they now have been "awakened" by Jesus. If they are genuine servants of Jesus, they will repent of their sins - verse 22. (If they don't repent, they are probably Jezebel's "children," rather than Jesus' servants.)

## Verse 21

I GAVE HER TIME TO REPENT (of her immorality)

She was given many opportunities to change her ways (and her attitude), but she was unwilling. Interestingly, this word "repent" is in *past* tense, and is not directed toward the others in the church.

- God often delays judgment, as an expression of patience, kindness and mercy - Romans 2:4-6. However, judgment *will* eventually come to those who are unwilling to change. See also 2 Peter 3:9.

## SHE IS UNWILLING TO REPENT

Repentance goes against her will. Remaining in this sin is a conscious decision on her part - of course, she wouldn't call it sin! And so, because she has rejected God's ways, God has also rejected her (v. 22).

- This verse shows that it is possible for infiltrators or "enemy agents" to creep into the church. The next verse shows that God *will* eventually judge those who do so.
- This "Jezebel" is as stubborn, in her refusal to repent, as were the religious leaders of Jesus' day - Matthew 23:37.

## Verse 22

Three groups - or individuals - are involved in this judgment: (1) "Jezebel" (who is encouraging the sin), (2) her "partners" (who are tolerating it), and (3) her "children" (who have adopted it as their way of life). Just as with the Jezebel of the Old Testament, all three groups will face judgment, if they do not repent. In fact, some who have adopted her ways are in danger of *never* having the opportunity to repent - see v. 23. (This shows how serious the sin actually is - though it may *appear* to be relatively harmless, so some.)

What if some of the people refuse to repent? They may have, at one time, looked like disciples of Jesus. But as the apostle John reminds us, their departure from the truth proves that they were never *genuine* disciples (1 John 2:19).

### SO I WILL CAST HER ON A BED [OF SUFFERING]

(A focus on her impending judgment.) Does she and her "participants" like to sin on a "bed" (sexual immorality)? Then God will give them a "bed" - not a "bed" of pleasure, but of pain. He will "throw her down" onto this "bed," along with those who are sharing in her sins, and together they will suffer.

### I WILL BRING INTENSE SUFFERING ON THOSE WHO COMMIT ADULTERY WITH HER

Those who have joined her in this "sin-bed" will share in her "judgment-bed," if they don't repent. This applies to those who are tolerating (or closing their eyes to) her sin. (They "join" her in this sin by closing their eyes to it.)

Adultery focuses on the sexual sin of one spouse against another. This is the only place in the book of Revelation, where the word "adultery" occurs. It focuses specifically on the conduct of the participants.

- *Genuine* disciples of Jesus - as a group - are described as the "bride" of Christ - Revelation 19:7; 21:9. See also: 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-33.

Elsewhere in the book of Revelation, the word "fornication" - normally referring to sexual immorality outside of marriage - is used. Note that this is the word that was used to describe "Jezebel's" conduct - v. 21. (The word "fornication" is also related to the concept of prostitution - which is mentioned several times in Revelation 17.)

- This "Jezebel" is not "married" to Christ, but those who are guilty of participating with her in this sin *are* - at least they claim to be. (Their repentance, or lack of repentance, will prove whether they belong to Christ, or not.)
- Verse 20 uses the word "fornication" as a general description of the *conduct*, and would be applicable to *all* involved, not just the servants (who are directly mentioned here).

There is a strong similarity between sexual immorality and idolatry. Both involve the violation of a relationship of *union* - whether that relationship involves a spouse or God. Both involve the expression (or violation) of trust, faithfulness, purity, loyalty, etc.

- In the Old Testament, tolerance or acceptance of false gods was likened to sexual immorality. (Examples: Judges 2:17; 1 Chronicles 5:25) In the New Testament, acceptance of the world's ways is likened to adultery. (Example: James 4:4; see also 2 Corinthians 11:2.) Throughout Scripture, physical adultery (or fornication) is often connected with spiritual adultery (or fornication).
- Here at Thyatira, their "adultery" is more than physical adultery. They are violating their covenant relationship with God, who demands purity of heart and mind, not just outward piety and good deeds.

