

Revelation 2:18-29 Thyatira – Jezebel’s Lair

How many of you know a girl or woman named Mary? Elizabeth, Sarah, Rebekah, Abigail, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah??

How many know a girl or woman named Jezebel??

That one is not very common or popular. Why?

In contrast to the other female names mentioned, Jezebel conjures up a bad vibe. The name is best known for the wicked wife of King Ahab, who was one of the worst kings of Israel. His wife, Jezebel, earned a notorious reputation for her wicked ways as well.

In fact she became a byword as we’ll see in this letter from Jesus to the church in Thyatira.

Message to Thyatira

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

19 ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bondservants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

24 But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Beale – We Become What we Worship:

The general main point of chapters 2-3 can be formulated in the following manner: **Christ encourages the churches to witness, warns them about compromise and exhorts them to “hear” and to overcome compromise in order to inherit the promise of eternal life with him.**

The refrain, “he who has ears, let him hear” is similar to the rebuke from the OT PROPHETS because the people did not listen to the Lord their God. I’ve been reading through the prophets and keep coming across this refrain, “they did not listen”. Having ears but not listening means that the people have become like their idols – Beale – We become what we worship p. 245

Jesus is warning the churches to hear, listen, and respond while they still can.

Jesus is saying to these churches, and to us, “hearing God’s truth and responding appropriately will result in overcoming.”

** People who don’t listen to sound words of advice usually end up doing foolish things.

OVERVIEW:

- ❖ Description of Jesus v. 18
- ❖ As we’ve seen in the first three letters, Jesus gives a commendation, v. 19
- ❖ The REBUKE Jesus shows that the “Jezebel” issues are more serious than we might think, i.e. “the deep things of Satan”. V. 20-25

- ❖ The consequence for not listening
- ❖ Jesus then closes with the promise to those who overcome. V. 26-29

First a bit of background on Thyatira:

D. Johnson – Triumph of the Lamb p. 74

While Thyatira was the smallest of the cities addressed, this is the longest letter and is the centerpiece of the 7 letters.

Thyatira had been a military outpost on the western border of the kingdom of Seleucus, who ruled from Antioch in Syria. Located in the middle of a broad valley, Thyatira was an easy target for capture, so it had changed hands repeatedly in the ebb and flow of eastern Mediterranean politics. Thyatira's identity was molded by commerce and manufacturing industries, each dominated by a trade guild dedicated to a patron god or goddess. Among the trades most in evidence in the archaeological remains are metalworking and the dying of fabrics. Lydia, who became a believer at Philippi in Macedonia, was an exporter of purple cloth from Thyatira (Acts 16:14). The influence of the economic sphere of life, exemplified in the trade guilds, challenges the church's fidelity.

THE DESCRIPTION OF Jesus v. 18

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

This title, “Son of God” is a proclamation that confronts the pagan idolatry of the city. The Romans would refer to their local gods or the emperor as ‘sons of Zeus.’ The image of Christ given here is also seen in Daniel 10, 6, 16 and Rev 19:12 – Christ who comes on a white horse to judge and wage war.

THE COMMENDATION: ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first

Wow, that is great. They didn’t rest on their laurels or take the foot off the accelerator. It seems that they were wanting to end well in love, faith, service, and perseverance. They had greater deeds than at first. O that this would be true of us individually, as families, and as a church. They would have loved for the letter to have stopped there, but alas, Jesus had more to say to them.

Again, we get a glimpse of the Jesus that may rub us the wrong way. Our STEPFORD Jesus who is just a gentle baby in a manger or a loving healer and friend of sinners, shows why, though he is good, He’s not always “safe.” V. 20-23 **He is the one who searches the minds and hearts; and will give to each one of you according to your deeds.**

That is meant to be a sobering proclamation of warning from Jesus. He knows our tendency to wander and lose our zeal, so he gives this reminder as a spiritual wake up call. We should see this as a KINDNESS from Jesus.

THE REBUKE

The church at Ephesus had lost their first love, though they were solid in examining doctrine. The church of Thyatira was strong in love and deeds but had a serious flaw in terms of theology and compromise.

Jesus applauded their love and deeds, but He rebuked them for their tolerance of idolatry and immorality.

