

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation: 2:18-3:6 | Session 6 | Jezebel and Dead Man Walking

Unto the Seven Angels of the Seven Churches (Chapters 2 and 3)

- Angels = (Seven stars are the seven messengers) Not angelic beings here, but rather human leaders, *messengers of the congregation* (see session 4). The Greek word *Angelos* means messenger.
- Churches = Not the church as we understand it today. These are Jewish assemblies or synagogues.
- The churches may have existed at the time of John's writing but are future Jewish congregations living during the Tribulation and may also represent all of Israel during that time.
- The three letters thus far are addressed to the leaders of the congregation:
 - Ephesus: Revelation 2:1-7.
 - Smyrna: Revelation 2:8-11.
 - Pergamos: Revelation 2:12-17.



As we look at two more of the seven assemblies in this session, Thyatira and Sardis, we assume they are all future Jewish synagogues living amid the seven-year Tribulation. It might be prudent to ask; If the letters are not intended for the future, what practical worth would there have been to include them in a "prophetic" book? (See Revelation 1:3). Or, stated another way, if the book of Revelation is about the future, how would the events of letters written 2,000 years ago and already fulfilled be of any value for prophetic events?

While these letters are sent to the seven assemblies, they are addressed to the leader of each assembly, as noted by the singular pronouns, Thee and Thou. The burden of good works within the synagogue

appears to fall upon the leader, yet each assembly is condemned or praised due to his actions and leadership.

To the Angel of the Church of Thyatira (2:18-29)

Verse 18—

Unto the angel, we have identified as the *leader of the Jewish synagogue*. **Thyatira** is modern-day Akhisar in western Turkey (as are all the seven churches in Revelation). This city is mentioned in Acts 16:14, where Lydia, a seller of purple, was from. **These things saith**, the speaker to the angel is now identified as the **Son of God** for the first time and the only time in Revelation. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is “the heir of all things” according to Hebrews 1:2, and so, He is invested with all power in the resurrection (John 5:25) and life (John 11:25), and as Son of God and Son of Man, all power in judgment is given to him (John 5:27). In the previous three letters, the speaker was not described by name.

These things he saith that holdeth the seven stars... (2:1, Ephesus);

These things saith the first and the last... (2:8, Smyrna);

These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges (2:12, Pergamos).

But the Son of God is also described here with symbols of judgment, as the one **who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire**; when Jesus Christ returns, He is not coming back in grace; instead, he will be seated upon a white horse (Revelation 19:11), he will judge and make war with fire in his eyes directed toward his enemies. When the Lord returns, He will “Bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the heart” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Scripture clearly shows that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Nonetheless, Christians worry and fear this verse. Let me give solace to those who don’t believe Romans 8:1. Go to the Lord, lay out your sins before Him. Once you do that, your sins are no longer hidden; there will be no hidden things of darkness to bring to light. Move on, grow in Christ through His Word.

And his feet like fine brass, at his Second coming judgment Jesus Christ will trample his enemies under his feet. Isaiah 63:1-6 describes the extraordinary return Of Christ to set up his kingdom with the imagery of grapes being stomped on to make wine.¹ The fulfillment of this prophecy is in Revelation 19:13-15.

Verse 19—

I know. Jesus Christ knows the leader of this assembly. What does he know? **Thy Works**, and he has some good works to be commended; **charity** (agape), **service, faith, and patience**. All indicative of the kingdom gospel of works, not grace. The leader’s latter **works** will be greater than their **first**. Works and patient endurance are necessities in the Tribulation, and this messenger leads his assembly to do some good things.

Verse 20—

¹ This passage alone should convince us that we are not setting up God’s kingdom in the world today. We are not “kingdom builders.” Jesus Christ alone has the power to do it. He will trample the enemy with feet like unto polished brass, and there will be no stopping him. (See also Malachi 4:3).

Jesus also corrects this leader. In the church of Pergamos (2:14), the congregation's leader allowed the false doctrine of Balaam to creep into the assembly. In Thyatira, there is a **woman** named **Jezebel**.^{2 3} The leader, note again the pronoun **thou**, has **sufferest** (permitted) her to **prophesy, teach, and seduce** the **servants** of Jesus within the assembly to **commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols**. Whatever this apostasy she will bring to the assembly of Jews, it will not be challenged by this synagogue's leader. He will allow it to happen.

