

Session 5 Jesus' Message to the Church of Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29)

I. THE PRIMARY MESSAGE: A CHURCH TOLERATING IMMORALITY (REV. 2:18-28)

- A. Jesus commended them for their love and ministry to others while warning them that they must refuse to tolerate immorality and idolatry. This church was affirmed for their patience (perseverance) in their many outreach ministries. However, they lacked zeal for moral purity.

¹⁸To 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: ¹⁹I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience...²⁰I have a few things against you, because you allow [tolerate; NAS, ESV] that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality...²²I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent...²⁶He who overcomes...I will give power over the nations..." (Rev. 2:18-28)

- B. Thyatira was about 30 miles inland in Turkey, surrounded by many rivers. The city of Akhisar now exists on the site of Thyatira. It was a wealthy center for trade guilds—"labor unions"—(garments, bronze workings, weavers, leather workers, linen makers, etc.). All employees in the "unions" were required to attend worship feasts for Apollo (the sun-god). These idolatrous feasts included drunkenness and immorality. Refusal to participate would lead to them losing their job.
- C. The Spirit is preparing the Church to operate in great power. He requires that we live in agreement with His leadership. Idolatry and immorality are the two sins that Jesus spoke against most in Revelation. Idolatry refers to ***power*** outside God's will; immorality to ***pleasures*** outside God's will.
1. ***Idolatry*** is expressed in covetousness (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5) by pursuing and trusting in money in ways that oppose Jesus' leadership over their life.
 2. ***Immorality*** includes all sexual activity (physical, technological, etc.) outside of the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman.

II. JESUS' REVELATION OF HIMSELF (REV. 1:14-15; 2:18)

- A. Jesus highlighted three aspects of His majesty that help to equip His people to overcome immorality and idolatry (covetousness)—that He is the Son of God and has eyes like fire and feet like brass.
- ¹⁸Says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass... (Rev. 2:18)***
- B. ***Son of God***: Jesus emphasized His deity and power to equip them to withstand Jezebel.
- C. ***Who has eyes like a flame of fire***: His eyes speak of His attentiveness to His people and to what they do. Fire symbolizes the impartation of holy love and the release of judgment. He releases either the "fire of grace" or the "fire of judgment," depending on how we respond to Him.
- D. ***His feet are like fine brass***: Brass is a symbol of judgment against sin. Jesus' feet of bronze speak of His commitment as a mighty warrior to confront and triumph over persistent immorality with judgment. Jesus promises to tread down as His enemy all that is identified with Jezebel.

III. AFFIRMATION FOR FAITHFULNESS

- A. ***I know your works***: This church was affirmed for their works, love, service, faith, and patience. This is the only church commended for both love and service.
¹⁹I know your works, love, service [outreach ministries], faith, and your patience [perseverance]; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. (Rev. 2:19)
- B. ***The last are more than the first***: They increased in their work of ministry and service as time went on. Their deeds were greater in number and quality than in their earlier days of ministry.

IV. CORRECTION FOR COMPROMISE

- A. ***I have a few things against you***: Jesus' correction is not rejection. He corrected three churches in the seven letters. Those in Ephesus left their first love (Rev. 2:4). Believers in Pergamos held the doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2:14), and those in Thyatira allowed Jezebel to teach (Rev. 2:20).
²⁰...I have a few things against you, because you allow [tolerate; NAS, ESV] that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols...²⁴to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan...I will put on you no other burden. (Rev. 2:20, 24)
- B. ***You allow Jezebel to teach and seduce My servants***: They tolerated Jezebel by allowing her to continue instead of rebuking her error and stopping her ministry. She taught "liberty in grace," saying that attending idol feasts involving immorality was acceptable.
- C. Those who participated their idolatrous feasts were worshipping demons (1 Cor. 10:20-21).
²⁰The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons...and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. (1 Cor. 10:20-21)
- D. Most idolatry was motivated by covetousness (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). Covetousness is an expression of idolatry because people put their confidence in money instead of the Lord.
⁵Put to death...fornication, uncleanness...and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Col. 3:5)
⁵No...covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom. (Eph. 5:5)
- E. Paul required the leaders under him to confront immorality in the church. Immorality is included in almost every list of sins in the NT and is emphasized in Revelation as one of Satan's primary strategies in the end times (Rev. 9:21; 14:8; 17:1-4; 18:2-4, 9-10; 19:2; 21:8).
¹It is reported that there is sexual immorality among you...⁴In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together...⁵deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord...⁹I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world...since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹Now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral...or a drunkard ...not even to eat with such a person. (1 Cor. 5:1-11)

