

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    jthomas@fbgbible.org*

**A0521 -- May 22, 2005 – Revelation 2:21-29 – Thyatira: Church of Compromise–**  
**Part 2**

**Structure of Thyatiran Letter**

Recipient, Destination, and Description of Christ (2:18)  
Commendation (2:19)  
Condemnation (2:20-23)  
Exhortation (2:24, 25, 29)  
Promise (2:26-28)

**1 Condemnation (2:20-23)**

***Revelation 2:20 'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My slaves astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 2:21 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 2:22 'Behold, I will throw her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 2:23 '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 works.***

Jezebel's Refusal to Repent. Last week we got through verse 20. This week let's pick up in verse 21. We are still working on the condemnation, particularly of Jezebel and her close associates who are encouraging her teachings and deeds. The **Son of God, the One who has eyes like a flame of fire, and...feet...like burnished bronze, says this: 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.'** In other words, this had been going on for some time and Christ has given **Jezebel** ample opportunity to have a "change of mind" concerning her claims, teachings, and deeds. But she has refused to "**change her mind**". The aorist tense of **I gave** shows that Christ had given **Jezebel** a

definite warning in the past. Someone approached her and warned her to repent. The present tense of **she does not want** signifies that she is set against changing her mind. She will continue her present course of action; calling herself a prophetess (although she is not), teaching false doctrine (which was condemned by Paul), and leading Christ's slaves into acts of immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols. Two actions that were condemned by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:20, 29. Christ goes on to say that she will not change her mind about her **immorality**. She apparently thinks it is not sinful for a Christian to engage in **immorality**. **Immorality** is the Greek word *porneuo* and it has a broad meaning. It does not refer solely to adultery (*moichao*). Rather, it means any form of sexual fornication. So, this word refers to any kind of sexual activity "outside of marriage". This would be particularly difficult to avoid in Thyatira because the guild feasts were always followed by orgies and anyone that was anybody attended these feasts. Jezebel refused to "change her mind" about these practices. She was going to engage in them no matter what and this church was tolerating it (*apheis*). Obviously it would cause many to stumble and it would divide the sheep.

The Punishment of Jezebel and Her Followers. Verse 22 Christ says **behold** (*idou*; cf 1:7) **I will cast her on a bed of sickness**. The words *of sickness* are in italics signifying they are not in the Greek text. The translators are trying to clarify the authors intention but here they confuse things. A **bed** is from the Greek word *klinen* and can refer to a **bed** of sickness but that is obviously too mild a punishment in this context. Her followers will be cast into the great tribulation. Why would the ring-leader only get sick and bed-ridden. Therefore, the **bed** is a symbol which is defined by the rest of the verse, particularly by the words **great tribulation**. **Those who commit adultery with her...will be cast into great tribulation**. Both **Jezebel** and **those who commit adultery with her** are going to be cast into the same place. So, we conclude that the **bed** is a symbol of the **great tribulation**. **Those who commit adultery with her** are her close associates, her closest disciples who encourage and engage in her acts. They share the same fate. They are all destined for the **great tribulation** unless they repent. Notice also the phrase **thrown into** (*ballo eis*). In other places in the Bible we find that phrase referring to the ultimate destiny of unbelievers; eternal separation from God. So, this terminology demonstrates that Jezebel and those who commit adultery with her are not believers at all. Therefore, if Christ comes they will be **cast into the great tribulation**. The imminence of Christ's coming is once again mentioned in v. 25 ("hold fast until I come"). This is the first mention of the **great tribulation** in the Book of Revelation and we have to identify what it refers to. We've seen the Church at Ephesus enduring "tribulation" but this is something different. This is more than general affliction. This is a reference to the future 7 year tribulation on earth (Rev 7:14). Jesus warned of this day of distress in Matt 24:21.

**Matthew 24:21** <sup>21</sup> "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

This time is also known as Jacob's Trouble, the Day of the Lord, the day of distress, et. al. It is the most horrible time the world will ever experience. Notice in our context that Jesus connects the **great tribulation** of v 24 with the words "**hold fast until I come**" in v 25. Jesus is connecting His imminent coming and the future **great tribulation** in an intimate way in this context. Revelation 6-19 will describe in great detail the unparalleled **tribulation** judgments Jezebel and her associates are destined for.