While women have a Biblical role to play in a Jewish assembly and a church in the dispensation of grace when it comes to the office of overseer or that of the pastor-teacher, there is a limitation that God has mandated. The office is to be only filled by a man. That divine mandate goes against the grain of our society completely, but society doesn't determine God's order in the church. Paul wrote to Timothy about this exact issue in 1 Timothy 2:11-14,

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be silent. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

This does not mean women are less important than men, or they don't play a crucial role within a church, or they are not as valuable as men. Do not read any more into this imperative than what is written. So why this admonition from Paul? The only answer I can give is that, as a general rule, there must be something in the DNA, or the emotional makeup of a woman, that makes her more open to spiritual deception than a man. Gender is not a *social construct*. *There* is an innate, divinely purposed difference between males and females. But Paul's exhortation to Timothy only applies to the oversight of the church. Are there some women who *can* lead better than some men? Certainly, but this is God's instruction; a woman is not to be a pastor, and she is not to exercise any authority in the church over men through preaching or teaching. And, as we can see in our day, the Church, in general, is in a great mess because this rule is being violated, and it will happen to a greater degree during the Tribulation in Thyatira. The leader has allowed the **woman** named **Jezebel** to usurp his leadership, and this assembly is paying the price for him doing so.

In the letter to the angel in Ephesus, we saw the opposite. The *messenger/leader* of that assembly *could not bear those, which were evil*. This type of apostasy or corruption will be the norm of what will happen during the days of the Antichrist. The fornication and sin we see in our day will pale to what will happen during the Tribulation.

Verse 21—

I gave her space to repent...and she repented not. The Lord Jesus Christ will give this woman space (chronos=time) **to repent**. Although we live in the specific *dispensation of grace* (for salvation), God's grace permeates all of Scripture, beginning in the garden of Eden. We see God's grace in Revelation, where John records several times when people will have a chance to repent but will not. Here Jesus gave this woman time to repent, but she didn't want to. For further study, see 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11.

Verse 22—

² Aptly named after the Jezebel wife of King Ahab in 1 Kings 21:25; she *stirred up* the king to *work* wickedness

³ A good woman can elevate a man to his greatest potential, a bad woman can bring him down!

Cast her into a bed, a bed of what? Jezebel of the Old Testament faced judgment. In the account (2 Kings 9:33-37), she was cast out of a window, *“So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses....”* This is likely a **bed** of judgment meted out according to her works. And all those with her will face **great tribulation** unless they **repent of their deeds**.

Verse 23—

Her children could be her biological children, but likely He is referring to those who follow her. **Kill...with death** seems redundant. Some say *kill with pestilence* (NASB), but the word death doesn't mean *pestilence*. It could mean, as the ESV translates it, *I will strike her children dead*. Whichever it is, they are going to die **according to their works**.

I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts. The word **reins** in Greek is “nehpros,” which means *kidneys*. If one has a kidney removed, it is called a nephrectomy. The Greek word heart is “*kardia*,” which we always translate as the heart. Thus, the kidneys and the heart. The idea is that Jesus says he searches the **“inner man.”** Jesus can't be faked out. What is inside the inner man is what will come out in his life. Jesus warned **every one of you** in the assembly.

Verses 24,25—

We may look at our society today and think things cannot get any worse. The world has not yet seen the **depths of Satan** that will unfold during the Tribulation. Many will give in, but some in Thyatira will not succumb to the false **doctrine**. Some will not compromise. Jesus tells **the rest who hold fast till I come** that there will be no **burden put on them**, so keep doing *good works*.

Verses 26,27—

He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him, I will give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron. This passage causes many Christians to think that “we” will **rule** in the kingdom of God. When Bible commentators use the word *believers*, they most likely mean believers like you and me who have believed by grace through faith. We have already determined that will not be possible during the Tribulation. The word *believe* is not found in the Book of Revelation. For example:

“Christ promises believers who are faithful that they will join him in his millennial **rule**.”⁴

The promise here is to the **overcoming** Jew who **keepeth my works unto the end**. To the *overcomer*, *he will give power over the nations*.

Verse 27 is a quote from Psalm 2:8,9; *“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”* Here is a promise to Israel, and Jesus confirms that it will happen in verse 27. Many Christians today claim this verse in Psalms for us. If we ask God, then we can win the nations for Christ! But look at the second part of that psalm,

“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

That is a verse you will never see a missionary society quote as their mission statement. We cannot pick and choose Bible verses to fit our own bias.