"Intense suffering" = "great tribulation." This is a judgment for their sin.

- This phrase also occurs in 7:14, where the focus is different, being a reference to the intense trials and afflictions that some of God's people will experience as *persecution* (not as judgment from God). In 7:14, God's people are victorious in their struggle against those trials.
- Statements such as this help make a distinction between genuine disciples who are sinning (and who need to repent) and the fakes. The genuine Christians will eventually repent (or experience a discipline that could include physical death); the others won't repent, *whether or not their judgment results in death*.
- Here in verse 22, those who refuse to repent will *never* recover, but (assuming that they are genuine servants) will experience some form of ongoing judgment. [The exact details of this judgment are not mentioned. Perhaps this is because, as a principle that is applicable to people in other contexts, the specific type of judgement may vary from situation to situation.]



## UNLESS THEY REPENT OF HER WAYS [= her deeds]

This is the only way that her participants can escape judgment. They must turn against her ways, both in attitude and actions. They must reject her ways, rather than tolerating them. (As already mentioned in v. 21, "Jezebel" has rejected repentance... so she *can't* escape judgment.)

Some N.T. manuscripts say "unless they repent of *their* ways," perhaps focusing more on their attitude of toleration, rather than on their participation in this sin. (The overall message is the same.)

### A FEW COMMENTS ABOUT DISCIPLINE:

- There are some sins which are so intolerable to God, that he will discipline those who claim to belong to him, even to the point of death, if necessary. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32 illustrates this.) More often, God will discipline the person in a way that does *not* result in such severe consequences.
- Our attitude toward God's discipline should be one of gratefulness, and should result in our repentance. When God disciplines us, it proves that we are his children (Hebrews 12:5-11)! [Of course, if we are his children, we will respond like his children: sooner or later, we will start to pay attention to what our "daddy" is teaching us. A person who continues to stubbornly reject discipline is probably *not* one of God's children - with the possible exception of those who are disciplined to the point of death.]
- God's discipline of his children is *not* the same as his judgment against unrepentant "Jezebels." [How do we know whether it is *discipline* or *judgment*? Our response to it is a good indicator. If we are willing to repent (and learn), so that we can share in God's holiness - Hebrews 12:10b - then we know we are responding as his children. If we stubbornly refuse to repent, then we are acting more like "Jezebel."]
- There are different types of discipline - not just punishment, but also training and instruction. (Here, there is a greater emphasis on the punishment aspect of it.)

## Verse 23

### I WILL STRIKE (KILL) HER CHILDREN DEAD

Those who have adopted her ways will be "killed with death" - a very strong emphasis on the severity of their judgment. It will be an act of God - a judgment that *he* will accomplish.

- These people are different from those already mentioned, who haven't *adopted* her ways, but simply *ignore* them (when they should be opposing them, instead).
- Rather than being "born" into life, in Christ's family, these people will enter a "deader" state of death.

"Children of Jezebel" vs. "children of God" - The apostle John frequently describes God's people as "children of God" - see 1 John 3:1-2, as an example. To *not* be a child of God is to be a child of the devil - 1 John 3:10. Here, in 2:23, those who follow God's ways (those who do his "deeds") are God's children; those who follow Jezebel's ways (deeds) are Jezebel's children. (Of course, they are *also* the devil's children, in the sense of 1 John 3:10.)

This judgment parallels the judgment experienced by the Old Testament Jezebel's children. They also died as the result of judgment against their sins, because they followed in Jezebel's evil ways.

