

## **Revelation Ch. 2: The Seven Churches Part 1**

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It has already been discussed in the introductory material why these seven churches in Asia were the primary recipients of the book of Revelation. Following from that, the first century church was to know the purpose for these troubled times, and the desolation of the beloved city of Jerusalem was to be a stern warning against those who oppose God- a time for self examination and repentance. Surely the church in any century can benefit from these lessons, and “hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

### **Ephesus**

Ephesus was about 70 miles NE of Patmos, the nearest of the churches addressed. It was the capital and principal city of Asia Minor, known for its library, theater (largest in the world at that time), and temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The first Biblical mention of Ephesus occurs in Acts 18:19, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He later came back to the city, and ministered there for about three years (Acts 20:31), longer than he had stayed in any other city. During this ministry, “all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). Before heading to Jerusalem, Paul bid an emotional farewell to the elders in Ephesus and warned them of false teachers that would come in amongst them (Acts 20:17-38). Later, while in prison, Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesians, in which he commended them for their love (Eph. 1:15), and exhorted them to remember all that Christ has done for them (Eph. 1-3), to walk worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1), and to be strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10). Paul also wrote to his dear friend Timothy, whom he left in Ephesus to minister (1 Tim. 1:3).

Tradition holds that the apostle John spent his last days in Ephesus, to which he went after being released from Patmos.

### **Verse 1**

**To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, these things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands**

One cannot help but wonder why certain descriptions of Jesus from Chapter 1 are paired with certain churches in Chapters 2 and 3.

- 1) He who holds the seven stars – Since the stars most likely represent the leadership of the congregation (see 1:16), this is here mentioned because it was the leadership in Ephesus from which the false teachers had arisen (Acts 20:30). They are also symbolic of Jesus' power to refute false teachers through the word, and His protection of those who put on the full armor of God in condemning error (Eph. 6:10-17).
- 2) Who walks in the mist of the seven golden lampstands – This might have to do with the opposite side of the coin. Though the Ephesians were doing right in testing false teachers, they had left their first love, something that would not be apparent to most, but very apparent to Christ, since He walks in our midst.

David Roper summarizes this as symbolic of Christ's power and protection, and also His presence and

perception (p. 110).

## **Verse 2**

**I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars**

Jesus tells each of the churches that He knows their works (see 1:14), by which we all will be judged (2 Cor. 5:10). Ephesus has a number of items of commendation:

- 1) Labor and Patience – They were laboring for the gospel, and enduring hard times from false teachers
- 2) Cannot bear those who are evil – Though struggling with false teachers (1 Tim. 3, 7), they had tested those who were liars (cf. 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Thes. 5:21) and put them out of the church (Eph. 5:11; Tit. 3:10). The evil spoken of is probably not limited to false teaching, but perhaps a general reference to a church that practices proper discipline (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14, 15).

What is an apostle? - The word apostle means “one sent” and carries the idea of men sent by God to fulfill a purpose, to preach the gospel. A true apostle was one who had seen the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:3-7), and who could perform signs that proved it (Acts 5:12; 2 Cor. 12:12). An apostle was not limited to the twelve (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-7; Acts 14:14), and so those who claimed to be such needed to be tested (2 Cor. 11:13; 1 Jn. 4:1).

## **Verse 3**

**And you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary**

They had heeded Paul's warnings in Acts 20 by rejecting false teachers, they had not “burned out” in doing so. They were waiting on and trusting in the Lord (Isa. 40:31).

## **Verse 4**

**Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love**

What does it mean that they left their first love? They no longer had the love they once did when they received the gospel. They were still doing what was right, but the motivation for service was fizzling. The good works and service they did have were now more out of a sense of duty than a love for Christ. They labored, and taught, and persevered because that was expected of Christians, yet they “had not love.” (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Some who hold to a later dating often appeal to the apparent age of the churches, especially Ephesus. They contend that Ephesus could not have left their first love in such a short period of time. Granted, apostasy is gradual (Heb. 2:1), but notice that they had just started to fall away. They were performing correct actions but the proper motivation had gone. Since the church at Ephesus dates to 54 or 55 AD, during Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 19), then an early dating of Revelation would put the church at 10-15 years old. Is that enough time for a church to leave its first love? Absolutely. Notice that the false teachers were to creep in not too long after its establishment, as Paul warned the Ephesian elders in approx. 58-59 AD (Acts 20).

