

Revelation 2:18-29 –Deception by Reasoning in Thyatira

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: From the church at Pergamos you learned of the lure – the bait- the Nicolaitans used to lead some Christians away from God. That lure was adultery – adultery that led to idolatry. (This hindered the comfort God wanted to give his church in the face of their severe persecution from the Jews and the Romans!)

But Satan is never limited to one way of hurting God’s people. Yes, sometimes he uses force. Sometimes he uses a bait, as you saw with Pergamos. **Sometimes he will use deceptive arguments that seem to be logical** – as you will see today.

And since this is one of the more common methods Satan uses today to hurt God’s people, you will want to pay attention.

Our headings are:

Commendations

Concerns

Challenges

Comforts

Our goals are: That you learn to **watch out for fallacious arguments** that lead you and fellow believers away from the Lord, and that **you keep holding on to the Gospel truth** so you can fulfill your duties to God and your neighbor.

Commendations

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

1. Thyatira was a city in Asia Minor, a Province of Rome, where they mixed pagan and emperor worship.

The main idol of the Thyatirians was the sun god, Apollo.

2. Before the Lord Jesus commended the Thyatirians for their good works, he emphasized some reassuring characteristics about himself, just as he did with the other churches.

He shows himself as one who has **“eyes like a flame of fire,”** and **“feet like fine brass.”**

Why?

“Eyes like a flame of fire” means **his eyes pierce hearts searching them for truth.** So Jesus was **not simply a controller of fire as the sun god** Apollo, but Christ was the **creator of fire.**

“Feet like fine brass” means Christ has the strength to crush his enemies under his feet. (Psalm 2, 72, 110)

A picture does tell 1000 words. Two pictures tell 2000 words! What reassurance this was!

3. After giving reassurance to the Thyatirians, Christ commended them for their good works. What were their good works?

a. Love: Thyatirians loved God and man. This is the sum of God's law for man.

b. Service: Thyatirians served each other, a natural progression of love. You love someone, you serve him!

c. Faith: Thyatirians were known as people of faith by their endurance under hardships.

d. Patience: Thyatirians were patient during heavy pressures and deep poverty

4. What is more commendable was the level of these good works *increased over time*, not diminished, as is normal when people get tired or complacent.

Their **last works were better than their first.** (If you start a new job you might work harder to impress your boss – but things slow down! If you get married you do all you can to impress your wife – even do the dishes! Do you do the same 10 years later?)

5. Lessons:

a. None of your good works escapes the notice of Jesus and he loves to see them! Others don't see them, but he does!

b. Is your Christian life better today than it was a year ago? Are you even busier doing the Lord's work like teaching your family, learning the Bible, helping the poor, and telling others of Christ? Are you singing with the same zeal as before? Can the Lord commend you for being better today than he could 2 years ago?

Concerns

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.**

1. The city of Thyatira was controlled by guilds-a type of trade union-in every manufacturing industry: There were potters, tanners, weavers, robe-makers, and dyers. Lydia, the purple-seller of Philippi, came from Thyatira. In order to trade or work you had to be a member of one of these guilds.

But part of the requirement of these guilds was you had to worship pagan gods. These guilds always held their common meals and meetings in pagan temples.

The 2 central aspects required of their pagan worship were having sexual relations with temple prostitutes and the eating of meat sacrificed to idols.

So faithful Christians, who refused to sin, suffered economically and were not able to have a sustainable livelihood.

2. Now Jezebel (and this seems to be a real woman but a nickname) was working for the sneaky snake and luring people into sin, in particular, she was luring them into sexual immorality and eating foods sacrificed to idols.

This woman, Jezebel, lured them into sin by her arguments.

The name Jezebel is properly used because Queen Jezebel worshipped Baal, the Sun God. And she convinced her husband, King Ahab of Israel, by arguments, to worship Baal. Baal worship then spread throughout Israel.

3. This woman did not use direct confrontation...but backdoor arguments...where people pay less attention.

She did just as the serpent did to Eve in the Garden of Eden. She probably used pious-sounding arguments...claiming to have more serious biblical insights. **She wanted them to claim “the best parts of all religions!”** She wanted them to assume all religions were equal.

4. Lessons:

a. Here are a few more suggestions this “evil woman,” represented by false religions and cults, make again today:

You don’t have to believe in God to go to heaven, just be sincere. (The pope said that last week!)

We should learn to take the best from all religions and not be so absolute.

If you want to do business with us you have to go golfing on Sunday.

If you are going to be in our club you have to get into the drinking habit or telling lewd jokes.

If you can’t find a Christian husband, it is okay to marry a non-Christian.