- Ahaziah, king of Israel (son of Jezebel, successor to Ahab) - died from injuries after he fell through the lattice of his upper room. God would not heal him, because he chose to follow Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron - 2 Kings 1. (He followed after his parent's evil ways - 1 Kings 22:52-53.)
- Joram, king of Israel (successor to Ahaziah, his brother) - killed by Jehu - 2 Kings 9:21-26. (He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but was not quite as bad as his parents - 2 Kings 3:2-3.)
- Jehoram, king of Judah (married Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel) - stricken with sickness and died a painful death - 2 Chronicles 21:18-20. (He was evil, just as his wife's family was - 2 Kings 8:16-18.)
- Ahaziah, king of Judah (son of Jehoram and Athaliah) - killed by Jehu's soldiers - 2 Kings 9:27-28. (He was evil, just like his mother's family - 2 Kings 8:26-27.)
- Athaliah, queen of Judah (daughter of Jezebel) - killed when Joash, the rightful heir to the throne, began to reign (2 Kings 11). (She was an evil person, who attempted to murder all the rightful heirs to the throne - 2 Kings 11:1.)
- [Also, Ahab, Jezebel, 70 other sons of Ahab were killed (1 Kings 22:34-38; 2 Kings 9:30-37; 2 Kings 10:1-10).]

Because this "Jezebel" was being tolerated (rather than judged), horrible consequences were about to occur. ***We should never forget that sin has consequences!*** Those who accept "Jezebel's" ways (her "children") may never even reach the point that they comprehend what *genuine* Christianity is all about... so for them, the concept of "repentance" may remain meaningless. (Note that repentance is not mentioned in this verse.)

- It is a horrible thing to live a lifetime in the church, and to never realize what repentance is all about. But this becomes a real possibility, when sin is tolerated by those who *do* know the truth.
- Those who die in this condition will be judged for their own sins, based on whatever truth they *did* know. (Compare to Romans 2:12, 14-15, which shows that even those with *no* exposure to God's Word will be judged - but based only on what they already know in their consciences.)
- Scripture warns us that horrible things such as this will happen... but *woe to the person who causes them to happen*. Their judgment will be far worse. (Compare to James 3:1; Matthew 23; Luke 17:1; etc.) If they repent, Jesus will take their punishment upon himself, but their actions will still influence what happens to them in eternity - the types of rewards they get (not just "crowns," but probably gifts, skills and abilities).

#### ALL THE CHURCHES WILL KNOW

God will use this judgment as a warning to *others*.

- In keeping with Romans 8:28, this judgment will accomplish good in the lives of those who love God - not just at Thyatira, but elsewhere, as well.

It will be obvious to others! They will take note of this judgment and will know that *God* is involved in it.

#### I AM THE ONE WHO SEARCHES MINDS AND HEARTS

This is very emphatic: It is Jesus, not someone else, who is examining us. If we compare this to Jesus' description of himself (2:18), we could say that Jesus has "penetrating eyes." He searches our innermost beings, our desires and thoughts.

- Compare this with the effects of God's Word (the Bible) - Hebrews 4:12-13.

#### I WILL GIVE (reward) EACH OF YOU ACCORDING TO YOUR DEEDS

This applies to each of us, not just to the people in Thyatira. Those who have changed hearts will have deeds that honor God; they will do God's will, as "overcomers" - v. 26. The others, with unchanged hearts, will have the deeds of the devil. (Compare to John 8:41, 44. See also 1 John 3:7-10.)

This promise can be a warning or an encouragement, depending on what one's deeds are. We must not forget that *none* will be able to escape this "day of payment."

- This "payment" will be based on our deeds, *the way Jesus sees them*. (All prehension will vanish away.)

#### Concerning our works and our future judgment:

- Salvation is a "gift," not a "wage" or "payment" for what we have done - Romans 6:23. However, our salvation (or lack of it) will influence our conduct. This is why Jesus tells us, "by their fruits you will recognize them." (Matthew 7:16-20) [Sometimes a person may be more easily recognized for what he is, than at other times, depending on the extent that his "fruit" is visible.]
- People will choose to act in a way that is compatible with their nature. And so, though salvation comes by trusting in what *Jesus* did, Scripture also says that our judgment will be based on what we do - our works (Romans 2:6-11).
- Revelation 20:11-15 mentions both the Book of Life (which lists those who are saved), as well as books which record the things we have done in this present life. Each will have a specific role in determining what type of existence we will have in eternity.

