

The Seduction of Jezebel

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. For those of you who are new, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. And it's my joy and honor to preach God's Word to you.

We are in a series in the book of Revelation. We're in Revelation chapter 2. This is why you turn with me in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible, if you raise your hand, we'd love to bring you a copy of the Bible that you can have.

And Revelation is the last book in the Bible. Revelation chapter 2, verses 18 to 29.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, as you always do when we gather in your name, we know that you are present here in your Spirit.

And we also ask that by your Word, now you address us and enlarge our vision of Jesus, your Son, so that in light of your glory and his greatness and his might, we are humbled and people seem small in comparison so that we do not fear them, but we fear you.

[1 : 36] remind us of your holiness this morning, but also remind us of your mercy and your grace.

in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are willing and able, please stand and join me in the reading of God's Word.

I'll read it out loud. Revelation 2, 18 to 29. And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, the words of the sons of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

[2 : 54] I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her, I will throw into great tribulation unless they repent of her works.

And I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart. And I will give to each of you according to your works.

But to the rest of you in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.

Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.

And he will rule them with a rod of iron as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

[4 : 02] And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

Please be seated. In C.S. Lewis' book, *The Silver Chair*, which is part of the *Chronicles of Narnia* series, the friends of Aslan, Eustace Scrubb, Jill Pohl, and Puddleglum meet the Lady of the Green Kirtle, also known as the Queen of the Deep Realm, which, while they're on their mission to find Prince Rillian, who has been lost, who is the rightful heir to the throne of Narnia, and when they first meet the Lady of the Green Kirtle, it says that she was riding side saddle on a beautiful white horse. That horse itself was so lovely that it says it made you want to give it a lump of sugar at once. But in the description, it says, but the lady who wore a long, fluttering dress of dazzling green was lovelier still.

Her voice was as sweet as the sweetest bird's song. This is, I'm quoting C.S. Lewis here. Her laughter was the richest, most musical laugh you can imagine.

The Lady of the Green Kirtle, however, is no sweet lady. She directs these three friends of Aslan to the giant's castle, Harfang, for an autumn feast, like the fall festival we had yesterday, and tempted by the rich fare of an autumn feast with the giants, they go to Harfang not knowing that the specialty that these giants eat at this autumn feast is what they call man pies and that these friends will become the meal and that's where the Lady of the Green Kirtle sent them.

[6 : 01] She's also the one who has put Prince Rillian under a spell and has kidnapped him and is now ruling the underground, the Deep Realm, where she is mobilizing an army of gnomes with which to make war against Aslan and against Narnia.

And that's why she's called the Queen of the Deep Realm. So this seductive, beautiful lady turns out to be this Queen of the Deep Realm and her true identity is revealed in dramatic fashion toward the end of the book when the long green train of her dress kind of wraps around her and thickens into this solid green pillar and her facial features all disappear except for her eyes and then she takes on quote, the loathsome body of a great serpent as green as poison.

Her loveliness is exposed to be a loathsome body that it really is and her dazzling green is exposed as the poisonous green that it really is.

In this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira, we see that an otherwise very healthy church is facing the threat of a false prophetess who is teaching and seducing Christ's servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

Rather than overt persecution like some other churches were facing or political oppression, the church in Thyatira is suffering more from seduction of false teachers similar to the church in Pergamum and sometimes this kind of evil is harder to deal with because it's from an insider rather than an outsider because it's so seductive and enticing.

[7 : 45] It takes discerning eyes to see the lady of the green curdle for who she really is, a green serpent. And that's what this passage is seeking to accomplish in our lives, to enable us to see evil disguised as good through the eyes of Christ because Christ has eyes like flame of fire and he's the one who searches mind and heart.

And that's the main point of our passage, remembering Jesus' eyes of fire. We must keep the works of Christ and not tolerate sexual immorality and idolatry in our midst.

I'm going to talk in turn about the authority of the Son of God and then the adultery of the children of Jezebel and the award for the servants of Christ to persevere to the end. First, let's look at the authority of the Son of God in verse 18.

Once again, as we have seen if you've been with us in this series, as Jesus does in every letter to every church, Jesus introduces himself with an aspect of the glorious vision of him in earlier chapter 1, verses 12 to 16.