- F. The high priest Eli loved God but tolerated immorality in his sons—Hophni and Phinehas—who were leaders under him. He failed to replace them when they refused to repent. As a result of allowing immorality to continue under his leadership, Eli lost God's blessing (1 Sam 2:12-31).
- ²²Eli...heard everything his sons did...how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle...²³So he said to them, "Why do you do such things?...²⁵Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them..."²⁷Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD..."²⁸"Did I not choose him [your forefather Aaron] out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest...?"²⁹Why do you...honor your sons more than Me...?"³⁰Therefore the LORD...says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.³¹Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off...your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.'" (1 Sam. 2:22-31)*
- G. **Jezebel:** There are two women in the Scripture named Jezebel—one in the OT and one in the NT.
1. The OT Jezebel was married to King Ahab (1 Kgs. 16:31). She financially supported 850 false prophets, killed God's true prophets, and sought to kill Elijah (1 Kgs. 18:13, 19; 19:1-2). Her harlotries and occult practices were well known (2 Kgs. 9:22). Her name lived on as a byword for immorality and/or occult activity.
 2. The NT Jezebel acted like the OT Jezebel and, therefore, may have deliberately taken her name in her brazen boldness to live in sin. She was a recognized leader in the church who claimed to be a prophetess. Thus, she had a reputation for accurate prophetic revelation. Those accepting her teachings prided themselves on their enlightened liberalism in grace.
- H. Those described as having the *spirit of Jezebel* are those who promote immorality and/or sorcery. Immorality stimulates one's body outside of God's will. Sorcery stimulates one's spirit outside of God's will. The spirit behind making, selling, or buying pornography or partaking in any expression of immorality is the spirit of Jezebel. As the OT Jezebel killed the prophets physically, so the spirit of Jezebel today kills the prophets spiritually with immorality—it kills the prophetic spirit.
- I. **Depths of Satan:** John referred to Jezebel's doctrine as the deep things of Satan. In other words, her false teaching on grace that promoted immorality and idolatry without concern for Jesus' leadership or His judgments is one expression of the depths of satanic deception.

V. JESUS' EXHORTATION TO THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA

- A. Jesus warned the church that He would kill her children—those who followed her teaching—and cast them into tribulation (increased trials) that troubled believers who refused Jezebel's ways.
- ²¹I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²²Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. I will give to each one of you according to your works. ²⁴Now to...as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan... I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵Hold fast what you have till I come. (Rev. 2:21-25)*

- B. Believers are sometimes made sick and even die under God's judgment on immorality. God's discipline includes Satan being permitted to make the unrepentant sick (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:30-32).
³⁰For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [died]. ³¹If we...judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are chastened [disciplined] by the Lord, that we may not be condemned [go to hell] with the world. (1 Cor. 11:30-32)
¹It is reported that there is sexual immorality among you...⁵deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord... (1 Cor. 5:1-5)
- C. ***Churches shall know***: Jesus wants the Church *to know* that He is zealous to free His people from immorality. He said they all *shall know* when He casts unrepentant believers on a sick bed.
- D. ***Hold fast what you have till I come***: It takes diligence for a leadership team to hold fast in proclaiming and insisting on purity among those involved in their ministry. It is not automatic.

VI. PROMISE FOR OVERCOMERS: AUTHORITY AND INTIMACY

- A. ***He who overcomes***: We must maintain our obedience in this until the end of our life. Augustine said, "*Lust yielded to becomes a habit, and a habit not resisted becomes necessity* [addiction]."
²⁶“He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. ²⁷He shall rule them...²⁸and I will give him the morning star.” (Rev. 2:26-28)
- B. ***Power over the nations***: One reward for resisting immorality is to reign with Jesus in His *millennial* kingdom (Rev. 2:27; 3:21). Each believer has a different measure of eternal rewards.
- C. ***I will give him the morning star***: Jesus is the morning star (Rev. 22:16). This promise speaks of increased revelation of Jesus and deeper relationship with Him. The morning star is the brightest star in the sky (planet Venus), seen just before the dawning of a new day.
¹⁶“I, Jesus...am the bright and morning star.” (Rev 22:16)

VII. SUMMARY

- A. Believers in the Pergamos and Thyatira yielded to idolatry and immorality. Jesus emphasized specific truths to equip His people to overcome immorality. Jesus is the wisest teacher who has perfect understanding of the human heart. These truths are needed in overcoming immorality.
- B. Jesus revealed four things about Himself to the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira and four rewards as part of the solution to the two main temptations they were facing (Rev. 2:12-28).
1. Jesus revealed that He has *a sword* that He would use to fight the saints (Rev. 2:12, 16) and that He was the *Son of God* with *eyes like fire* and *feet like brass* (Rev. 2:18).
 2. Jesus promised to reward overcomers with *hidden manna*, *a white stone* with a new name (Rev. 2:17), *power to rule the nations* (Rev. 2:26), and *the morning star* (Rev. 2:28). These are the positive blessings of restraining our flesh because of our love for Jesus.