

Series: The Blessing Book

Text: Revelation 2:18-29

Title: When Culture Becomes A Curse

If you have been with us you know this already but if you havent been with us we are studying the book of Revelation in search of a blessing each time we do as Revelation 1:3 reminds us, **“God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.”**

We are studying the letters to 7 churches that form an oblong-like circle in what is known as modern-day Turkey.

The 7 churches represent the church as a whole. The number 7 represents completion. It's referred to as God's number.

I find it interesting that the 7 churches all within the same time period and in the same part of the world, dealing with much of the same

circumstances of life, all have different strengths and commendations from Jesus. Every church faces something unique much like the church community today. Every church faces unique challenges and Jesus is aware of what every church is going through and He cares!

We learn right away that there are no perfect churches because there are no perfect Christians.

So far, we have looked at three churches...

Ephesus:

- Strengths: Hard work, patient endurance, refusal to tolerate evil, discernment against false apostles.
- Weaknesses: Left their first love.

Smyrna:

- Strengths: Spiritual richness despite suffering and poverty, faithful under persecution.
- Weaknesses: None mentioned.

Pergamum:

- Strengths: Loyal to Christ even in a hostile environment, the city of Satan's throne.
- Weaknesses: Some follow false teaching (Balaam, Nicolaitans), moral compromise. (They were not bringing the false teaching into the church, some began attending the pagan temples and participating in their practices.

Last week I shared with you...

Why do believers compromise?

Fear of rejection

Desire for pleasure

Pressure to fit the culture

Avoiding confrontation

Pergamum's challenge wasn't what they believed but what they tolerated.

Frog in the Kettle Science Experiment: Put a frog into a kettle of water at room temperature and raise it one degree at a time until the frog is acclimated and then turn the heat up one degree

until you boil the frog to death without the frog jumping out of the pot of water.

Compromise is a slippery slope. That's what compromise does to us... one degree at a time.

As we study the church at Thyatira we find a church that is compromising their faith as they practice tolerance towards the pagan religions.

So, as we study the 7 churches here in Revelation chapters 2-3 we need to be asking ourselves a couple of really important questions,

1. What kind of church are we corporately?
2. What kind of church am I individually?

Maybe the difficulty in studying the 7 letters to the churches in Revelation chapter 2 we are confronted with ourselves. I know that has been the case for me.

It's a lot easier to read the bible as a story or as history or to watch the Chosen on television than to open up the bible and begin with Jesus

confronting each and everyone of us here today first and foremost by saying **“He who has an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying.”**

So as we read Revelation 2:18-29 this morning lets not wait for God to ask us to have ears to ear, lets ask Him to give us ears that hear what the Spirit is saying and wanting to speak to us today. Make it your prayer as I am making it mine, God give me ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to me today and help me to have the faith to walk in obedience to what You call me to do.

The Message to the Church in Thyatira
18 “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze:
19 “I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.
20 “But I have this complaint against you.

You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. 22 “Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve. 24 “But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching (‘deeper truths,’ as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you 25 except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come. 26 To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, to them I will give authority over all the nations. 27 They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.

28 They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star! 29 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”

Lets pray...

So lets start with the question... what is the Spirit saying here and what is it that He wants each of us to understand?

Don't compromise the Word of God, and don't tolerate those who do.

Understand the bible is not one of many books of God. Our bible doesnt contain the Word of God, the bible is the very Word of God!

Men didn't write the bible, men were moved by the Holy Spirit and they penned the Word of God. They were human instruments.

Its not my opinion... I tell you all the time my opinion does not matter.

This is personal... God is speaking to you.

Jesus writes a letter to a church here in Thyatira that has dropped its guard and has let the world in.

Verse 18: **18 “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze:”**

The name Thyatira means “**perpetual sacrifice or continual offering**”.

The letter to the Church in Thyatira is the longest of the seven letters Jesus writes, although Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities.

Thyatira was a commercial city with numerous

guilds, each with its own temple and god. A woman known as a chief prophetess presided over one temple for fortune-tellers.

Thyatira also produced the most expensive garments in that part of the world; workers took a special shellfish from the Mediterranean Sea, known as a murex, and extracted purple dye from it, using the dye to color wool (see Acts 16:14).

Thyatira was a very resourceful city. If your clothes were from Thyatira you were somebody.

Most expensive clothes...

What are you wearing... Kirkland jeans!

Jesus introduces Himself to this church as the Son of God—the only time that term is used in Revelation.

It speaks of authority. The Son of God comes with eyes of burning fire and feet of brass, both of which suggest judgment.