⁴ Walvoord, John F., and Roy B. Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. Print.

This prophecy of Jesus to Thyatira is for the Jews who overcome.

Verse 28—

And I will give him the morning star. This is difficult to interpret, but it could be connected with Numbers 24.17, *“I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: There shall come a Star out of Jacob, And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, And destroy all the children of Sheth.”*

In Revelation 22:16, Jesus says, *“I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”*

All of verse 28 deserves more study.

Verse 29—

Jesus repeats his often-used formula, **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.** The prophetic testimony spoken by Christ Himself, or the other prophetic testimonies spoken by John, angels, etc.

To the Angel of the Church of Sardis (3:1-6)

Let's keep in mind that the Greek word *angelos* means messenger. An *angelos* can be an earthly messenger or a heavenly messenger. The context should help us decide. Hebrews 1:7 tells us that angels are also *spirits and ministers*. Quoting from the book of Psalms, 104.4, The *“Lord God...maketh his angels' spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.”*

Verse 1—

These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. We saw in Chapter 1 that the seven spirits are not another name for the Holy Spirit⁵. The plain sense is that they are some sort of servants of God (created angelic beings). Whatever or whoever the seven spirits are (and we will discover more about them in future chapters), they are separate from the **seven stars**. Jesus Christ possesses them both, not as attributes but as having them in his possession to accomplish his work.

I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. The works of this messenger are known to Christ, He may have a reputation of being (spiritually) alive, but he is (spiritually) dead. There is nothing worse than a spiritually dead pastor who does not know the Lord. These men (and, unfortunately, women) abound in many evangelical churches.

The book of James says, *“Faith without works is dead,”* but I would argue that James is speaking to Jews under the Law, not to the Body of Christ since James contradicts the apostle Paul. Paul says, speaking to the Body of Christ, *it is by grace, not of yourselves or works. All who believe are alive in Christ* because of individual belief (1 Corinthians 15:22). Likewise, speaking of those who believe (Ephesians 2:5), *When we were dead in sins, God made us alive together in Christ (by grace are ye saved).*

In the dispensation of grace, a believer can't be spiritually dead or have dead faith. A person might be walking in the flesh and not by the spirit; he might be immature in this knowledge of the word of God, but his faith is not dead.

⁵ See Session 2, page 4.

Verse 2—

The **works** of the messenger of the assembly of Sardis are not **perfect** (or complete) **before God**. Maybe some things (works) **remain** in his ministry and life **that** are not dead yet but **are ready to die** but can be saved if the messenger is **watchful and strengthens** them. How can he do this?

Verse 3—

Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard (the Gospel of the kingdom, Matthew 24:9-14), **and hold fast, and repent**. *He is a dead man walking* but can be saved by repenting. If the messenger does not **watch**, Jesus will **come upon** him as a **thief** at an unknown **hour**.

For those of us who believe by grace through faith, this is not a passage directed to us; we are not in darkness and will not be overtaken by a thief (1 Thessalonians 5.2).

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

In 1st Thessalonians 4:16-18, the Body of Christ (the Church) receives comfort from Paul's revelation from Jesus Christ regarding the Rapture of the Church.

In chapter 1st Thessalonians 5, Paul deals with the timing of the Rapture.

Paul begins with **But** (or now), when is all of this going to happen?

But of the times and seasons.

- **Times** is the Greek word *chronos*. We get our word chronometer (a timepiece or a watch). It is not a specific time but an unlimited duration (unless defined as a specific time).
- **Seasons** is the Greek word *kairos*; it refers to a definite portion of the *chronos*.
- Paraphrase: *"About the general time of the end, even the exact time, there is no need for me to write to you."*
 - Why? Because *"God hath not appointed us to wrath."* (1:10; 5:9). Therefore, there is no need to know any more than what he taught them in chapter 4.

You know perfectly.

- Those in the church who were Jews would have known about the day of the Lord from Old Testament passages like Isaiah 2:10-22.

Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

There are two primary views on when the Day of the Lord begins.

1. One view believes it begins at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (at the end of the Tribulation).
2. Another view is that the Day of the Lord begins at the beginning of the Tribulation and continues through the New Heaven and New Earth.

Both views have merit. My view #2. As noted above, Paul states in verse 9, **For God hath not appointed us to wrath**. The antecedent of wrath (or the logical reading of the passage) is the **day of the Lord**. Day of the Lord = wrath. "That day is a day of wrath." Zephaniah 1:15.