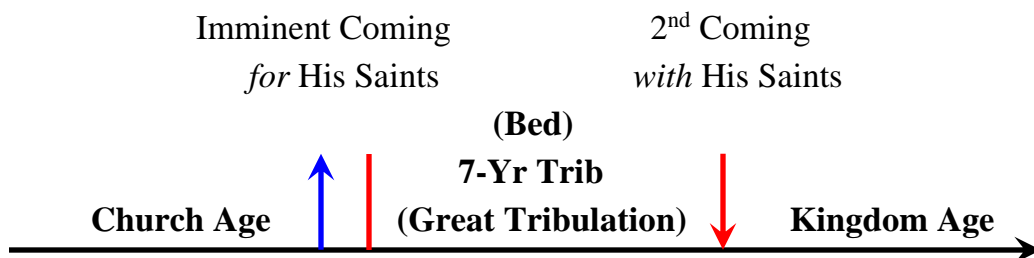
The Way of Escape. As always, however, Christ gives a way of escape. He says they are destined for **the great tribulation** unless they repent of her deeds. Jezebel's destiny is certain, Christ already gave her an opportunity to **repent** but she refused and will continue her present path (v. 21). However, Christ graciously extends an opportunity for her close associates to escape; that way is by **repenting of her deeds**. They must have a "change of mind" about the deeds she is committing. Since these associates are unbelievers then this "change of mind" is a crucial step toward their salvation. There is often a "change of mind" that must take place before a person can come to salvation. Sometimes our beliefs are so contrary to the truth that we must have a change of mind about them before we are able to believe the gospel. This "change of mind" would not be salvation itself because it is only in reference to **her deeds**. They must first have a change of mind about **her deeds** before they will be able to believe the gospel. This is referring to a pre-salvific repentance which is required if they are ever to believe the gospel. Believing the gospel is not a mindless activity. The mind must be involved and these associates must have a "change of mind" about **her deeds** before they can believe the gospel, thus escaping the **great tribulation**. A "change of mind" concerning **her deeds** should prepare their minds for the gospel.

Tribulation Punishments and Demonstration of Omniscience. Verse 23 Christ says, **and I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. her children** are her spiritual followers; those who have embraced her teachings and ways. The threat by Christ is that Jezebel's children will be killed with **pestilence**. This refers to physical death and possibly the 4<sup>th</sup> Seal Judgment (Rev 6:7-8).

**Revelation 6:7-8** <sup>7</sup> When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." <sup>8</sup> I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them

over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

This is one of the verses that indicate that these letters, though written specifically to the seven churches of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, have a prophetic application to the church universal. The Jezebel of Thyatira is dead but there are modern Jezebel's and followers of Jezebel all over the place. Christ's threat of casting them into the **great tribulation** are directly related to the church today so these seven letters are to be taken very seriously. These seven letters are Christ's only evaluation of the church anywhere in the Bible. Do you want to know what Christ thinks about the church? Do you want to know how pure Christ demands that His body become? These seven short evaluations show that Christ's body was a mess just 60 years after its beginning. If we take the NT straightforwardly then the church age is going to end in apostasy. Things are going to get worse. This means the church is not building the kingdom, the church is not bringing in the kingdom, the church is certainly not the kingdom itself, the church is not getting better, but the church is going to end in apostasy. I believe that these seven letters give a general description of all possible problem areas in local churches and Christ is giving the answers to these problems. Is it possible that we don't take these letters serious enough? Is it possible that we just slam all the application back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century and think of ourselves as exempt? I think it is. We need to ask "what aspects of these churches have application to our church?" I can't do anything about Joe Blow's church down the street. But I can do something here at this one. I can draw out Christ's threats to the churches and try to help Him stir you up to action. If we don't take these letters seriously this lighthouse in Fredericksburg, TX will be put out. That's not funny knowing all that's been invested in this church and it should not be taken lightly. Christ is calling on each individual believer today to hear what He says through the Spirit to the seven churches and to respond. And He's calling every individual who is not a believer to respond by faith, to trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. If you don't you will be **thrown into a bed; the great tribulation** and will be killed. No unbeliever will live beyond the 7-year tribulation. Every unbeliever will be killed and God will re-populate the earth afterwards starting with a base population composed solely of believers.



