Revelation Chapter 2--The Messages to the Churches Part 3

- At Ephesus we saw that all their good deeds did not make up for having left their *first love*--**Jesus**
- Smyrna personifies Tertullian's statement: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."
- The letter to Pergamum was a warning against compromise in doctrine, morals & teaching

Revelation 2:18-29 To the Church in Thyatira

- *Thyatira*--commerce & trade center ~40 miles southeast of Pergamum on the road to Sardis
  - This least important of the 7 cities had been under Roman rule for nearly 3 centuries
    - No natural defenses & had a long history of being destroyed & rebuilt
    - Originally populated by soldiers of Alexander the Great, was a military outpost to guard Pergamum
  - No special religious significance; local hero-god was Tyrimnus; the only noteworthy thing was a fortune-telling shrine presided over by a female oracle called the Sambathē
  - Provided numerous products & had guilds for wool, leather, linen, bronze, dyers, potters, bakers
    - Lydia, seller of purple cloth, was from here (Acts 16:14); dye was from flowers that grew in the area
  - No threat of persecution; the threat came from *inside* the church via compromise with the world
- *v18* The letter opens with a description of the Risen Christ which conveys a threat in it
  - *Son of God*--emphasizes His deity in contrast with *v1:13* as the *Son of Man* does His humanity
  - *Eyes like a blazing fire*--blazing anger against sin per Deuteronomy 4:24; righteous judgment (Romans 1:18-20); nothing is hidden from His sight which penetrates to the intents of the heart
    - Jesus shows that He truly is the final Judge, as in Revelation 19:15-29
  - *Feet. . .bronze*--denotes immovable power; also, bronze was used in the temple for sin sacrifices
  - To those who match churches to historic eras, the "Pagan" or "Papal" Church (590-1517 AD)
    - During this time the Roman Catholic church introduced many things that do not show in Scripture
      - *Thyatira* comes from two words meaning "sacrifice" & "continual" which fits the Catholic view that the Mass celebrates Christ's continual sacrifice rather than the Protestant "one & done"
      - Images & relics; holy water; canonization of dead saints; fasting on Fridays & Lent; priesthood celibacy; the rosary; praying to Mary & saints; sale of indulgences; Transubstantiation; purgatory; 7 sacraments; tradition equal authority with Bible; apocryphal books;
      - After this time added Immaculate conception & Assumption of Mary; infallibility of the Pope

  ⇨ These things not in Scripture symbolize the danger of moral compromise with worldly values
- *v19* **Commendation:** their love & faith are manifested in their service to those around them
  - This is not a stiff cold church, as some of the other churches are, but a loving & caring church
  - *Deeds/works*--unlike Ephesis, their love for Jesus has not grown cold; rather it has grown & been the driving force for them to persevere in trials & serve the less fortunate around them
    - Their trials may have come from the same issues with guilds we found in the other churches
- *v20-23* **Rebuke:** the church is accused--as at Pergamos, this church ***allowed*** teaching that mixed worldly/pagan practices with Christianity which resulted in spiritual & moral compromise
  - Once again, Jesus sees beyond the outward display of good works & exposes a stronghold of Satan right in the midst of this church
  - *v20 Tolerate*--though we are not to judge others, we are to be knowledgeable of Scripture in order to discern false teaching & then thru the Spirit's power have the boldness to call it out
    - *Jezebel*--likely not her name, but refers to her evil spirit similar to the wife of King Ahab; Jezebel was an idolatrous woman who used unscrupulous methods to perpetuate her power
    - She may have advocated eating food offered to idols & immorality so that men could join the trade guilds; some contend that "fornication" (per KJV) here means idolatry, as it often does in Scripture
    - Many ancient texts read *thy wife* rather than *that woman*--she could have been the bishop's wife
      - If so, her husband was likely reluctant to cast her out & she'd have had influence & staying power
  - *v21 Time to repent*--God had as yet withheld judgment but He would not do so forever
    - *Unwilling*--indicates persistent rebellion & indicates lack of truly being reborn in Christ
      - **Revelation 3:19** Those I love I rebuke and discipline. Therefore be earnest and repent.