And he takes an aspect of that that's most pertinent to this particular church and introduces himself that way. And because the church in Thyatira is being seduced by a false prophetess into sexual immorality and idolatry, Jesus emphasizes his discernment and his authority to judge in verse 18.

[9 : 08] The words of the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. His eyes were like a flame of fire.

So fire is often a symbol of judgment and discernment. At a refinery, workers subject various metals to the flames so they can burn off the dross and isolate the precious metals so that it can be used in some way.

Sometimes we describe people that we know as, oh, that guy or that woman has piercing eyes. And by that, we mean that they have, I mean, it could just be a description of the appearance, but usually we mean that they have eyes that seem to look through that they can see inside you.

Jesus' eyes are like that, but it's not just an appearance. He has eyes like a flame of fire. He has all-seeing eyes with which he searches mind and heart.

As it says in verse 23. That means nobody can dupe him, nobody can get past him, no one can trick him, no sinner can hide from his infallible judgment.

[10 : 18] And his feet are like burnished bronze. This is an allusion to Daniel's vision of the Son of Man in Daniel 10.6. So refined, polished bronze, burnished bronze is glossy and it gleams, it's shiny and because of its purity.

And Jesus, so Jesus has no impurity in him like bronze refined in a furnace. Bronze is also the hardest of the three precious metals most commonly used in the ancient world, gold, silver, and bronze.

And so imagine feet like burnished bronze, pure and gleaming and hard, just crushing these brittle rocks underneath. I think, I was trying to think of an illustration for this.

I once made the mistake of using the flat side of a meat pounder, is that what that's called? To crush garlic. And it was, it's not that it didn't work, it just worked too well.

And I just hit it once and then it was like, it just, it was disintegrated into smithereens and it splattered all over the kitchen. So I've never done that again. But that's the effect of having something so powerful and strong like burnished feet, feet of burnished bronze just walking over and crushing the enemies of Christ underneath.

[11 : 35] That's Christ's authority and power. So this vision of Jesus with eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze is important because it keeps us, when we have this glorious vision of Jesus, it protects us and it keeps us from being deceived by the enemy into thinking that sins can be tolerated and hidden.

Oh, Jesus doesn't see. Oh, Jesus doesn't care. It also keeps us from believing the lies of the enemy that Jesus will not come to judge because he will come to judge those who oppose him with feet like burnished bronze.

If you live before the all-seeing eyes of Christ, then you do not have to fear the peering eyes of man and their fallible judgment of you, their fallible opinion and estimation of you because you care about what Jesus thinks because he sees everything.

And if you live in light of a glorious view of Jesus who has feet of burnished bronze, like burnished bronze, then you do not have to fear men and what they can do to you. You don't have to fear the schoolhouse bullies or the academic or professional power brokers or the governmental powers that be that might marginalize you, demote you, or crush you because you see that Christ is more powerful and you care more about what he thinks.

So all of these descriptions are taken directly from the glorious vision of Jesus in Revelation 1 except for one detail and that detail is significant.

[13 : 11] It says in verse 18, the words of the Son of God. That title, the Son of God, is not from Revelation 1. That's from Psalm 2 where God says to his appointed king, and we read that earlier as our cult worship, to the messianic king that God has appointed, he says to him, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you. Ultimately, it's a prophetic word that points to Jesus who is God's only begotten son. And this biblically allusion to Psalm 2 is confirmed later by verses 26 to 27 which directly references a part of Psalm 2.

He quotes verses 8 and 9. And it speaks of how God gives authority over the nations to this messianic king to rule with the rod of iron. So by declaring himself to be the Son of God, Jesus is identifying himself as the messianic king from the royal line of David.

He is the rightful heir to the throne established by God himself. He is the only begotten Son. And this is also significant in light of the historical context because it's a polemic against the claims of the political pretenders of the Roman Empire.

Ever since Julius Caesar formally declared himself the divine Julius in 42 BC, his adopted son Octavian, better known as Augustus, style himself as the son of the God.

[14 : 42] A letter that Augustus wrote to the magistrates of Sardis has been preserved and in it he begins the letter Imperator Caesar, son of the God, Augustus, Pontifex Maximus.

Presumptuous title. But Caesar Augustus is only a counterfeit because Jesus is the true king and he is the true emperor.