Finally, Jesus says “**and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts**”. This too broadens the scope of the application. “The immediate reference is to these seven churches, but in the broader purpose of the book the seven represent the church universal of all times...It will become well known in the future day of the Lamb’s wrath that Jesus is aware of both outward conduct and inward thoughts and motives, and will judge righteously on the basis of such knowledge.”<sup>i</sup> We know it now theoretically; we will know it then by observation (*gnosontai*). The **mind** is the Greek word *nephros* which really refers to the “kidney” (nephrology) but had reference in John’s day to the inner parts of man, particularly his emotions and will. The **heart** is *kardia* and refers to the center of your being where your thoughts take place. Nothing is hidden from Christ. He plumbs the depths of your inner being and knows your innermost thoughts.

Lastly, Jesus says, **and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds**. You say, “doesn’t this imply that salvation is by works and not faith?” No, not at all. One’s works or **deeds** are often stated to be the basis of future judgment because outward **deeds** reflect a person’s inner thoughts, motives and condition (1 Cor 4:5). This is not a judgment for believers (2 Cor 5:10) but a judgment for unbelievers. Although He knows your innermost thoughts He can judge unbelievers on the basis of their **deeds** which will probably be what unbelievers insist God do. It is interesting that most people would rather be judged on their deeds than their heart condition and that Christ will judge them on that basis and in so doing will teach them what absolutes are all about, what justice is all about, what righteousness is all about and that no one measures up. This is the principle of return. Christ will return to every single individual in proportion to the **deeds** he has done. Christ, **the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze** is deity and He has penetrating vision and supernatural intelligence. You cannot hide from God. His feet are ever moving about. He sees all and knows all and like the purity of burnished bronze He will separate the good from the evil **giving** to unbelievers according to their **deeds** and bringing about moral purity in the church. Have you trusted in Him alone? You don’t have time to put off this decision. He could come at any moment. He could come before you get out the door. Will you be found *in* Christ or *outside* of Christ?

### **Exhortation (2:24-25, 29)**

*Revelation 2:24 '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. 2:25 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.*

Now Christ turns to the faithful remnant in the Church; those who do not hold to Jezebel's teaching and have not known the deep things of Satan. Christ places no other burden on them. This faithful remnant are those who Christ commended in v 19 for their works of love, faith, service, and perseverance. Here the faithful remnant is distinguished by **not holding this teaching** (*echo*). They did not hold to her teachings in any sense. Instead, they rejected the deceptive teachings of Jezebel. They have consulted the word of God and have not been deceived by the imposter. Second, they have **not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them**. The kind of knowledge they are claiming is a supernatural type of knowledge, a knowledge that is secret and requires revelation from supernatural beings. They claim knowledge of **the deep things of Satan** whereas Christians are called to know **the deep things of God** (1 Cor 2:10). This is no less than Satan worship. While there is deep knowledge of Satan Christians are never to strive to attain it. For one, Satan and his demons can reveal themselves to humans under God's permissive decree. However, what is revealed comes from the father of lies. What Satan says may sound good and may even contain truth but you are far too limited to a being to play with this. Many people confuse a vision or revelation they had with a message from God. They think it was God who revealed something to them. This is not possible. The Greek structure of the closing words of Revelation shows that God is no longer revealing anything period (Rev 22:18-19). The word of God is totally sufficient. Any claim to esoteric knowledge in the present cannot have come from God. It may have come from a supernatural being, but that supernatural being is not the God of light (1 John 1:5) but Satan disguised as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14).