## **Verse 5**

**Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works**

Given the language here and elsewhere in the NT (Heb. 2:1; 3:12; 4:1; 1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; 1

Tim. 4:1; Gal. 5:4), how can anyone believe that apostasy is impossible? Ephesus was laboring, they **had** a proper love at one time, but they had fallen. What should they do? Repent! Repentance demands recognition of sin (remember), and change of action (do the first works). These first works were ones that were done out of love rather than duty.

**Or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent**

What does it mean to have a lampstand removed? Perhaps it refers to a church no longer being recognized as belonging to Christ, or maybe even being dissolved or destroyed. It is worthy of note that Ephesus lies in ruins today.

### **Verse 6**

**But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate**

Keep in mind that they hate the sin, not the sinners (Rom. 12:9; Heb. 1:9). Who exactly were the Nicolaitans? Some have said they were a Gnostic sect that claimed to follow Nicolas (Acts 6:5). One Gnostic belief was that matter was evil, and so Jesus did not come in the flesh (called Docetism; cf. 1 Jn. 4:2,3; 2 Jn. 7). This idea caused some to indulge the flesh with every carnal desire they had, while others did the opposite, abstaining from food and pleasure (asceticism). The former would tie in with the problems in Pergamos, who tolerated the Nicolaitans (2:15), a statement that followed from the acceptance of eating things sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immoral things.

### **Verse 7**

**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**

What does the Spirit say to the churches? Every piece of inspired writing is what the Spirit says (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and so we ought to consult the entire revelation of God regarding our salvation and conduct. The message is applicable today! He who is able to understand, please do so (Matt. 11:15).

**To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.**

While we overcome through Christ (Jn. 16:33; 1 Jn. 2:13, 14; Rom. 8:37; Rev. 17:14), who rendered the devil ultimately powerless against us (Heb. 2:14, 15), we still face a daily struggle that requires us to continue overcoming temptation and sin (1 Cor. 10:13; Rom. 12:21). We overcome by faith (1 Jn. 5:4), the conviction that He will do what is right and we will follow Him no matter the cost (cf. Heb. 11:1; Rev. 2:10).

The tree of life is that which gives immortality (Gen. 3:22). Though this was lost in the Garden of Eden, Jesus has once more provided us access (cf. Rom. 5) to spiritual sustenance both here on earth (Jn. 6:35; Jn. 10:10), and ultimately in heaven, the Paradise of God.

The tree of life provides healing, and is found in the New Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 22:2; 1 Pet. 2:24), a symbol of the righteous (Heb. 12:22, 23), glorified in heaven. For those living at the time of this writing, and for us today, access to the tree of life is found in the Lord's church, one aspect of the New Jerusalem, whose ultimate destination is heaven (1 Cor. 15:24).

### **Smyrna**

Smyrna was located 35 miles N (and slightly W) of Ephesus. It was a beautiful and prosperous city known for worshiping Dea Roma, a deification of the city of Rome. As such, the city had the first

temple dedicated to Roma, and also erected temples to the deified emperors Augustus and Tiberius. Smyrna is not mentioned by name in any other books of the Bible, but perhaps it was founded by Paul during his third journey (Acts 19:10). It is now the modern day city of Izmir.

### **Verse 8**

**And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, these things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life**

As with the other churches, we wonder why this description of Jesus was given to those in Smyrna.

- 1) First and the Last – Smyrna probably boasted of being the first to worship Dea Roma, yet Jesus makes it clear that He is the First, Creator of all things, and the Last, the One who will bring it all to an end. God alone is worthy of worship.
- 2) Who was dead, and came to life – Those who killed Jesus thought they had him beat, but they were wrong. Likewise, things seemed hopeless for those suffering in Smyrna, yet they are assured that there is hope. Just as Jesus suffered and died, and lived again, so also would those in Smyrna (2:10).