It’s okay to steal, as long as it is not from the poor; stealing from the rich and the government is okay!

b. But there is only one real God with one real truth. His way of salvation is the only way. **It is hell without him.**

Challenges

21 "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 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.

1. God demanded repentance from Jezebel and her followers, but they abused the patience of God.

It looks like the church, even though it recognized Jezebel's sin, refused to excommunicate her. So Jesus challenged Jezebel to repent, or she would be cast into sickness and death.

And notice the irony here: Jezebel used her bed for adultery, but she would be made to die in it.

23 "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

2 More, Christ would certainly kill her and her children, literally, with death! Gen 2:17.

This remarkable judgment would make the world (Romans and Jews) know Jesus was the one only and true God who judges the motive of the mind and heart. He will condemn the wicked, with absolute certainty, to death and destruction.

"Mind" literally means "kidneys," (nephron) the **"seat of emotions."** **"Heart" means "seat of will."** (Different from our view!)

Isaiah 60:12 - For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.

And Christ made it clear that his judgment would be fair.

24 "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. 25 But hold fast what you have till I come.

3. Jesus then challenged the Thyatirians who had not fallen for the fallacious arguments of Jezebel, to hold fast until he came.

This was their only responsibility (burden). (Burden means "duty.")

Jesus is speaking in this personal letter of a near coming (coming in judgment) or he would not have used these words... 'hold fast what you have till I come.' It could not reasonably mean 2000 years later. All those Thyatirians are dead now!

4. Lessons:

a. True Christianity is intolerant...in the good sense! We don't think people don't have the right to exist, but when they don't teach the truth, we are obligated to condemn them! Don't treat their teachings as if they were on the same moral footing as ours.

b. If we tolerate false doctrines we die, just as the promoters of false doctrines will die.
See Bill 6.

c. Sincere churches are not sanctuaries for sin and sinners. Faithfully carry out discipline.

Comforts

26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him **I will give power over the nations**—27 '**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; 28 "and I will **give him the morning star.**

1. Jesus knew there were doubts in the minds of the Thyatirians whether they could win in this struggle against Jezebel, the Jews, and the Romans, so he encouraged them to keep fighting and reminded them of their great rewards.

2. What were those rewards?

a. Power...power over nations...the Jews and the Romans in particular. Christ himself would control those nations with a rod of iron...and break them in pieces. This is what he prophesied!

Daniel 2:40 "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.

Psalm 47:1. Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! 2 For the LORD Most High is awesome; **He is a great King over all the earth.** 3 **He will subdue the peoples under us, And the nations under our feet.**

Christ will rule the nations through his people, breaking them in little pieces like a clay jar.

b. The people of God would then be given the benefits of the Sun of Righteousness – Jesus-as oppose to Baal – the sun god with no power-the non-existent false god. Christ would be a Sun that **never goes out** and would give light to his people forever in heaven. What hope! What joy the Sun brings!

29 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

3. Jesus then encouraged the Thyatirians to listen to his words of comfort – to listen carefully.

4. Lessons:

a. Serve the Lord because he is your Savior and he has a right to your obedience. But Jesus induces you to do good works by promising you rewards of consequential value...rewards that could never be taken away-eternal rewards.

b. God promised his church would spread to all the nations. Pray and work toward this end. Don't stop. Let his promise encourage you to keep working for him.

Conclusion:

The Thyatirian Christians were pressured with deceitful theological arguments by a wicked woman to compromise their faith. Jezebel reasoned men into adultery and participating in pagan feasts as Queen Jezebel had done 800 years before. She probably **told them how strange Christians appeared to society.** She probably **reminded them of their starving children at**

home because they couldn't work on account of the unions. She might have reminded them **what she was telling them to do was all harmless**...after all...she might have said: **"It is only burning a pinch of incense, it's only eating a little meat sacrificed to idols, and only a little harmless sex between consenting adults."** But it wasn't harmless; it caused death.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. You have Jezebels today as well. There are many such people – individuals, false religions, cults, teachers, and civil authorities. They use all kinds of logic telling you why you don't have to obey God's Word. Some teach: "We're poor, so we don't have to tithe." "I have to get more money, so I have to work on Sundays." "You have to commit adultery so you can fit in with the crowd." "You have to dress this way, 'cause everybody does!"

2. Hold your ground and rebuff these deceivers who will be sent to hell. If you rebuff them and hold your ground, you will be part of the kingdom of Christ that will one day rule with Jesus.

Finally, see the horrible and certain judgment the wicked will face. If you aren't a Christian, that judgment applies to you as well. Save yourself from judgment by calling on Christ to take away your sins and make you his child.