Jesus is the true son of God and Jesus is the true Pontifex Maximus, which means supreme pontiff or the chief high priest. Christ. So this is a comfort to the suffering believers who are facing idolatry and immorality of the Roman Empire and feeling political pressure from their surroundings and from the political authorities.

It's a reminder that Jesus is the true king. He is the true son of God, so do not fear. And it says in verse 27, Jesus received authority from God the Father.

So don't fear when Caesars or presidents or dictators try to stamp you out for your allegiance to Jesus because all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus and he has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze.

[16 : 06] So hold fast to your faith and persevere even unto death and conquer as Christians.

That's the exhortation. Having looked at the authority of the Son of God, let's not turn to the adultery of the children of Jezebel in verses 19 to 25.

But before Jesus critiques this church, he graciously commends them for their good works in verse 19. I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance and that your latter works exceed the first.

The word works is used once at the beginning and once at the end of the verse and it seems to be a summary term for everything in between.

So the works that the church in Thyatira was doing includes their love and faith and service and patient endurance. So here in this passage, unlike some other parts of the New Testament, the works are not being contrasted with faith as it's rather being used in a more general sense to refer to the totality of Christian faithfulness.

This is confirmed by what Jesus said to the church in Ephesus earlier in chapter 2. He also said to them, I know your works and commended them. But then he added, but I have this against you that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

[17:30] So in light of that evaluation for the church in Ephesus, Jesus' exhortation to them, the church in Ephesus in verse 5, was repent and do the works you did at first. So recovering the love they had at first involved doing the works they did at first.

So you can see that these two things are related. So then here, for the church in Thyatira, the works that they are doing includes the love and faith and service and patient endurance. They're doing all of these things.

Unlike the church in Ephesus who did those things at first but were no longer doing those works, had lost sight of their first love, the love that they had at first for Jesus. This church, the church in Thyatira, their latter works, it says, exceed the first.

They're not waning in their zeal. They're waxing in their zeal. They're doing more. They're loving one another more. They're loving their neighbors more. They're serving more. They're patiently enduring more. They're living by faith and not by sight and they're serving each other with generosity and sacrifice.

They're patiently bearing witness to Jesus in a hostile world. So many wonderful things that they're doing and they're being commended for and it's such a heartening and encouraging thing that Jesus knows our works.

[18:42] Every good thing you do, Jesus sees. Everything you do in his service, Jesus knows. He doesn't need to.

He doesn't have to pay attention. He's the king. We all should still be serving him whether he sees it or not, but he sees everything. I know your works and I pray that we as a church can one day hear these commendations from the Lord like the church in Thyatira.

Unfortunately, however, there was still one glaring fault with the church in Thyatira. Jesus says in verse 20, but I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

This is very similar to the church in Pergamum. Remember, they were tolerating the teaching of the Nicolaitans who were also teaching that sexual immorality and idolatry feasts are okay for Christians to participate in.

And Thyatira boasted a number of large, a large number rather, of Roman trade guilds. And I mentioned to you a few weeks ago that Roman trade guilds, these were like economic kind of societies and they got together and usually they had feasts where they would make sacrifices to the Roman gods and to the Roman emperor and they would use that context to network and make connections and try to, you know, ingratiate yourself to people in power so you can get promotions.

[20:24] And also during those times people drank heavily and as is often the case in places where people drink heavily there was a lot of sexual promiscuity. It was, historians record that often these things devolved into orgies.

And there would have been for Christians because Roman religion and politics and economy are all intricately related, there would have been tremendous pressure for Christians economically and politically and culturally and religiously to participate in these feasts.

And some people like Nicolaitans in Pergamum and Jezebel in Thyatira were telling Christians it's okay. It's not a big deal.

You can be loyal to Christ and still do these things. Now, I don't think Jezebel is her real name. Why would you ever name your child Jezebel?

Right? No Jew would name their child Jezebel. And no Christian would either. In the same way the Nicolaitans were figuratively compared to Balaam earlier in this chapter.

[21 : 35] I think the false prophetess of Thyatira is being figuratively identified as Jezebel from the Old Testament. Let me give you some background on Jezebel in case some of you are not familiar.

1st Kings 16:31 tells us that the Israelite king Ahab married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians. The name Ethbaal means there is Baal and the Canaanite god of rain, storm and life.