### **Verse 9**

**I know you works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)**

Sometimes when enduring troubles, we tend to think that God has forgotten us, but that is not the case. He knows about our troubles, and trials, and sufferings, and yet is working through those events so that everything works out for the better (Rom. 8:28; cf. 2 Tim. 3:12; Jas. 1:1-4).

- 1) Poor yet rich – Although those in Smyrna were suffering greatly, and perhaps as a consequence were poor physically (as were others, cf. Heb. 10:34). It could also have been the case that only the poor of this wealthy city were converted (cf. Jas. 2:5). Whatever the case, Jesus ensures them that they are rich spiritually (Eph. 3:8; Phi. 4:19), which is far better than any physical wealth (Matt. 16:26; 1 Tim. 6:7).
- 2) It is somewhat difficult for those living in such a blessed nation to fully understand what many others in the world go through, and have gone through, every day. It should be a daily habit to reflect on what God has done for us, and thank Him for the physical blessings we often take for granted (1 Tim. 6:17), and above all the spiritual blessings provided by Jesus (Eph. 1:3).

**And I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan**

Two of the seven churches were given no condemnation (Smyrna and Philadelphia), and both had a problem with the synagogue of Satan, who said they were Jews and were not.

The Bible gives a clear definition of what a true Jew really is (Rom. 2:28, 29), and yet we know that many first century Jews did not fit this definition, and so did not become Christians. Even those who had become followers of Christ were tempted to go back to their old ways (see Hebrews). It was this generation of Jews that put Jesus to death (Matt. 27:22-25), beat, stoned, and committed Christians to prison (Acts 5:18; 8:1-3; 22:4; 26:10; 2 Cor. 11:24), confiscated the property of those who converted (Heb. 10:34). Throughout the New Testament, we read over and over again about the problems Paul encountered with seditious Jews in almost every city he went (Acts 17:5-13; 18:12; 20:3; 21:30-32).

Yes, those Jews who persecuted the early church were Jews physically, but nowhere close to the definition spiritually (Rom. 9:6; cf. Jn. 8:44; Matt. 23).

## **Verse 10**

### **Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer**

One of the greatest blessings of Christianity can be found in these words: “Do not fear.” A faithful Christian does not have to fear any suffering or misfortune (Ps. 56), and can know that something wonderful awaits them after death, which is biggest fear for the majority (cf. Heb. 2:15; Matt. 10:28).

These particular sufferings foreseen in Smyrna could be both Jewish and Gentile, especially during this time period. The Jews were still heavily persecuting Christians (v. 9), and likewise the pagans in Smyrna who worshiped Rome (Roma) would cause problems for those who would take part in no such thing. Also, though Christianity was now recognized as a separate religion, there still may have been problems for Christians based on their roots in Judaism, especially due to the trouble in Judea.

### **Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.**

The devil was not going to physically throw anyone into prison, but his influence would cause persecutors to do so (Jn. 8:44). Whether or not the mention of prison is literal or figurative (for more persecution) is irrelevant, these Christians were about to endure yet more hardships, so that they may be tested (Jas. 1:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:6-9).

The period of tribulation would be ten days, which is most likely symbolic for a complete period of time. Since ten was used to convey the idea of complete power, perhaps this refers to the fact that the enemy would have, or seem to have, complete power over these Christians. It could also refer to those in Smyrna being completely troubled, where problems were lurking at every corner. Whatever the case may be, it was a finite period of time, and they would have some means of escaping all temptations to give in to the devil (cf. Jas. 4:7; 1 Cor. 10:13).

### **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**

This part of the verse is often quoted when emphasizing the importance of living faithfully for Christ, however, many are probably unaware of the context in which it is found. Even under intense persecution, when it seems like all hope is lost, and that the best thing to do for yourself, and your family is just to give in to those who are causing you harm, perhaps by simply renouncing your faith in Jesus, remain faithful. Do not give in. Do not give up. Do what is right. Remain faithful even if it means death, and you will receive the crown of life, a symbol of victory and eternal life, for those who overcome the world (cf. Jas. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; 1 Cor. 9:25).

