

This is the longest of the letters, and it is written to the smallest, least important city. God's scale of who and what is of great importance is much different than ours.

The only notable thing about Thyatira from the religious point of view was that it possessed a fortune-telling shrine, presided over by a female oracle called the Sambathe. (Barcley)

She would get into some kind of trance state and give people information from the gods.

It's also interesting to note that every person we know of from history that was prominent in this city was a woman – which turns out to be the case with this church as well.

1. Compromise is sin, and God will punish it.

Christ introduces Himself to this church in a very threatening way.

18 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

Just as He did with Pergamum, He introduces Himself as the Judge, Jury and Executioner.

The eyes like fire represent His penetrating, searching, omniscient gaze, and the bronze feet represent the crushing, devastating nature of the judgment that arises from His holiness.

We talked about the threatening, dangerous nature of working with molten brass. These people knew all about that, because they had a metalworkers' guild in that city.

It's really a frightening thing to see Christ approach His church in that way.

Why does He introduce Himself that way? This sounds like a great church.

19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

your love and faith, your service and perseverance

These are parallel. **Love** issues forth in **service** and **faith** in **perseverance**.

(I take this as faith rather than faithfulness because it's combined with love. Love and faith make a better summary of the Christian life than love and faithfulness. Also, faithfulness is basically the same thing as perseverance.)

The word translated **service** is the word *diakonia* (which ends up as the English word "deacon").

There are two major kinds of service in the NT: that which is done by a slave by obligation, and that which is done by a friend who doesn't owe you anything – he just decides to do it out of love (like someone who would help at your wedding).

That kind of thing characterized this church.

What more could you ask from a church than to be characterized by love and faith?

And not only that, but they were *improving*.

19 you are now doing more than you did at first.

Unlike Ephesus, the backsliding church, this church was making spiritual progress.

So there are some terrific things about this church, so why this threatening greeting?

To answer that, you don't have to look any further than v.20. They were guilty of the same sin as Pergamum.

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you

That in itself is frightening, isn't it? If there is anything that would be unimaginable to me it would be to get letter from the Lord Himself telling you that He is against your church.

You tolerate that woman Jezebel

They are doing great with their spiritual growth in general, but they have the one glaring sin of tolerance.

This church is very similar to Pergamum, but even worse.

At Pergamum they were rebuked for having false teaching among them, here it goes beyond just having them – the word **tolerate** means they *permitted* it.

It's a little bit stronger word. At Pergamum they may have argued against the false teachers, but failed to put them out. Here it sounds like they actually granted this woman permission to continue.

It's interesting to contrast this church with Ephesus. They were strong on doctrine but had left their first love. This church was strong on love, but was tolerating false doctrine.

Both churches are harshly rebuked. It's essential to be committed to both love and holiness.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard people bring up the letter to Ephesus when they want to argue against dealing with sin or false doctrine in the church. "Ephesus was rebuked for losing its first love – even though they were strong on doctrine."

That's true, but Thyatira was rebuked for being soft on false doctrine and sin even though they were strong on love.

Jezebel

I can't imagine this woman's name was actually Jezebel. No father would name his daughter Jezebel.

The Lord calls her that to compare her with Jezebel.

"What were the major things that characterized Jezebel?" Two things come to mind:

1. Mass murder and prophet killer

2. Dog food.

The king of Israel, Ahab, gets the prize for actually figuring out a way to be more wicked than Jeroboam, which was quite a feat.

The way he managed it was by marrying Jezebel.

From the wedding day on, she took over.

She worshipped Baal, was into witchcraft (2 Ki.9:22) and seduced Israel to do the same.

Her goal in life was to kill all the prophets of Yahweh. She was one of the most intimidating figures in Israel's history. She was a very, scary lady. Even Elijah was afraid of her.

After Elijah demonstrated Baal to be an impotent god who couldn't even send fire down from heaven, he put 400 prophets of Baal to death.

1 Kings 19:1-3 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.

Elijah gets a lot of ridicule for being a coward. But it's not surprising that he would be scared.

She was a mass murder with all the resources of the king at her disposal. Prior to this she had killed almost all of God's prophets.