The reason Jezebel and her followers claimed to **have knowledge of the deep things of Satan** was to convince others that "they could indulge in idol feasts, including their immorality, without sinning. From their perspective, they looked with scorn on their "weaker" fellow Christians."<sup>ii</sup> Do you see what was happening? This sect was very licentious. This means they used grace as a license to sin. They were saying, "We're saved and nothing can change that so we can engage in any activity. These things are not sinful." What they meant was that they were saved by their secret knowledge, not by Jesus Christ. This was a Gnostic teaching. John wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle against sects that embraced this and other teachings (e.g. 1 John 1:5, 6, 8, 10). Their supposed deeper knowledge gave them license to engage in idol feasts and immorality without sinning; they thought. Anyone who refused to engage in these feasts and immorality was considered a weak Christian, not initiated into the deeper things of Satan. These people probably professed to be Christians but they certainly were not. A Christian would hardly go around bragging about his deep knowledge of the things of Satan.

For those who had rejected these teachings Christ says, **I do not cast on you any other burden.** The faithful are already burdened with resisting the pressure of Jezebel and her followers. The faithful already had to put up with ridicule when they abstained from their evil practices. Jezebel and her followers must bear the wrath of the Lamb in the **great tribulation** but the faithful have no other burden beyond their present resistance and ridicule. “He casts (*ballo*) Jezebel and her children into conditions of unparalleled sufferings (vv. 22-23), but He does not cast (*ou ballo*) upon the faithful anything worse than to keep doing what they already are doing.”<sup>iii</sup>

Exhortation to Hold Fast. Verse 25, Christ says to the faithful, **nevertheless, what you have, hold fast until I come.** What do they already have? They already have the good deeds of v. 19; love, faith, service, and perseverance and they already have rejected Jezebel’s teachings and the deep things of Satan (v. 24). They should **hold fast** these things **until** Christ **comes.** **hold fast** (*krateo*) is used in several of the seven letters (cf. Rev 2:1, 13, 14, 15, 25; 3:11). The phrase “**Hold Fast!**” was probably a motto of the early church. Such a motto would stimulate us to grasp tightly the things of God and not compromise *with* the world or tolerate the world *in* the church. The church is to be a pure, undefiled, called-out people of God. The words **hold fast** are an aorist imperative. The aorist means point action and used here promote the sense of “urgency”. These Christians have integrity and they need to urgently hang on to that **until** Christ **comes.** **until I come** signifies the imminence of Christ’s coming. He may come at-any-moment. We don’t know when He will come but we should **hold fast** *at every moment* because He could come *at any moment.* Following this coming the Tribulation will begin and then the Millennial Kingdom which is mentioned next in the promise to the overcomer.

### **Promise (2:26-28)**

***Revelation 2:26 'He who overcomes, even he who keeps My works until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 2:27 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; 2:28 and I will give him the morning star.***

Promise to Rule the Nations. The promise to the overcomer falls in vv 26-28 and precedes the final exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (v 29). The one **who overcomes** is defined for us in 1 John 5:4-5 as the one who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus was called **the Son of God** in v. 18 at the beginning of this letter. Those who believe this message **overcome** the world system; the tug of the culture. The

**overcomers** are the same group as those **who keeps My deeds until the end**. Good works always follow salvation to some degree though they can never be used as a means of determining salvation. Even the thief on the cross had “peace”, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). **The end** of the struggle to perform good deeds in the Spirit will coincide with Christ’s imminent coming for His saints (pre-trib Rapture). The promise itself is a quotation from Psalm 2. Let’s read Psalm 2, a Messianic Millennial Psalm.

This quotation from Psalm 2 alludes to verses 8 and 9 where the Messiah is promised victory over His enemies. As **overcomers** we will share in the Messiah’s victory over His enemies. As the Messiah was given all authority so we, as fellow **overcomers**, will be given **authority over the nations**. This means we will rule in the Messianic Kingdom over nations of men.

- Gentile Church Saints will rule on the earth in the Millennium *outside* of Israel’s Promised Land
- Jewish Church Saints will rule on the earth in the Millennium *inside* Israel’s Promised Land
- All resurrected saints will have an intense hatred of sin and total devotion to Christ, truth, holiness, justice, and righteousness.