For a graphic description of what some Christians in Smyrna endured (in the second century), see *Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 4.15*.

## **Verse 11**

### **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death**

Those who overcome are the faithful, and so we have their crown of life here contrasted with the second death. The second death is described later in Revelation as the lake of fire (20:14; 21:8), and since the first death is defined as a separation of body and spirit (Jas. 2:26), the second is the eternal separation of the soul from God (cf. 2 Thes. 1:8, 9; Mk. 9:41-48). This separation first occurs when we sin against God (Isa. 59:2; Rom. 3:23; 6:23), and remains unless our sins have been forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5).

## **Pergamos**

Pergamos or Pergamum was located 55 miles N of Smyrna and was known for its temples to many gods, and also the altar of Zeus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This may be one reason why this city was referred to as the home of “Satan's Throne.” It was initially the capital of Asia Minor, before the Romans decided to give that distinction to Ephesus. Pergamos was also known for the development of parchment, and had a large library rivaling that of Alexandria. The lower part of this ancient city is modern day Bergama.

### **Verse 12**

**And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, these things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword**

Since the two-edged sword represents the Word of God (see 1:16), it is likely this description was chosen for Pergamos because there were some there holding to false doctrine. Jesus threatened to come and fight against them with this sword if they did not repent (2:16). It is also a contrast to the weapons used by the persecutors in Pergamos, namely those who killed Antipas (1:13), that no weapon is more powerful than the Word of God, which pierces to the heart of man (Heb. 4:12), and will ultimately judge him (Jn. 12:48).

### **Verse 13**

**I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is**

Jesus was well aware that this city was the center of all kinds of wickedness, and as a center of paganism could be identified as a place where Satan dwelt. Some say that headquartered at Pergamos was the “concilia,” the body in charge of state religion that enforced emperor worship (Summers, p. 114)

**And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells**

Though they were in the midst of all kinds of immorality, they had held fast to the name of Jesus, meaning they still had acknowledged Him as the one having all authority (Col. 3:17; Matt. 28:18).

Their faith was so strong that they had not denied Him even in the darkest days, when Antipas was killed. Notice that it was “My faith” that they had not denied. Christianity is a united religion practicing a *single* system of faith, the one that Jesus reveals in His word (Eph. 4; Jude 3).

There is some discussion on the identity of Antipas, mostly regarding whether or not this was his literal name. The name means “one who opposes” or “against all” and so could symbolize the reason for his martyrdom, because he opposed those who wanted Him to deny the faith. The term “martyr” means, and is elsewhere translated, “witness,” and so we have a picture of Antipas opposing paganism by actively testifying of Jesus.

### **Verse 14**

**But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality**

So far it has sounded like the church at Pergamos was a shining example of holding fast to the faith, however, like Ephesus, there were a few things wrong.

What was the doctrine of Balaam? Balak, dreading what Israel might do to Moab, sent messengers to Balaam, a prophet, and asked him to curse the children of Israel (Num. 22). Balaam resisted for a while, but ended up going to Balak out of greed (Num. 22:21; cf. Jude 11), though could never curse Israel. After he left Balak, the children of Israel began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab (Num. 25:1) and eat and bow down to their gods (Num. 25:2). Balaam is later blamed for having counseled the women to do this (Num. 31:16). He no doubt did this to appease Balak, since he was angry that Balaam had blessed rather than cursed Israel while in his presence (Num. 24:10). Therefore, the doctrine of Balaam appears to be worldly compromise.

There were those in the church holding to (not necessarily teaching) false doctrine. Perhaps those who were faithful were unaware of this (or chose not to take notice), and those who held to these beliefs practiced such things outside of any assembly of the church. While it may seem out of the question today, these practices were quite normal in that society, though forbidden by God (Acts 15:29; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Cor. 8). These may be equivalent to things today like going to a drinking party on Saturday night (cf. 1 Pet. 4:3). It is easy to let things that “seem harmless” creep into our lives, and often times nobody else takes notice, but God notices. This “no big deal” attitude is what got man into trouble from the beginning (Gen. 3), and continues to do so today.