20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bondservants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality

(This is one reason why we don’t see many women named Jezebel)

Jesus indicates that the issues are more serious than we might normally think. He refers to the so called “deep things of Satan”.

That's not language coming from some wild-eyed tin foil hat wearing religious zealot. This is Jesus talking. While I'm slow to count things as Satanic, Jesus was willing to go there. He is not unaware of the wiles and schemes of the devil.

D. Johnson..."The ancient Jezebel wielded her influence to seduce Israelites into Baalism (I Kings 16:30-33; 2 Kings 9:22, 30- 37). This prophetess is seducing Jesus' servants to "commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20). Despising the gospel of Christ because it is so simple and so public, leaving no secrets hidden from the uninitiated, the prophetess promised insight into "deep things," which Jesus labels Satan's deep things."

The idolatry of Jezebel was most likely that of teaching that one can worship something alongside of Jesus. That would fit in with the culture that had multiple gods. In such worship, people could secure their jobs because the rituals of idolatry were most often associated with a trade guild. Such rituals often involved sexual immorality as well.

There is no sin that does more spiritual or relational damage than sexual immorality. For Satan, the return on investment is EXPONENTIAL.

*** In case you haven't noticed, there has been a trend to sexualize our culture and it comes through entertainment industry, media, education special interest groups, and government. Sensuality is used to sell just about everything. Under the guise of "sex education" young children are taught about all sorts of behaviors that I won't mention from the pulpit. You may say, "That's just in CA or WA." FOR NOW.

What was once seen and celebrated as the healthy biblical norm for society – a nuclear family- of mom, dad, and kids is now ridiculed in many sectors. Some social movements are intent on destroying that family structure. The definitions of marriage, man, and woman have been so subverted that we can barely speak of any of them without all sorts of alphabet qualifiers.

Friends, this WAS NO ACCIDENT. It was and is Jezebel at work. Much could be said here, but I'll simply reference one source:

1985 [After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90s](#)

It was a strategic guidebook on how to normalize a certain aspect of the sexual revolution. They succeeded **The movement should eagerly ally itself with large, mainstream groups that can actually advance our interests (e.g., the Democratic Party, the National Organization for Women, or the Presbyterian Church).**P.182

In scripture, there is a reason why spiritual idolatry is compared to adultery rather than to shop lifting, gossip, gluttony or slander. The relationship that God has with His people is deeply personal, not transactional. Israel and the church are seen as a bride who is the object of God's redeeming love. Idolatry is a rejection of the love of God while your heart gets in bed with something else.

Idolatry is more about violating a relationship than breaking a rule.

Thus, spiritual idolatry is not always literal sexual immorality. The image of sexual immorality is a pointer or picture of participation in idolatrous activity. Revelation 18 points out how the idolatry manifested itself in the pursuit of wealth, luxury, and sensual living.

The language of adultery underscores the importance of the heart relationship issue in idolatry.

THE SIN UNDER THE SIN

As PCA pastor and friend, Mark Auffarth, points out, a big part of the sin of the people is not just the external sin of idolatry and immorality but the internal heart sin of saying that **God is not enough and that he will not take care of us.** That is why people are willing to compromise in their work environment or elsewhere because they're afraid the God will not provide. We simply don't trust God.

The 1st century compromise seemed to be driven by the threat of economic loss, prison or death. The cultic idolatry of the city involved trade guild related religious rituals, often accompanied by immorality. There was pressure to go along to keep your job and to fit in.

We may take the path of compromise because we think it is the easiest road to gaining acceptance by the wider community. Underlying this is the sin of valuing the acceptance of man above the acceptance that we have in Christ.

Here's the dirty little secret of compromise with the world: Unless you go whole hog, they'll still hate you. If you hold out on any aspect of the cultural agenda or fail to celebrate any aspect of the moral revolution, they'll still hate you. For Christians that means simply affirming the bare minimum – God exists, and Jesus saves – will put you outside of the “accepted crowd”.

<http://www.johnrepici.com/Misc/TheInnerRing.pdf>

**EX: I recommend the C S Lewis essay – the Inner Ring 1944
I believe that in all men's lives at certain periods... one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and the terror of being left outside.**

My main purpose in this address is simply to convince you that this desire is one of the great permanent mainsprings of human action.... Unless you take measures to prevent it, this desire is going to be one of the chief motives of your life, from the first day on which you enter your profession until the day when you are too old to care. ... If you do nothing about it, if you drift with the stream, you will in fact be an “inner ringer.”