And the name Jezebel means where is the prince? And that's an allusion to a mythical story about Baal. And so you can just tell from the names that both Ethbaal and his daughter Jezebel are loyal and devout worshippers of Baal.

But Israelite king Ahab marries Jezebel which he wasn't supposed to do in the first place because she's not a follower of Yahweh of the one true God. What follows in 1st Kings 16:31 is not therefore surprising.

It says Ahab took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians and went and served Baal and worshipped him. In fact their idolatry got so bad that it says in 1st Kings 21:25 there was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab whom Jezebel his wife incited.

[22 : 53] So in God's estimation Ahab did more evil in Israel at that point than anyone else in the history of Israel. And Jezebel his wife was a big part of that.

Ahab and Jezebel were like Satan's power couple in the Old Testament. According to 1st Kings 18:9-450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah that's another pagan religion all ate at Jezebel's table meaning Jezebel is personally providing for these false prophets.

She's their patron and supporter sponsor. She's the one who killed the prophets of the Lord. She's the one who breathing murder drove out God's prophet Elijah out of town.

She's also the one who arranges for the murder of an innocent man named Naboth so that her husband Ahab can claim his lucrative vineyard. She was so thoroughly wicked that the Lord said of her that dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.

And indeed that happened. She was thrown out of the tower of Jezreel by her eunuchs. Her blood splattered on the wall and the horses trampled her and then the dogs came and ate her so that nothing remained of her except for skull and the feet and the palms of her feet.

[24 : 11] That's what the Bible tells us about Jezebel. That's Jezebel. No wonder her name is synonymous with a wicked woman in the Bible.

With all of that background in mind you can see that it's a very serious accusation to identify anyone with Jezebel. And yet Jesus here does not hesitate to identify this false prophetess with Jezebel because it says in verse 20 she calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

This is kind of unrelated but this is proof that New Testament Church did have prophets and prophetesses and I think that's a good thing. The prophecy itself is not the problem.

It's a false prophecy. That's the problem. And note how he says she calls herself a prophetess. Jesus doesn't call her a prophetess. She calls herself that.

And she is teaching and seducing my servants Jesus says. They are Jesus' servants. They belong to him but instead she is leading them astray and seducing them into sexual immorality to eat food sacrificed to idols and that's how we know that she is a false prophet because the spirit of God never contradicts the word of God.

[25 : 39] So if you claim to prophesy by the Holy Spirit and then you tell people in your prophecy to tell people to do what contradicts scripture then you're a false prophet. So Jesus doesn't hesitate to call her Jezebel.

He says and then Jesus rebukes the church for tolerating that woman Jezebel. tolerance has been a buzzword in our culture for some decades now and its meaning has morphed radically and an older view of tolerance said in essence I disagree with you but you have the right to your own beliefs and I'm not going to coerce you into believing the same thing that I believe.

That's what tolerance used to be. Nowadays however it means more like your view is equally valid as mine. You're right and I'm right. Neither of us is wrong.

We're all right. That's what tolerance often means nowadays in a kind of relativistic postmodern manner. But that's not tolerance because when you tolerate something it assumes that you

disagree to a degree with that person.

So imagine if I got this analogy from I think Michael Ramson somewhere imagine if I went over to you guys house for dinner and you guys served me dinner and you said hey how was the food?

And I said the food food was tolerable.

[27 : 09] That'd be offensive because if it's tolerable that means like I I'm not really happy with it. I'm just tolerating it. I just I found it disagreeable.

That's what that means but you know I'm going to stomach it. And so tolerance assumes a level of disagreement but the new notion of tolerance in vogue nowadays says no your view is just as valid as mine.

Your opinion is just as valid as mine. You know we all have nobody's wrong. As someone has paraphrased G.K. Chesterton saying in his book Heretics tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions.

where tolerance is the attitude of those who do not believe in anything. Not the old kind of tolerance the new kind of tolerance.

I remember that my college chapel had replaced a cross in the chapel with this ornate tapestry that had symbols of all conceivable religions on it and had it right front and center at the chapel.

[28 : 17] But a true Jew cannot worship in front of that and a true Muslim cannot worship in front of that and certainly a true Christian cannot worship in front of that because they actually believe something.

And that tapestry essentially reified pluralism and claimed that every religion is equally valid which most faithful adherents of world's religions cannot accept.