We need to make Christianity a daily practice rather than a once or twice a week “thing we do.”

#### **Verse 15**

**Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate**

Because of the context, we are given a little more information about the Nicolaitans. Since the fact that there were those who held to this doctrine was connected with the problem of sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols (see 2:6). Based on the fact that they were willing to compromise their faith, believing the teachings of Gnosticism (cf. Rom. 6:1) would be no problem.

#### **Verse 16**

**Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth**

How might Jesus fight with His word? This could be some sort of temporal judgment, as in the case of Jerusalem. Since it is a consequence of impenitence, it cannot be a good thing (cf. Heb. 10:31).

If the faithful of the congregation were aware of the problem, which it appears that at least some did, they needed to take care of the problem or Jesus would do it Himself, and they did not want that to happen. It sounds like the church at Pergamos was a congregation that failed to practice church discipline (cf. Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14, 15; Gal. 6:1).

#### **Verse 17**

**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat**

Manna was given to the children of Israel when wandering in the wilderness (Ex. 16), and so represents God-given sustenance. Instead of eating those things sacrificed to idols, those in Pergamos should have been partaking of the true bread of life (Jn. 6:32-58; Matt. 5:6). This hidden manna symbolizes spiritual sustenance provided by God (cf. Eph. 1:3). We do not know or see how things always work out for those who love Him, but they always do (Rom. 8:28).

Just as the tree of life provides immortality (2:7), the hidden manna provides everlasting sustenance (Jn. 6:35).

**And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it**

People used to use white and black stones to show their approval or disapproval (Roper, p. 139; cf. Acts 26:10, vote can be translated pebble or stone). The new name is likely the name “Christian,” or simply symbolic for a renewed spirit or character, or “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4; cf. Isa. 62:1, 2). Besides God, only the individual truly knows if he or she is a Christian (2 Tim. 2:19; 2 Cor. 13:5; Phi. 2:12).

## **Thyatira**

Thyatira was located about 40 miles E, SE of Pergamos, and was well-known for its many tradesmen, and guilds for each particular trade. These guilds may have required members to participate in worship to the gods of those groups, a difficult situation for Christians trying to make a living. The city is mentioned in Acts 16:14 as the home of Lydia, a seller of purple. Though it is less prominent than the other cities, to it was written the longest letter of the seven. Thyatira is modern day Akhisar.

### **Verse 18**

**And to 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**

To this church only, the Son of Man (1:13) declares Himself as the Son of God. Unlike the idols of the trade guilds, or of any other group, Jesus is the true God. His penetrating vision (1:14) is likely connected with the fact that Jezebel was making things appear (“seduce”) to be righteous, and His strong, crushing feet (1:15) referenced to emphasize His power take care of the deep things of Satan happening in this city (2:24).

### **Verse 19**

**I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first**

They had done good works (Tit. 2:14), loved one another and God (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 3:11; 1 Jn. 4:11), served for the cause of Jesus (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 6:7), had a strong faith (1 Cor. 16:13), and were patient in times of trial and want (Heb. 12:1; Lk. 21:19; Jas. 1:3, 4). On top of that, they were growing (2 Pet. 3:18). And so not only was Thyatira (in general) a working, faithful, growing church, the love that was lacking in Ephesus was present here.

### **Verse 20**

**Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols**

Thyatira seemed like they had everything going for them, but just like Ephesus and Pergamos, something was amiss. One might wonder whether the woman mentioned was really named Jezebel, or if this name was symbolic. The name is most likely symbolic, since the exact identity of the woman is expanded upon (the one who calls herself a prophetess), and it would send a strong message to the church about the true character of this woman.

Jezebel, meaning “not exalted,” was the name of one of the most wicked people mentioned in the Bible. She was from Sidon, and became the wife of King Ahab, which helped her to promote Baal

worship in the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 16:31ff.). Jezebel killed many prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:4), threatened the life of Elijah after he had executed the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:2), and had Naboth killed when he refused to sell Ahab his vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-16). She finally met her doom when Jehu commanded that she be thrown out a window (2 Kings 9:33-37), a punishment prophesied by Elijah (1 Kings 21:23). Jezebel will forever be remembered as the one who stirred up Ahab to do wickedness like none other (1 Kings 21:25).