Of all the passions, the passion for the Inner Ring is most skillful in making a man who is not yet a very bad man do very bad things.

Once the first novelty is worn off, the members of this circle will be no more interesting than your old friends. Why should they be? You were not looking for virtue or kindness or loyalty or humor or learning or wit or any of the things that can really be enjoyed. You merely wanted to be “in.” And that is a pleasure that cannot last. As soon as your new associates have been staled to you by custom, you will be looking for another Ring. The rainbow's end will still be ahead of you. The old ring will now be only the drab background for your endeavor to enter the new one.

Here's the idolatry test question: AM I WILLING TO DISOBEY God in order to get what I think I need or want?

If so, that thing has become an idol, a functional God that “I must have”. Our idols will never forgive or satisfy us.

Jezebel and the world want to squeeze you into their mold. They want to lure you with the thought of being in the “inner ring.” But it is a fool's paradise and won't satisfy. **If they can get you to believe the unthinkable, then the unimaginable becomes possible.**

EX: “If the cluster of cells in the womb is not a person, then it can be terminated at ANY TIME.”
“If gender is fluid, then men can be women and you have to CELEBRATE IT.”

THE CONSEQUENCE V.21- 25

v. 21 the false prophetess, Jezebel, did not repent but continued to lead people astray. That is also the case of the harlot Babylon in Rev 18:23.

**Once again, we see the warning about the dangers of false teaching. Jezebel reappears throughout the church age in different forms.

In these letters to the churches, we see how one who is associated with the 'deep things of Satan' can creep into the church and even find a following. Watch out for "new and deeper" truths that DENY the teaching of scripture.

EX: Mohler 10/8/21 Atonement doctrine does moral harm- Christian Century Magazine
<https://albertmohler.com/2021/10/08/briefing-10-8-21>
<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/how-my-mind-has-changed/epidemic-moral-injury>

The claim in this article is that the biblical understanding of substitutionary atonement is a form of moral injury upon human beings. We are injured morally by such a doctrine that would say that God demands a satisfaction for sin and that that satisfaction required the death of the Lord, Jesus Christ on the cross. We are told that that is now a form of moral injury.

Apparently, "moral injury" to our psyche or self-esteem is the great sin.

Mohler: "Notice, she is rejecting biblical Christianity not because she misunderstands it, but precisely because she understands it and she will have nothing of it"

Don't mess with spiritual fire, i.e. the consequences can be deadly.

v. 23 , **THIS IS A SOBER WARNING –and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.**

Christ, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, sees through the outer veneer that we put on, and He searches our minds and hearts. He also gives room for repentance to those who will hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Those who come to Christ will not be cast out – THE HOPE UNVEILED.

THE PROMISE TO THOSE WHO OVERCOME 26 -29

Those who overcome will be given a share in the Messianic kingdom promised in Ps 2. THE OVERCOMING OCCURS IN THIS LIFE, not the one to come. **We overcome when we see the seduction of idols and run to Christ so that we might say no to compromise by saying 'yes' to the love of God in Christ.**

*** Again, a sober warning and promise for believers to hold fast to Christ even in the face of loss, persecution, and death.

His life and faithfulness is the example and model for our overcoming. Our union with Him by faith gives us the Holy Spirit and the spiritual capital we need when we are tempted to chase after some idol.

Ps 2:7 refers to 'God's son' which is how this letter to Thyatira opens.

v. 28 – The morning star is Jesus as we see in Rev 22:16

Beale/ Kim p. 75 In contrast, the Roman rulers referred to themselves as the sons of Venus, which they saw as the morning star. Here Christ is laying ultimate claim to the title that the earthly imposters used for themselves.

Those who overcome are given status alongside of Christ Himself, such is our union with Him by faith.

It is this union that make THE TABLE so special.

The overcoming Christ is pictured as a Lamb who was slain. The elements before us are a picture and reminder of the Lamb who gave Himself for us.

These elements are given to us as an invitation and an affirmation that we are in the ultimate "INNER RING" through faith in Christ alone.

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