That kind of pluralism or that kind of tolerance is actually inherently intolerant because it refuses to tolerate anyone who says of other religions your religion is false.

In this kind of confused world Christians are often accused of intolerance and denounced as bigoted because of our claim that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through him.

because of our claim that Christian ethics including sexual ethics is superior to the prevailing ethics of our culture. We get called bigoted.

[29 : 27] But sexual immorality no matter how it gets dressed up in our culture is wicked and we must not tolerate that in our midst. I'm not saying that as Christians we need to be moral polices with all of our non-Christian neighbors.

That's not what I'm saying. Paul says clearly in 1 Corinthians 5 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister in Christ if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater reviler drunkard or swindler not even to eat with such a one.

For why do you judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside purge the evil person from among you. It's not our business to judge those who are outside the church.

So we can say to them hey I disagree with you I think your beliefs and your ethics are gravely mistaken and spiritually perilous but I'm not going to force you to believe what I believe and I can't force you to behave the way I think you should behave.

[30 : 42] That's what tolerance is. That's tolerance. But we don't judge those who are outside. God will judge those who are outside. However it is our business to judge those who are inside the church because they are Christians but not living like Christians and they are refusing to repent when we speak the truth and love to them and gently confront them and say no you need to repent of your sins and they refuse to repent then it is the church's duty to dissociate from them to defend the honor of Christ to preserve the purity of the church and to protect the integrity and credibility of our witness as Christians to the world whenever I speak of this issue of church discipline there are inevitably some people who tend to be very compassionate which is good and empathetic and they say well that's so harsh have you considered the feelings of those people but

I want to ask have you considered the feelings of Christ verse 22 describes idolatry and sexual immorality as spiritual adultery committing adultery against Jesus our bridegroom Jesus is the victim of such adultery imagine that your friend's wife just committed adultery against your friend

and she is not repentant right she's insisting on staying in an open marriage let's just keep an open marriage because I want to keep doing this and your friend is heart broken he's crushed and he thinks well that's I can't do that I can't submit myself to such an arrangement that's tempted him out to asking for divorce would you go to your friend and say well hey just be a little more tolerant of your wife so harsh to your wife love to no we wouldn't do that to our friend then why would we do to Jesus what about Jesus reputation what about Jesus honor what about Jesus value what about Jesus holiness what does Jesus deserve better than that that's why we have to be pure that's why we cultivate holiness in the church because the church is the bride of Christ and adultery cannot be tolerated in the church that is the bride of Christ but one of the reasons why the Jezebels of our world are so seductive is that they have a semblance of legitimacy remember she calls herself a prophetess the Jezebel of the Old Testament also had a lot of influence and power and legitimacy because after all she was a queen well if the queen says worshipping Baal is okay and all these Baal prophets are eating at her table then maybe it's not so bad maybe it's okay maybe it really is okay for us to participate in his idolatrous feasts isn't she a prophetess didn't she speak prophetic words of penetrating insight in the past powerful prophecies maybe she's relaying the words of God maybe it's okay for us to be involved a little bit in these feasts things and orgies look at verse 24 Jezebel's teaching included learning what some call the deep things of Satan perhaps that was her seductive line of reasoning how can we brothers and sisters rescue people from idolatry unless we know what idolatry is all about if we want to rescue people from the deep places of Satan we need to learn the deep things of Satan think about it we need to build relationships with these non-Christians neighbors and how can we do that unless we go where they go and do the things they do how do you expect to rescue people who are in the swamp of sin without getting your hands dirty it's those who have learned the deep things of Satan who are the most effective ambassadors for Christ so don't be so uptight you will make more friends that way maybe a little bit of sexual immorality can't do any harm they'll listen to us more if they see that we're one of them but those are lies Jesus never sinned in order to save sinners and we don't have to either Deuteronomy 13 is very clear about prophets if a prophet or a dreamer of dreams rises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass and if he says let us go after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams for the will you listen to the voice of

[36 : 54] God even when false prophets and false pastors try to lead you astray I don't care how many true prophecies a prophet has prophesied or how many wonderful sermons a preacher has preached if they teach you to go against the teachings of scripture if they teach you to go into sexual morality and idolatry if they teach you to besmirch the name of Christ don't follow them are you tolerating what God does not tolerate are you okay with what God is not okay with in your life and in this church if you are more tolerant than God that is not a virtue to wear as a badge that's a sin to repent of and look at what