In Revelation 1 Jesus says to John to write the things you have seen... Jesus revealed Himself in all His glory to John to show that He is superior to all the false gods of the world.

Revelation 1:8 **“I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,” says the Lord God. “I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One.”**

Revelation 1:13-16, **“And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. 14 His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. 15 His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. 16 He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance.”**

Jesus keeps repeating His attributes, a direct conflict to the gods who were worshipped in Thyatira.

I lived, I died, I rose again... I am the Son of God... Jesus is the one and only mediator between heaven and earth... The world had lost sight that Jesus is the only begotten son of God, God in the flesh.

Apollo, eyes as of fire
Heleus... feet of bronze

Jesus makes it clear He is the great... "I am"

Verse 19: Verse 19: **"I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things."**

What kind of church are we when God examines us?

Thyatira was outstanding in several ways. It was not lacking in good works, love, service, faith, and patient endurance. In fact, its works were increasing in quantity rather than declining.

Verse 20: **“But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols.”**

This letter also has a stronger opening. Jesus begins with judgment and severe words, and yet He speaks out of His relationship with the church from within it.

The church at Thyatira was tolerating some false doctrine taught by a woman in their midst, and somehow, no one seemed disturbed by her immoral teaching which resulted in immorality and idolatry being practiced.

The church had permitted a self-proclaimed prophetess named Jezebel to lead God's servants into sin. Just as Jezebel in the OT had corrupted God's people with fornication and idolatry, so this woman taught that Christians could engage in these practices without sinning.

Perhaps she encouraged the believers to join the trade guilds of Thyatira, even though this involved honoring the guild god or goddess and participating in festivals where food was sacrificed to idols. She doubtless justified this compromise with the world on the ground that it would allegedly advance the cause of the church.

Jezebel's doctrine challenged the exclusivity of Christ...

Jezebel's doctrine is God cares only about your sincerity. You hear Christians say more and more, "when it comes to faith in God, what religion you hold to isn't as important as your sincerity to what you believe. It's as if the most important characteristic about you is that you

are sincere.

This woman, “Jezebel.” This was probably not her real name but her spiritual nickname.

Some commentators identify her with the prophetess from the temple of fortune-tellers, a woman who had some kind of conversion experience. The church evidently allowed her to teach because of her stature in the community. She began seducing members of the church with doctrines that encouraged sexual immorality, much like the Jezebel of the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 16–21; 2 Kings 9).

Jezebel: To understand Jezebel’s impact on Israel, we must understand the world she came from: Phoenicia, a wealthy, powerful, and deeply pagan civilization whose worship practices stood in direct opposition to the God of Israel.

Jezebel’s Background: A Princess of Phoenicia: Born Into Power. Jezebel was a Phoenician princess

Daughter of Ethbaal (also known as Ithobaal), king of the Sidonians, (1 Kings 16:31)

Ethbaal: A former high priest of Astarte (Ashtoreth), A usurper-king who seized the throne. According to historical sources (including Josephus), Ethbaal merged political and religious power.

Jezebel grew up in a court where: Royal authority and pagan priesthood were intertwined. Baal and Ashtoreth worship were the state religion. Human authority was absolute. Demonic spirituality infused daily life. This shaped her worldview long before she ever entered Israel. The Phoenicians believed that economic prosperity as evidence of divine favor and that Sexual expression as part of worship. Sacrifice—including child sacrifice—were seen as a path to blessing. Political power is intertwined with priestly authority. This produced a society rich in culture but corrupted in morality.

Jezebel's Entrance Into Israel. When Jezebel

married Ahab (1 Kings 16:31): A political alliance was formed

But a spiritual invasion began as Jezebel did not “convert” to Yahweh.

Instead, she brought: Her prophets, Her rituals, Her religious dominance. She introduced Baal worship on a national scale:

Watch the progression... compromise is never upward... its a downward spiral...

Built a temple and altar for Baal in Samaria (1 Kings 16:32)

Installed 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah (1 Kings 18:19)

Imported Phoenician religious systems

She persecuted God’s prophets: “Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord.” (1 Kings 18:4)

She replaced true worship with pagan worship.

Israel went from: Worshipping Yahweh alone to a syncretistic mixture of Yahweh + Baal to Open Baal worship as state religion

5. How Phoenician Practices Corrupted Israel

A. Sexualized Worship

Temple prostitution directly opposed the holiness God demanded.