The book of Jude mentions a different situation in which people secretly crept into the church, in order to destroy it. (They, of course, would claim that they had *other* intentions.) Jude reminds us that God will eventually judge and destroy such people. The last verses of Jude show us how we should respond in such situations, and focuses our trust on God, the one who can (and will) protect his people.

## Verse 24

TO THE REST OF YOU IN THYATIRA... WHO DO NOT HAVE (HOLD TO) THIS TEACHING/DOCTRINE

This encouragement is for those not involved in the judgment of v. 22-23. These people do not hold on to Jezebel's teachings, in any way (whether by accepting it, or by tolerating it).

YOU WHO HAVE NOT LEARNED SATAN'S "DEEP SECRETS"

To know by experience. (Remember that learning and lifestyle are connected.)

There are two groups in this church: The one group has been influenced by "Jezebel" and knows (or at least tolerates) Satan's "deep things." The other group has been taught by the Spirit and knows the "deep things" of God (1 Corinthians 2:10).

- False teachers often claim to have "knowledge" that others in the church lack - perhaps even calling it a "deeper knowledge." (Few would admit that their "knowledge" comes from Satan!)
- This is an instance in which ignorance is a good thing! We must strive to know the ways of *God*, rather than the ways of the *devil*.

I WILL NOT PLACE (impose/put) ANY OTHER BURDEN ON YOU

They only need to continue in what they have already been doing (v. 25) - and those things are not necessarily a burden.

A burden: something that is heavy, that weighs us down. The context will show whether it is good or bad to have this burden. Some other verses that focus on this concept:

- The trials of life may be a "burden" to us, but they are nothing, compared to the "weight" of glory that we look forward to - 2 Corinthians 4:17. (The word "weight" is the same word, in the original N.T. language. But in this verse, it sure has a different connotation!)
- Everyone has burdens in his life. Paul tells us that we should help carry each other's burdens - Galatians 6:2.
- In Jesus' day, the religious leaders "burdened" the people with their man-made teachings - Matthew 23:4 ("heavy" loads placed upon people).
- In contrast, *God's* commands are not burdensome - 1 John 5:3; Matthew 11:28-30. (Of course, people who do not know God might *call* them a burden.)
- Many religious leaders also tried to burden the non-Jews with Jewish rituals, when the non-Jews became Christians. However, in Acts 15:28-29, the only "burdens" God gave to the Gentiles (non-Jews) were the avoidance of: immorality, idolatry, and certain practices related to the eating of strangled animals and blood (perhaps associated with certain idolatrous practices).
- In another sense, we should consider things such as justice, mercy and faithfulness as being "heavier" (= "more important") than things such as ceremonial regulations - Matthew 23:23.

## Verse 25

HOLD TIGHTLY TO WHAT YOU HAVE

Their only requirement: Hold on to all the good things they have. Considering the focus of the previous verse ("Jezebel's" teachings), Jesus may be emphasizing the teachings they have received from the apostles, which they were to cling tenaciously to. However, we cannot totally remove their actions (praised in v. 19) from this exhortation, since there is such a strong connection between what a person truly *believes* and what he *does*. [Today, many "fakes" try to separate the two, but Jesus never does.]

- This would include a willingness to oppose sin that tried to creep into their midst. Since this was something they were already doing, a failure to continue doing so would be the same as letting go. It would have placed them under the same judgment as what Jesus had just pronounced upon the others.
- This same basic encouragement is given to the faithful at Philadelphia (3:11).
- We must remember that the principles stated in these seven letters have application to *all of us*. *We also* are told to hold on to what God has given us, and to not let go of it - either directly (through our own sins) or indirectly (by tolerating or ignoring the influence of other people's sins).