Jesus has to say about Jezebel and those who follow her teaching in verses 21 to 23 I gave her time to repent but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality behold I will throw her onto a sick bed and those who commit adultery with her I will throw her works and I will strike her children dead and all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart and I will give to each of you according to your works I don't think this is a reference to literal underage children that Jezebel has I think following the figurative language of spiritual adultery I think these are spiritual children of Jezebel so people who have followed her into sexual immorality and idolatry those who identify with Jezebel rather than with the son of God so they are no longer servants of Christ but children of Jezebel they will face the fearful judgment of the son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze unless they repent that's a key word repeated twice here even for the most heinous sinners even for the sexually immoral even for the adulterer even for the idolater there's forgiveness in

Christ if only they repent but for unrepentant sinners who stubbornly go their way they will face great tribulation look at how patient God is he gave even Jezebel Jezebel remember who Jezebel is from the Old Testament Jezebel God gives a woman like Jezebel in the church in Thyatira time to repent he already gave her time to repent think about how impatient we are with people who sin against us again and again the same sin again and again oh you did it again but God's not like that with us he could have just cut her right off she's been leading people astray long enough he gave

her time to repent and you too can repent and if you're a sinner and you have not repented of your sins

God God God is just and he will reward or punish everyone according to their works says verse 21 this doesn't mean that we're saved by our works we are saved by grace through Christ through faith in Christ alone but true saving faith always works itself out in good works that's why God judges on the last day according to our works which is inclusive of all our faith and obedience just as a good tree always bears good fruit a true faith always bears good works with this in mind Jesus shares his final exhortation verses 24 to 25 to the rest of the believers in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching of Jezebel Jesus says in verses 24 25 to you I say I do not lay on you any other burden only hold fast what you have until I come this language the phrasing closely follows the apostles decree in the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 I do not lay on you any other burden except for refraining from sexual immorality eating meat strangled blood and and idolatry eating food sacrifice to idols so it's I think reflecting that and the reason why these are important is because even though they were such a pervasive aspect of Roman culture and society in order to be Christians they have to stop because a Christian is by definition united to Christ by faith our bodies are members sacred set apart holy members of Christ and therefore we are one spirit with him and to our sacred union with Christ himself as it says in 1 Corinthians 5 likewise as Christians when we partake in the Lord's supper we are participating in the body of Christ eating of his bread the bread that represents his body and drinking the grape the fruit of the vine that represents his blood and to participate in the [42 : 38] Lord's supper and then to turn around and participate in idolatrous feasts is like making the Lord participate participating with demons as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 Christians cannot double dip like that and so Jesus lays on them no greater burden than these because remember from verse 19 they're actually doing all these other things well they have love and faith and service and patience and endurance they need to hold fast those things until Jesus comes that time frame refers to the same time as the end mentioned in verse 26 it could be the end when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead or it could be the end of the believer's life when Jesus comes to him where he goes to be with the Lord whichever comes first to those who persevere till the end

Jesus promises this award my final point award for the servants of Christ in verses 26 to 28 the one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end to him I will give authority over the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron as when earth and pots are broken in pieces even as I myself have received authority from the father and I will give him the morning star remember I mentioned to you that the title son of God is from psalm 2 so this here is a direct quotation of psalm 2 verse 9 the psalm describes how God gives authority to his anointed one the Davidic king the son of God and then it says you shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel that's psalm 2 9 there's a slight translational difference there psalm 2 9 says break them with a rod of iron revelation 2 27 says rule them with a rod of iron and that's because the Hebrew manuscripts don't have verbs it's just consonants and so you have to kind of use contextual clues to figure out what the word is and depending on which verbs you supply it can mean break or it could mean shepherd or rule I think however for interpreting this passage it doesn't really matter all that much because in verse 27 it says rule them with the rod of iron and then it's immediately followed by as when earthen pots are broken in pieces so clearly it's the authority to punish the rebellious nations that's in view it's this very authority of Christ the scepter and rule of Christ that's promised to God's people who conquer and keep Christ's work until the end the promise of the morning star in verse 28 is getting at the same idea the Romans called the goddess Venus the morning star Roman emperors claimed to be descended from Venus and Roman generals carried standards flags that had the sign of the morning star over 50 countries in the world today still including ours have stars on their flags because star is a symbol of sovereignty and rule and so this serves a polemical purpose as well when