We will rule **with a rod of iron**. This means our rule will be a fierce, violent rule. Of course, a violent rule is required to maintain righteousness on the earth. A strong promise is required in light of Christ’s strong hatred for false teaching such as Jezebel’s. The **rod itself** is a powerful royal scepter which will shatter the power of Christ’s enemies, and He allows the **overcomers** to share this conquest with Him. We are getting a preview of the Messiah’s Conquest. There have been many great military leaders but Jesus Christ is the greatest Military Leader. No one can even challenge Him. As Psalm 2 said, the kings and rulers of the earth, the presidents, the great dictators, take their stand against Him and counsel against Him and the Lord who sits in the heavens laughs, He scoff at them. It is very important for a military commander to know His enemy. Clearly the world’s kings and rulers in the last days will not know their enemy. They can take all the counsel they want against Him and any measure they might imagine but the Lord searches the minds and the hearts of men. He knows all, He sees all, He cannot be escaped and He will mete out judgment against His adversaries. As **overcomers** we will share in this dominating victory over our enemies.

The text says that the way we will **rule them with a rod of iron** is **as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces**. This describes how utterly devastating the conquest of the Messiah and His followers will be. Vessels of a potter are made of clay which is cooked



and becomes quite brittle. “Such material when struck with a sharp blow shatters into hundreds of pieces, a graphic picture of the collapse of the Messiah’s enemies at their future confrontation with Him.” God was pleased to crush the Messiah in your place at the 1<sup>st</sup> Coming but the Messiah will crush His enemies at His 2nd Coming. You may think this all sounds really mean and cruel but it’s not at all. God is righteous and just (i.e. holy). He can never compromise His righteousness or His justice. He can’t just weigh our good versus our bad works and see which outweighs the other (like Allah). You either trust in Christ who satisfied the righteous indignation of the Father or you reject Christ’s satisfaction. If you reject you are condemned for not believing in the only begotten (John 3:18). God has every right to smash His enemies for rejecting Him because He provided a loving means of escape and we as overcomers in Christ will be given the right to rule and smash His enemies (who are also our enemies) as well because we will be totally devoted to Him and His purposes. This conquest by the Messiah and those with Him will be a complete and total victory.

The closing words of verse 27 give the source of the Messiah’s authority. *as I also have received authority from My Father*. Christ **received authority from His Father** (Jesus is a Son in relation to the Father, again emphasizing His deity). In the same way we will receive authority from Christ.

Promise of Morning Star. Verse 28 gives a second promise to the overcomer. Christ says, **and I will give him the morning star**, but who or what is the **morning star**? Once again there have been many suggestions (Lucifer, resurrection, king of Babylon, sovereignty, Christ Himself) but the best interpretation is that the **morning star** is the righteousness with which we will shine in the Messianic Kingdom. Those who hold strictly to the truth are rewarded in a similar way in Dan 12:3

**Daniel 12:3** "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Jesus alluded to Dan 12:3 in Matt 13:43 when He said of the Messianic Kingdom,

**Matthew 13:43** <sup>43</sup> "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

The **star of the morning** was thought to be the brightest star and the glory that will follow the Messiah’s conquest in His kingdom will be that of perfect righteousness. So, this points to the righteousness with which we will rule in the kingdom.

## Exhortation (2:29)

*Revelation 2:29 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

Finally we close with the final exhortation. **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.** These words are used to single out individuals in the church who are genuine Christians. Only genuine Christians have been enlightened so that they are able to hear with understanding what the Spirit says. The natural man does not receive the things of God nor is He able to. So, this statement is a very individual statement. If you have ears to hear with understanding then your responsibility is to **hear what the Spirit says** not only to the Thyatiran church but to all **the churches**. That is added here because these messages, while directly applicable to these seven churches, have indirect application to the universal church. The principles that come out of these seven letters are meant to be applied to all similar church circumstances. This is for the building up of the body of Christ.

Review of first four letters:

- Ephesus: Church of Loveless Orthodoxy
- Smyrna: Church of Martyrdom
- Pergamum: Church of Compromise
- Thyatira: Church of Tolerance

If we have elements of loveless orthodoxy, compromise, or tolerance then we need to repent, have a “change of mind” about these sins which should result in a change of behavior and Christ’s blessing.

---

<sup>i</sup> Thomas, Robert, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 223.

<sup>ii</sup> Thomas, Robert, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 227.

<sup>iii</sup> Thomas, Robert, *Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 230.

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)