Verses 4-8 show why the church will not go through the wrath of the Tribulation: As **children of light**, we need not fear the **darkness** of the coming Day of the Lord. Several Old Testament passages refer to the darkness of the Tribulation:

Zephaniah 1:14-18

Joel 2:1-2

Joel 2:10-11

Therefore this day of darkness will come upon the *children of the night*, that is, unbelievers. But because the believer is of *the day*, the Day of the Lord will not come upon him.

Old Testament Names for Tribulation	New Testament Names for Tribulation
Time of Jacob's Trouble Jeremiah 30:7	The Day of the Lord 1 Thessalonians 5:2
A week (70th week of Daniel) Daniel 9:27	The Wrath of God Revelation 15:1, 7; 14:10, 19; 16:1
The LORD's Strange Work Isaiah 28:21	The Hour of Trial Revelation 3:10
The LORD's Strange Act Isaiah 28:21	The Great Day of the Wrath of the Lamb of God Revelation 6:16-17
The Day of Israel's Calamity Deuteronomy 32:35; Obadiah 12-14	The Wrath to Come 1 Thessalonians 1:10
The Tribulation Deuteronomy 4:30	The Wrath 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 11:18
The Indignation Isaiah 26:20; Daniel 11:36	The Great Tribulation Matthew 24:29
The Overflowing Scourge Isaiah 28:15, 18	The Hour of Judgment Revelation 14:7
The Day of Vengeance Isaiah 34:8; 35:4; 61:2	
The Year of Recompense Isaiah 34:8	
The Time of Trouble Daniel 12:1; Zephaniah 1:15	
The Day of Wrath, Distress, Wasterness, Desolation, Darkness, Gloominess, Clouds, Trumpet, and Alarm	

Children of the light (vs. 5) and the **day** never have to worry about being caught off guard. And because we are of the day, we don't sleep; we stay awake (staying alert), not worried about the Tribulation destruction, but rather waiting for the blessed hope of Rapture, and while we do, we stay **sober** (vs.8) and alert by **putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and, a helmet, that is, the hope of salvation**. The word salvation is one that we already possess and is in reference to the redemption of the body, which will occur at the Rapture. Therefore, this is the salvation we have been appointed to as believers, not the wrath of the Day of the Lord.

As Paul wrote in 4:18, he repeats it in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, **Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as ye do.**

Revelation Chapter 3 (continued)

Verses 4,5—

Jesus reassures the messenger in Sardis. **Thou hast a few names...which have not defiled their garments. They shall walk with me in white;** that is purity. This is not *Body of Christ* language. **They are worthy** to enter the kingdom because they have not defiled themselves. You and I who believe are worthy of being forever with Christ because of Christ alone and His work, not of ourselves, but these in Sardis are worthy because of their merit. Our salvation is not based on our merit.

The whole scene that we see with the assembly of Sardis is found in Revelation 16:15, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments..." and in 19:7-9, "The wife hath made herself ready...arrayed in fine linen." Those **which have not defiled their garments** are those who have not worshipped the Beast or received his mark, or partaken in his idolatrous obscenities.⁶ **And I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life.**

⁶ Bullinger, E.W. Commentary on Revelation. Kregel Publications. 1984.

As for the **Book of Life**, precisely what it is and what it means is difficult to determine. In the New Testament, the phrase is used once in Philippians 4:3 without any explanation and at least six times in the book of Revelation, which we will see later in our study. Is it a book for everyone who has ever been conceived or ever lived? Psalm 69:28 mentions *the Book of the Living*. Is this the same book? If one experiences the *second death* (cast into the lake of fire), is he blotted out of the Book of Life? Daniel also mentions the “time of trouble” and that “thy people (Israel) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” Is this also the Book of Life? Is the Book of Life only for Israel?

Because of its ambiguity, we would be wise not to make a doctrine around the Book of Life. But we should take heart that there is no hint in Paul’s epistles of a believer’s name being blotted out for those saved by grace through faith. Paul says, “*There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” And, “*nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:1,39). Only in the post-grace dispensation do we find this statement of being blotted out.

Verse 6—

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches—a reminder to keep reading. The Spirit is not finished; there are two more assemblies to hear from the Lord.

Next week we will look at the final two Jewish assemblies, Philadelphia and Laodicea.