Jesus says I will give you the morning star and later in Revelation 22 16 Jesus says I am the root of David the bright I am the root and descendant of David the bright morning star so Jesus is the true morning star not these false idols not Caesar Jesus is the one who has all authority power and sovereignty and Jesus promised us that if we persevere he will give us the morning star that's an amazing promise because the morning star is nothing less than Jesus himself he is the bright morning star and he is our supreme treasure and reward in heaven and in the new heavens and the new earth we will have our bridegroom our shepherd and our redeemer of our souls our bright morning star we will belong to him and he will be ours and we will be his that's the promise and

included in that promise is the participation in

Christ's rule over the nations in Balaam's prophecy of the coming Messiah in Numbers 24 17 to 19 it says a star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth Edom shall be dispossessed notice that star is parallel to scepter because they both symbolize rule this messianic king's rule and authority so this revelation 226 to 28 of the Messiah receiving the scepter and star being the star and coming and exercising dominion over the nations is a fulfillment of that prophecy in numbers 24 and we'll get to share in that rain but it's important for us to note that we don't receive this scepter until the end when

[48 : 12] Jesus comes I think many Christians in our country pine for those good old days when Christians used to have a lot more political power and influence but I think political power is a siren song yes we long for and pray for God's kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven we should pray that I pray that every day and yes we should exercise our rights as citizens of a democratic country to participate in the political process and use our best judgment to promote the glory of God and the good of humanity in the voting booth I'm not negating any of those things but we need to remember that Jesus does not promise us political power here and now in our days of turmoil when nations are warring against one another trying to conquer one another and just yesterday some of you might have seen this two heavyweight boxers came together out to the ring both of them are wearing crowns and they get seated on these thrones styling themselves as these conquering kings looking for glory and conquest in the ring the sinful world glorifies conquest and victory over others through might and through power but

Christian conquest looks radically different from that verse 26 says the one who conquers and one who keeps my works till the end to him I will give authority over the nations but how do we exactly conquer it's not by subjugating other people or nations through political or military might revelation 12 11 tells us exactly how Christians are supposed to conquer it says that we conquered the great dragon the ancient serpent Satan it says they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony for they love not their lives Christians we conquer by following in the footsteps of Jesus the lamb of God who died on the cross for our sins and then was raised from the dead Jesus died to seek and save the lost and so we also are to die while holding fast to our faith and speaking the words of

Christ the word of the testimony so that maybe even those who are persecuting us even those who oppose us might hear the good news of Jesus and be saved Christians conquer by being conquered Christians gain eternal life by dying to ourselves by being faithful unto death as Paul says in Romans 8 we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us even as we are killed all the day long he says and regarded as sheep to be slaughtered remember what Jesus said as he sent out his disciple he said I am sending you as sheep in the midst of wolves if we want to follow the lamb of God who take away the sin of the world by dying for us on the cross then we need to live as sheep among wolves as sheep to be slaughtered and if we follow in the footsteps of Jesus in his death and humiliation then we will also follow in his footsteps of resurrection and exaltation 2 Timothy 2 11 to 12 promises us if we have died with him we will also live with him if we endure we will also reign with him in this life we are sheep to be slaughtered it's the norm and not the exception for Christians to be persecuted and subjugated all over the world and it's still happening all over the world but when it seems like ungodly nations are triumphing over us when it seems like those who oppose Jesus have all authority and power we have to remember that we are the ones who will receive the rod of iron and we are the ones who serve the morning star with eyes like flame of fire feed like burnished brass we shall die but we shall be resurrected we shall be subjected but then we shall reign forever let's pray father we are weak and we are assailed on every side by the world the flesh and the devil every day we are assailed by our own sinful flesh and the temptations of the sinful world and of the devil who never ceases to tempt us and accuse us father we are weak but you were strong and we look to you and we wait on your son our savior lord Jesus with eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze we wait for him we hope in him and we wait for him and we suffer with him and for him and we die with him and for him so help us to be faithful unto death and to follow in the footsteps of the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in Jesus name we pray amen