1 Kings 18:4 While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves,

When her husband was unhappy about the fact that Naboth wouldn't sell his vineyard, she said, "That's no problem." And she issued an order to the local authorities:

1 Kings 21:9-10 "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. 10 But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

That's exactly what they did.

That last one was the last straw. 1 Kings 21:23 "And also concerning Jezebel the LORD says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.'

Later Jehu came to the tower she was in 2 Kings 9:30-34

Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and looked out of a window. 31 As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, "Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master?"

He looked up at the window and called out, "Who is on my side? Who?" Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. 33 "Throw her down!" Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her

underfoot. 34 Jehu went in and ate and drank. "Take care of that cursed woman," he said, "and bury her, for she was a king's daughter." 35 But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands. 36 They went back and told Jehu, who said, "This is the word of the LORD that he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh. 37 Jezebel's body will be like refuse on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel.'"

What Jezebel was to Ahab, this woman was to the church in Thyatira.

So my guess is this woman was an extremely powerful, intimidating woman. The men in the leadership of the church were probably cowards who were afraid to confront her, and she just walked all over them.

If you have had much experience with church politics you know it is very common for the biggest power broker in a church to be a specific woman – usually a woman that doesn't even have any formal position of authority (but she controls the men who do).

Jezebel didn't have any formal authority in their government. Everything she did she did by forcing her husband to do it.

who calls herself a prophetess.

She claimed to hear the voice of God (an extremely common claim today).

Leading Christians Astray

By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

Notice these are believers who are led astray by this woman (Christ calls them **my servants**).

That's serious.

It's bad enough to sin. It's bad enough to engage in compromise, believe false doctrine, commit sins of idolatry or fornication...

But much, much more serious is the sin of leading others astray.

When Judgement Day comes, you would be better off to be a mass-murderer, a vicious dictator – just about anything than to be someone who led others into sin.

Mt.18:6-7

if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

The world pumps out is evil constantly, but when that evil ends up causing a Christian to sin, God keeps track of who was responsible for that, and curses that person. Woe to that person – he'd be better off dead.

Whatever you do, do not ever be the cause of sin in others.

Jezebel seduced Israel into idolatry in Elijah's time. This Jezebel seduced this church into sin.

Be very careful.

When we sin, we often feel justified in that sin if we can drag someone else into it.

This has implications for women who dress immodestly.

There are women who so enjoy the attention they get when they dress in such a way as to draw attention to their bodies, that they don't even care that they are the cause of making someone stumble.

Woe to people like that.

Whoever stumbles will be held accountable for his own stumbling, but whoever was the cause of it will be judged even more severely.

Having said that I should also say we need to make a distinction between being the cause of sin and being the object of someone's sin.

Sometimes when a woman is abused by a man, she assumes it must somehow be her fault --maybe she did something to bring that on.

That's not a valid assumption. Men who do those kinds of things often do them to women who are perfectly modest.

But a woman who dresses in such a way as to incite lust is inviting the curse of Mt.18.

And the same goes for men who seduce Christian women to marry them when they are not spiritual leaders, which often results in the ruin of that woman's spiritual life. Woe to those men.

Jesus goes on to say He's going to cast this woman into a bed of suffering, He's going to send her associates through Great Tribulation, and He's going to kill her children.

If these words sound harsh to you, they are. Don't dismiss that as "Bible rhetoric." The Lord is really upset.

We should take note of how much it affects Him emotionally when His church is harmed.

So precious to Him is His church, that as He said in 1 Cor.3:17, where He compares the church assembly to God's temple: **If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred**

Sin in your life is serious. Infecting the church with that sin is really serious.

If you think about the preciousness of the church like Christ thinks about it, church discipline, to you, will seem lenient, not harsh.

Women Teachers

It wasn't uncommon for a woman to have significant positions of leadership in the synagogue (WBC). That was part of their culture. That's why the Lord had to regulate it in the Church.

1 Tim.2:11-12 In the church, Paul said **A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man;**

Evidently the church in Thyatira did what many churches today do and ignored that standard.

Maybe they figured it was cultural. "Paul wrote that 40 years ago – this is a new time and a new culture...."

Whatever their reasoning, they let this woman continue. They lacked courage. It's not uncommon for a church to be afraid to rebuke women.