The situations in Pergamos in Thyatira were similar, however, notice that in Pergamos there were those who simply held to the practices of sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols, while at Thyatira this woman was allowed to teach and seduce people to do these things. As mentioned with Pergamos, these acts were common place in those days, and may have seemed to be “no big deal.”

The New Testament does mention prophetesses (Acts 2:17; 21:9), who taught in private settings (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12; Acts 18:26). It is likely that this woman taught in the same manner. Perhaps she seduced men after the same manner of the Nicolaitans, though they are not mentioned here. Given the situation with the trade guilds, it is possible that those who took her advice were leaning that way already, and just heard what they wanted to hear (2 Tim. 4:3). It could also be the case that she convinced many to fellowship with evil in order to gain opportunity to teach the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:11).

Just as Ahab was stirred up to do much wickedness by Jezebel, some of the Christians in Thyatira were stirred up to do the same. Evil company corrupts good habits (1 Cor. 15:33). Like those in Pergamos, this church did not practice church discipline, but allowed compromise with the world.

#### **Verse 21**

**And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent**

She was given time to repent (2 Pet. 3:9). This might mean that someone actually said something to her about her actions. If so, it was not someone in Thyatira.

#### **Verse 22**

**Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds**

Jesus will execute judgment on her, just as was done to the other Jezebel. Not her only, but those who followed her, motivated by their own desires, would suffer as well. The great tribulation mentioned here could refer to them being caught up in that great tribulation which was about to encompass the whole earth (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14). If this were the case, then these would be ones counted unworthy of escape (Lk. 21:36).

#### **Verse 23**

**I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts**

Since her followers were already mentioned, this likely refers to her actual children. There is no indication of the age of these children, but they may have been too young to have lost their souls, or old enough to have partaken in their mother's deeds. Either way, we know that God is just, and always does what is right (Rev. 15:3). Nothing is hidden from His sight (Heb. 4:12, 13; Jer. 17:10).

**And I will give to each one of you according to your works**

2 Cor. 11:15; Rom. 2:6

### **Verses 24, 25**

**Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden**

The leadership (“you”) did not have this doctrine, nor did some others in Thyatira, yet they allowed it to be taught. Why didn't He tell them to repent? Given the character of the church, Jesus sees no need to explicitly demand repentance, for that is implied in that fact that He had this against them. He is about to take care of the problem anyway, so they need to simply hold fast what they have (the good things mentioned in v. 19), and not let this happen again.

What are the depths of Satan? This may be referring to the inner workings of Satan, that “no big deal” attitude that has been prevalent since the beginning (Gen. 3; cf. 2 Cor. 11:14).

We often beat ourselves up over wrongs committed, but Jesus lets us know that we do not have to do that (Matt. 11:30). We do not have to redeem ourselves, just repent and move on (Col. 1:14; Eph. 2:8; Acts 26:20).

**But hold fast what you have till I come**

This is the coming in judgment on the woman Jezebel and her followers, which may coincide with His coming judgment on Jerusalem (1:7).

### **Verses 26, 27**

**And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations - 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' as I also have received from My Father**

This is an allusion to Psalm 2:8-9, and refers to the rule of Jesus over the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:17; Rev. 1:5; 17:14; 19:16). In the sense that it applies to Christians, those who reign with Jesus (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6). We share in His reign in this life by being part of His kingdom (1:6) and family (1 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 6:10), and knowing that we have power to overcome any obstacle that crosses our path (Rom. 8:35-39; Phi. 4:13).

### **Verse 28**

**And I will give him the morning star**

This might symbolize a guiding light or the dawn of a new day (2 Pet. 1:19), similar to the new character described by the new name (2:17). Jesus Himself is later referred to as the morning star (Rev. 22:16), fitting in with the hidden manna and tree of life – Jesus is our guide, the source of a renewed spirit, spiritual sustenance, and immortality.

### **Verse 29**

**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**

See 2:7

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