Israel was seduced into: Ritual sexual immorality. Canaanite-style fertility rites. Mixed Yahweh worship with erotic practices

B. Idolatry and Syncretism

Israel adopted: Images of Baal, Asherah poles, Household idols, Pagan feast days, This broke the first two commandments outright.

C. Reversal of Spiritual Authority

Jezebel: Silenced true prophets, Elevated false prophets, Manipulated Ahab, Controlled national worship

This perverted God's design for leadership.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:15, “**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing**”—that is, they use the right names and spiritual words and language—“**but inwardly they are ravenous wolves**”.

There are three easy tests for spotting a wolf in sheep's clothing:

1. the test of character. Does their teaching foster holiness?
2. the test of creed. Does their teaching focus on Jesus as the Son of God who came to die for sinners?
3. the test of converts. Do their followers bear godly fruit?

What Are The Traits of the “Jezebel Spirit”

Scripture shows a recognizable pattern:

1. Idolatry: Drawing hearts away from worship of the true God.

2. Immorality: Blending pagan practices with faith.

3. Manipulation and control: Using power, fear, or influence to dominate.

4. False spirituality: Claiming prophetic authority

without alignment to God's Word.

5. Opposition to true prophetic voices:
Attempting to silence or intimidate godly leadership.

War Plan of Satan:

1. Ephesus... so busy they left their love...
2. Smyrna... persecution so great they gave in and called Ceaser Lord...
3. Pergamum began to embrace other faiths so that they would compromise the Word of God...
4. Thyatria... both compromise and tolerance to build, fill the church...

Pictures of churches with all kinds of flags and signs to signal inclusion, not of sinners in need of a Savior, but all faiths and practices merged into one, a so-called Christian service where all faiths are practiced together.

Pluralism... where every faith is accepted but they stick to themselves.

Syncretism... the fusion of two or more differing beliefs into one.

Jeremiah 7:15-18, “**15 And I will send you out of my sight into exile, just as I did your relatives, the people of Israel.’ 16 “Pray no more for these people, Jeremiah. Do not weep or pray for them, and don’t beg me to help them, for I will not listen to you. 17 Don’t you see what they are doing throughout the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18 No wonder I am so angry! Watch how the children gather wood and the fathers build sacrificial fires. See how the women knead dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. And they pour out liquid offerings to their other idol gods!”**

The doctrine of Jezebel... infiltrates the church...

Doctrine of the queen of heaven...

Doctrine of Mary as a mediator between us and God

What the Catholic Church teaches about Mary

- She is the Mother of Jesus, and therefore Mother of God (because Jesus is fully God and fully man).
- She was conceived without original sin (the Immaculate Conception).
- She remained a virgin before, during, and after Jesus' birth (Perpetual Virginity).
- At the end of her earthly life, she was taken body and soul into heaven (Assumption).
- She is honored as the greatest of the saints and a model of perfect discipleship.

Why Catholics pray to Mary

Catholics do not worship Mary. Worship is given to God alone.

They pray to her for the same reason people ask a saintly person on earth to pray for them—because:

- Catholics believe the saints in heaven can intercede (pray on behalf of others).
- Mary, as Jesus' mother, is considered the most powerful intercessor.
- Asking Mary to "pray for us" is seen as asking a trusted, holy figure to bring petitions to God.

The miracle of Cana... do people forget that even Mary's words were **"whatever my son tells you to do, do it"**

Speaking of compromise and tolerance...

Women Senior Pastors

Strict Chronological Timeline (1900–2025)

When each denomination first allowed women to serve as ordained pastors with eligibility for senior/lead pastor roles:

- 1908 — Church of the Nazarene
- 1911 — Free Methodist Church
- 1935 — Assemblies of God ordains women (partial)

- 1956 — Methodist Church / United Methodist Church
- 1956 — Presbyterian Church (USA)
- 1957 — United Church of Christ
- 1970 — Lutheran Church in America (LCA)
- 1970 — American Lutheran Church (ALC)
- 1976 — Episcopal Church (USA)
- 1976 — Evangelical Covenant Church
- 1979 — Reformed Church in America
- 1985 — American Baptist Churches USA
- 1988 — Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
- 1990 — Assemblies of God formally recognizes women eligible for senior pastor roles
- 1990s — Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (congregational)
- 1995 — Christian Reformed Church begins ordaining women
- 2007 — Christian Reformed Church removes classis restrictions (senior-pastor eligibility enabled)
- Early 2000s — Foursquare Church clarifies women may be senior pastors
- 2006–2015 — Vineyard USA fully affirms

women as senior pastors

- 2022 — Church of God (Cleveland, TN) grants women full ordination as bishops (senior-pastor eligible)

Denominations (1900–2025) that Do NOT Allow Women as Senior Pastors

- Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)
- Calvary Chapel (CCA and CCGN)
- Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
- Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS)
- Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA) —
Now ordains women (2023), but senior pastor/
elder role still restricted to men
- Seventh-day Adventist Church
- Eastern Orthodox Churches
- Roman Catholic Church
- Independent Fundamental Baptist (IFB)
churches
- Many non-denominational conservative
churches (polity varies)

Verses 21-23: **21 I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. 22 “Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.”**

There is no such thing as the gospel without repentance...