That's especially the case in our culture. We see the horrible oppression of women around the world and throughout history, and as Christians that is disgusting and heartbreaking to us.

But sometimes the result is an overreaction that makes us afraid to ever say "no" to any woman, or to ever rebuke a woman.

But that's not really loving. It's just cowardice.

Cowardice toward sinning members

You would think a church characterized by faith and love would be just fine in other areas. But love without holiness descends into immorality.

It's actually very common for those who emphasize only love to become weak and timid in confronting sin.

Their fatal flaw was that they thought they could just absorb sin and be OK.

They didn't want to disrupt their loving environment, and so they just tolerated everything.

That's a common error in churches. "We'll just let the unrepentant sinner continue in our midst, and try to influence him."

"We are all for love and faith, and we are all for spiritual edification and building people up, and we are all for growth..."

...but don't make us take a hard stand on sin.

And we really aren't interested in getting into a discussion about doctrine.

And we certainly aren't interested in running around confronting people about their sin.

Don't make us take an official stand on the whole issue of female pastors – it's too controversial."

“We don’t want to rock the boat.”

So many churches today are just simply too cowardly to tell someone, “You can’t do that – that’s sin.”

“You can’t teach – you aren’t qualified.”

“You can’t teach that – that’s error.”

Saying those kinds of things will be so uncomfortable. And they will put a dent in our growth chart.

It will disrupt the smoothness of our operation here.

People will leave – we won’t be able to meet our budget projection.

And the unchurched won’t understand it. Heaven forbid we should make the unchurched feel uneasy.

That kind of thinking will bring upon the church the fierce wrath of Christ.

Church discipline cleanses the church in so many ways. Not only does it cleanse the church by removing the unrepentant sinner...

and not only does it cleanse the church by shooting a shot across the bow and warning those who may be contemplating sin...

but it also cleanses the church by causing the people who don’t take the Bible seriously to be offended and leave the church.

It tends to drive away the cowards.

The Error

What was it that this woman was teaching that led Christians into terrible sin – idolatry and immorality?

The immorality is probably just as literal as the eating (Mounce)

We have some ability to reconstruct the setting in Thyatira based on our historical knowledge of that city from other sources.

Thyatira was a city dominated by trade guilds (like labor unions).

People in that city prospered – if they were in a guild.

The problem was that the guilds were not only labor organizations. They were also religious organizations.

Each guild had a god it focused on, and the guild meetings were also festivals to that god.

They would come together in a banquet and conduct business, and worship that deity, offer a sacrifice, eat that meat as an act of worship, drink wine, and by the end there would be all kinds of very immoral sexual behavior.

Back in Acts 15 when the Apostles said, “You Gentile converts, if you want to be Christians, are going to have to give up meat sacrificed to idols”, they were not just imposing a dietary restriction. - It wasn’t just a matter of finding new ways to get your protein.

That prohibition came near to cutting off a Christian from all social fellowship with non-Christians; there were few social occasions, and almost no banquets, which he could share with the heathen world – certainly not the trade guild meetings.

Refusal to join a guild was basically economic suicide.

Almost certainly this woman was advocating some kind of compromise related to membership in the guilds.

“Look, we have to make a living. We have to put a roof over our heads. We need an income to support the work of the Lord...

...so join a guild. It’s not a sin. And go ahead and go to the meetings. While they worship their false god, you can just pray to the true God.”

And she may have even been teaching the age-old heresy that says since the body is only matter, and matter is evil, it doesn’t matter what happens to the body.

Go ahead and drink the wine and eat the meat and engage in the sexual festivities what matters is not your body but your heart.”

We don’t know if she was actually advocating immorality, or if she was just teaching some level of compromise that tended to put people in a position in which temptation was so overwhelming that they fell into sin.

But either way she was responsible for them going astray.

It’s amazing how we can rationalize sin when our livelihood is at stake.

People will go to work day after day into an environment they know will cause them to sin, and do nothing to make a change, because they are convinced they need *that* job to survive.

Some people will get a job that requires them to work Sunday mornings. And they completely forsake the fellowship in clear violation of the Lord’s command not to forsake the assembly.

And they do that because they are afraid if they tell their boss “I’m not available to work Sundays” they might not get the job, or they might not get as many hours as they want.