This word "hold" is *not* the same as the word "have/hold" in verse 24. Here the word is also used in the sense of "to seize" something - *to grab hold of it and not let go*. (Example: The guards "seized" Jesus, when they captured him in the garden - Matthew 26:50.)

- We are to "hold fast" to the teachings we received from the apostles - 2 Thessalonians 2:15.
- We are to "hold fast" to the truths we claim to possess - our "confession" - Hebrews 4:14.
- Other places this word is used in the book of Revelation: 2:1, 13-15; 3:11; 7:1; 20:2.

#### UNTIL I COME

In this passage, Jesus' reference to his coming is an *encouragement* - to those who had remained faithful to him and were ready for his return. Jesus had already said that he would reward each person according to his deeds (v. 23).

- In contrast, the reference to Jesus' coming, in Revelation 3:3, is a *warning*, because, at Sardis, their deeds were *not* good.

There may be an initial reference in this verse, to Jesus' coming to judge "Jezebel." But as a principle, it would serve as an illustration of a judgment that is yet to come - the Great Day of Judgment, at Jesus' future coming. All of God's people are told to hold on to what they have received from God, until Jesus returns. [See also the phrase, "to the end," in v. 26.]

#### Verse 26

##### TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES

This promise applies to *us*. It applies to *all* who are willing to face the sins that may be present in the church (rather than closing their eyes to them), and are willing to deal with them properly.

- People who are willing to do this are merely acknowledging what Jesus *already* sees... and they are dealing with the sin in the manner that Jesus *requires*. They are not being "judgmental" (as those participating in the sin might claim), but are simply being obedient.
- Of course, we must first deal with our own sins - Matthew 7:5. Otherwise, we *also* deserve God's judgment - 1 Corinthians 11:31.

##### AND WHO DOES MY DEEDS (= who obeys Jesus) TO THE END

Whoever does Jesus' "deeds" (the things that he "wills") and doesn't quit doing them. Basically, they were to do what he encouraged them to do, in verse 25. And so are we. [This same word ("deeds") is mentioned several times previously - see the comments at verse 19.]

"Whoever does" = Whoever "keeps" or "watches over" his deeds (like a guard).

- The Christians at Philadelphia were praised for "keeping" Jesus' *word* (his teaching). Here at Thyatira, the focus is on Jesus' *deeds*.
- Jesus' deeds were to be seen in their lives. This means they were to live as *he* would, morally and upright, with a love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40) that was visible in their lives.

One important factor: There is an aspect of "keeping" Jesus' deeds that goes beyond the *individual*. We must be willing to "keep" his deeds *as a group*. To ignore what everyone else is doing, and to focus on just our own actions, would make us guilty of the very sins that some in this church were guilty of! As a group of people who claim to be Jesus' followers, we need to be "guards," making sure that the "deeds of the devil" are not in our midst.

"To the end": Until death, or until Jesus comes back - whichever happens first. This requires an ongoing need for faithfulness - something which people guilty of spiritual adultery (v. 22) do not have.

- Consider Matthew 24:13 - It is the one who endures or stands firm "to the end" who is saved. This is because genuine children of God *will* stand firm. The devil will *not* successfully deceive them - compare to Matthew 24:22, 24.
- Hebrews 6:12 - It is through faith and *patience* that we inherit what God has promised for us. We keep on trusting and obeying, rather than becoming spiritually lazy. Though we may struggle with old habits, we don't surrender to them. For we have a new nature - one that will never be satisfied until we are with our Savior.

## I WILL GIVE HIM POWER/AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS

Jesus is the ultimate ruler, but we will rule (and judge) with him.

- We will also have authority over angels - 1 Corinthians 6:3a.

### Verse 27

This verse contains a quote from Psalm 2:9. "The Son (of God)," in Psalm 2:7, connects with Jesus' description of himself, in Revelation 2:18. According to this psalm, Jesus (the "Son") will rule with justice. The rebellious people (mentioned in this psalm and in Revelation 2:27) will be crushed like pottery. The only proper response, if we want to be wise, is to submit to Jesus' authority (Psalm 2:10-12).