        - **2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.
    - *v22 Bed*--implies that she actually did practice sexual immorality & not just idolatry; since the bed was a place for her unrepentant sin, it would be a place of her just punishment
        - Though not mentioned, sounds like the Nicolaitan influence to both teaching & practice
        - *They repent of her deeds*--those who engaged with her were also guilty & needed to repent
    - *v23 Her children*--the church was about 40 years old as John wrote; her teaching had produced a second generation, advocating the same spiritual & moral compromise that brought degradation
        - *Minds* (also translated as *reins* or *kidneys*)--Jesus knows & judges the motives as well as the deeds
            - **Psalm 7:9** Put an end to the evil of the wicked, but establish the righteous, O righteous God who searches hearts and minds.
        - *I will repay*--God **must** punish unrepentant sin: 1) His holiness, righteousness & justice demand it--to let it go would violate His moral character; 2) to affirm the reality of right & wrong; 3) because unrepentant sin is persistent rebellion; 4) so others will see & turn back to Him before it is too late
            - **Revelation 20:12b** And the dead were judged according to their deeds, as recorded in the books.
        - *Children*--those who wholly embraced her doctrine will face even greater punishment
        - *Deeds*--the works & inclinations of the heart & mind which come to maturity in actual deeds
        - We know from **James 2:14-26** that deeds do not save, but do give evidence of salvation

⇨ Any union of that which is holy with that which is impure is spiritual adultery

⇨ Some churches today allow male or female "Jezebels;" to lead in accommodating to worldly values

⇨ Scripture says what is sin; a church leader that declares such to not be sin is a false teacher

- *v24-25 The rest*--those who did not follow the teachings & behavior of "Jezebel"
    - *v24 Deep things of Satan*--either: 1) doctrine, which would be viewed by Jesus as being of the devil or 2) knowledge whereby, like Gnostics, they feel they must know evil to conquer it
        - Such doctrine held you could do as you please as long as you are baptized
        - Gnostics falsely held that one could participate in evil without harming the spirit; they called their doctrine *the depths of God*, containing the most profound secrets of Diving wisdom

    ⇨ Jesus wants us to be holy as He is holy; He will forgive sin if we repent & strive to overcome it
        - **Leviticus 20:26** You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.
    - *v25* Hold *fast*--stand on the doctrine of the Gospel; for it there can be no compromise

⇨ Jesus does not judge by groups, but one person at a time; each must make his own decision

- *v26-28 Overcomes*--Jesus says this to each church, but each gets a different promise
    - *v26 Continues . . . end*--we can't just do a little & then sit back; He expects our commitment & expects us to bring the fruits of our labor to Him
        - *Authority*--the authority has been given to Jesus & He will delegate further as He sees fit
    - *v27 Rule*--the prize for faithfulness is the privilege of reigning with Christ in His earthly kingdom
        - The faithful will rule with the strength & power of His authority as a shepherd leads his flock
    - *v28 Morning star*--**Jesus'** eternal, victorious light gives spiritual illumination, assured hope, overcoming of darkness & fulfilment of God's promises (**Numbers 24:17**; **Revelation 22:16**)
        - Our morning star is already in our hearts but we will have Him in His fullness upon His return
        - Satan is called a morning star in **Isaiah 14:12** but his light was extinguished due to pride & rebellion
- *v29* Like each of the other letters, this message is for all the churches then & now

⇨ Ephesus, Pergamum & Thyatira all had a similar problem in the type of wickedness described here, but in advancing degrees: 1) the conduct of a few at Ephesus; 2) the justification of it by some at Pergamum; 3) toleration of the corruption of many by church leadership at Thyatira

⇨ **Josh McDowell**: Because of the new tolerance, our culture is not so much asking whether the gospel is credible, it is asking whether the gospel is relevant. And if we are to attract a needy world to Christ, we must demonstrate that He is both *evidentially credible* and *relationally relevant.*

⇨ Today, compromise often stems from "soft love," for we don't want to "offend someone" with truth