1. Reasons for the Decline in Preaching Repentance:

Fear of Offending: Some ministers avoid the topic of repentance because they worry it will be controversial or make them seem judgmental and old-fashioned [3].

Desire for Church Growth: Some churches prioritize attracting and retaining members by focusing on a more positive and less confrontational message [2][4]. They may believe that emphasizing repentance will deter people from attending [4].

Influence of "Seeker-Sensitive" Movement: Some churches focus on being relevant and appealing to non-believers by providing entertainment or motivational speeches instead of convicting sermons [1][5].

Cultural Accommodation: Some churches adopt ideologies that prioritize human comfort and "your truth" over biblical principles, leading to a downplaying of sin and the need for repentance [1].

Compromised Leadership: Some pastors may promote false teachings or prioritize personal agendas over delivering God's Word, thus avoiding difficult topics like sin and repentance [1][6].

Comfort with Sin: Society's increasing acceptance of sin has led some Christians to become more comfortable with it, reducing the urgency to preach repentance [7].

Focus on felt needs: Churches may focus on meeting people's immediate, practical needs without addressing the underlying need for repentance and spiritual transformation [6].

Verses 24-25: **24 “But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching (‘deeper truths,’ as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you
25 except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come.**

The enticement of false teachers is to reveal to you some hidden meaning or new deeper truth or understanding that Jesus says is not the deeper truths of God but of Satan.

The last years of Pastor Chuck's life he would say over and over again, **“Stay The Course.”**

I'll never forget a statement that Pastor John Courson would always remind the church when he spoke, **“If its true its not new and if its new its not true.”**

Verse 26: **“To all who are victorious (overcomers), who obey me to the very end, to them I will give authority over all the nations.”**

One of the apostle John's favorite words for believers was “overcomer”. John used the word in its various forms 7 times in 1 John, and 17 times in the book of Revelation.

Each of the letters to the seven churches ends with a promise of reward to the one who overcomes.

Who are the victorious ones, the

overcomers? Its not a special group of believers or “super saints”.

In 1 John 5:4-5, we read that all believers are overcomers.

1 John 5:4-5, “**4 For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. 5 And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.**”

1 John 5:4-5 (NKJV) it reads, “**4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

Heres the BLESSING. If you are Born Again today, if you have placed your hope and trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation **YOU** are an overcomer because Jesus has overcome the world!

The worlds system will uses you and abuse you then lose you! Jesus came to set you free from the power of the worlds system.

Verses 27-28: **“They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.”**
28 They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!

At Jesus first coming He came born as a baby into this world. Thats what Christmas is all about. John writes in his gospel Jesus did not come into the world to judge the world but to save the world but at Jesus Second Coming He is returning to judge the world and those who have placed their hope and trust in Him will return with Him to rule and reign during the 1000 year period known as the Millennium.

BLESSING: Those in Christ will return with Him and rule and reign with Him in glory!

I don't know about you but look forward to the time when what's spiritually correct will

take precedence over what's politically correct.

Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus says when He returns at the Second Coming He will judge the world, and in verse 46 Jesus says, **“And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”**

Regarding the **“Morning Star”**

Mark Hitchcock writes in his book, “The Revelation Answer Book”,

“The term morning star is often associated with the planet Venus, which appears brightly in the sky in the early morning hours before the day dawns. Many make a connection here to the symbol of Venus that the Roman legions carried on their banners to represent Roman invincibility. Jesus could be employing this imagery to underscore that all sovereign power belongs to Him and His followers, not Rome or any other earthly, pagan power.

“The view I prefer is that the morning star is a reference to the rapture of believers to heaven to be with Christ before the dark hours of the tribulation that precede the glorious dawn of the millennial kingdom.”

Jesus is our bright and Morning Star and He is both our Rearder and our Reward!

Philippians 3:14 **“I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.”**

Philippians 3:20 **“But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.”**

Verse 29: **“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”**