#### RULE WITH A ROD OF IRON

"Rule" = "to be a shepherd" over them, to take care of them, as a guardian.

- Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron - Revelation 12:5; 19:15; we will rule with him - Revelation 2:27.
- Even now, leaders in the church are to be like shepherds, as they lead (take care of) Jesus' "sheep" (the church). See John 21:16 (an example of Peter being told to do this) and Acts 20:28. They are to do so willingly (not as though forced) and with the right motives - 1 Peter 5:2. They are *not* to "lord over" the flock - 1 Peter 5:3.
- In contrast, fake leaders only "shepherd" (care for) themselves - Jude 1:12.

"Rod (of iron)" = a "staff" or "scepter."

- Jesus' scepter is one of righteousness - Hebrews 1:8. Those who are righteous will have nothing to fear. But his scepter can (and *will*) destroy those who are his enemies.
- "Iron" - it will be strong and invincible. (This does *not* mean that it will be cruel or tyrannical, rather, it will be the expression of righteous justice.)

#### [Being] BROKEN TO PIECES (LIKE POTTERY)

Crushed, battered, broken to pieces. This focuses on the fate of his enemies.

- Romans 16:20 is another passage in which this word is used in connection with power and judgment against an enemy. Paul refers to Satan as being "crushed" under the people's feet. (Note that Jesus mentions his own feet in connection with judgment, in verse 18.)

#### JUST AS I RECEIVED AUTHORITY FROM MY FATHER

Jesus' authority to rule is from the Father. (Note the connection back to verse 18, where Jesus is described as the Son of God.) In the same way, our authority to rule will be from Jesus.

We must remember that this authority belongs only to those who are the "overcomers," - those who pay attention to the warnings and encouragements found in the previous verses. This means that *we have an obligation to exercise Jesus' authority even now* - and failure to do so will result in the type of judgment seen in verses 22-23.

- We must be willing to oppose (rather than tolerate) sin that is in our midst. (Also, compare to 1 Corinthians 6:3b-4.)
- Note, however, that we must exercise this authority within the context of whatever authority we *rightfully* have. It is not our duty to try to exercise authority over people we have no authority over! (Example: The church, as a group, must judge *itself*, rather than those focusing on those who are *not* a part of it - 1 Corinthians 5:12-13.)

### Verse 28

#### I WILL GIVE HIM THE MORNING STAR

In nature, the term "morning star" refers to Venus, which under the right circumstances, can be very bright, just before daybreak. (At other times of the year, it can look like an "evening star.") Here, this term is used to symbolize one of the blessings that belongs to the "overcomer."

A suggested explanation of this blessing is found in Revelation 22:16, where Jesus says that *he* is "the bright morning star." If this is the meaning of "morning star" in 2:28, then we are being told that Jesus gives *himself* to the "overcomers."

- The word "star" (v. 28) and the word "scepter" (v. 27) are both used in Numbers 24:17, in reference a future ruler who would come from Jacob/Israel (a reference to Jesus). (Ironically, this verse was spoken by Balaam, a false prophet, after God overruled Balaam's desires to curse Israel, and told him specifically what to say!)

Some additional comments related to stars and light:

- Throughout these verses, the leaders or representatives of the churches ("angels" or "messengers") are described as "stars" (see 1:20). As in nature, the "morning star" (Jesus) is brighter and greater than all the rest of the stars (representatives of the church).
- God's people are the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14-16). They follow the example of their Savior, who is also called the "light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5).
- The term "morning star" is also found in 2 Peter 1:19. In that verse, it seems to be related to the coming of salvation/redemption - the final realization of everything that is a part of it. For us, the future day of judgment will bring us bright daylight, rather than "utter darkness." Even now, the light of this hope "shines" brightly in our hearts.

### **Verse 29**

**HE WHO HAS AN EAR...**

This promise applies to *everyone* who is willing to pay attention to it (to accept it and live up to its requirements).