What is the answer to the economic problem you would face in Thyatira if you didn’t compromise and participate in a guild?

The solution is Christ has promised to take care of His people. All we have to do is obey.

Very often I will show someone from Scripture what the biblical response is for his situation and he will say, “If I did that I would lose my job/wife” or “I would be destitute” etc.

In other words, “If I obey God, there would be a dire consequence, and that’s unacceptable.”

And that’s really the crux of the issue with faith. Obedience that doesn’t cost you anything doesn’t require any faith.

Christ is saying, “Yes, you will face some dire consequences if you obey, but it’s worth it.” And Satan says, “No, it’s not worth it.” And you will respond to whichever one you believe.

Let me make it easy for you: If obeying God in some area is going to result in you starving to death, what should you do? That’s easy. Starve.

That’s all Christ asks of you – just put your entire life in His hands.

But this woman said, “No, you don’t have to go that far – that’s fanaticism.”

No persecution is mentioned in this letter. They probably weren’t being persecuted. If you compromise with the world, you don’t have to worry about persecution.

As for this specific issue of guilds and unions, I won’t go so far as to say it’s sin to belong to a union. But I would strongly caution you in that area.

Unions require loyalty. Sometimes they even require that you swear an oath of loyalty to the union.

If you do that, you had better make it clear to yourself and to them that this is conditional, limited loyalty.

“I will be a hard working, dutiful faithful employee. But my first allegiance is to Christ.”

It seems to me you are placing yourself in a position of temptation by joining a union. What are you going to do if that union decides to strike? Going on strike would be a violation of your word and a failure to be a faithful employee.

How can you sign a contract agreeing to work on certain terms, and then refuse to work on those terms? That’s lying.

This woman most likely was teaching people to go ahead and participate in the guilds, which led to disastrous compromise with the world.

21 I gave her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling to repent.

As evil as her actions were, Jesus’ primary concern is not with them, but with her refusal to repent. If you repent He won’t even punish you for your past deeds (no matter how awful), but He will not forgive unrepentance.

God will continue to call you to repentance, and continue to give you opportunities...for a time. But in this woman’s case, her time is up. **I gave her time to repent** is in the past tense.

The Lord doesn’t call her to repent. He just announces judgment.

The Judgment

22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering

This is a word play on the fact that she promotes fornication. “You like beds? I’ll put you to bed.

“I’ll make you bedridden.”

“She who profaned the bed of love is pinned to the bed of suffering.” (Morris) It’s ironic, because most likely the thing that caused her whole departure from the truth in the first place was a desire to escape suffering.

The historical Jezebel’s life ended in judgment when she was thrown out of a window to her death. This Jezebel will also be thrown down, but she won’t be so lucky as to be put out of her misery when she lands.

Instead He is going to slam her down into a bed of misery.

And the word “throw” or “cast” also applies to what He is going to do to those in the world she is involved with.

and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely lit: ,I will throw them into great tribulation.

those who commit adultery with her

It seems that the Lord is doing what the prophets so often did and broadening the scope of what He means by fornication to include spiritual adultery.

(If it were only physical, then why would He tell them *they* need to repent of *her* works?)

These are the people in the world she is compromising with.

If you have some involvement with a false teacher, from God’s perspective He sees you as being literally in bed with that person.

And when judgment comes from God on someone you don’t want to be in bed with that person at that moment – you don’t even want to be in the same house (Remember Lot’s wife).

The phrase “**great tribulation**” appears in Revelation only here and in 7:14 (also Mt.24:21). The only other occurrence in the Bible is Acts 7:11 about a famine and Dan.12:1.

The time of Great Tribulation that will come at the end will come upon the earth for this very reason.

unless they repent of her ways (lit works).

It’s too late for her. She was given a chance, and now there is no way for her to avert judgment. But for those involved with her, there is still an opportunity to repent.

23 I will strike her children dead. Lit Her children I will kill with death (or a plague).

Who are her children? It may be her physical offspring, but more likely it refers to her spiritual offspring. That is a very common figure of speech in Scripture.

These are her converts – the people who have her genes. Her followers.

John is taking this language from Ez.33:27-29 **...those who are left in the ruins will fall by the sword, those out in the country I will give to the wild animals to be devoured, and those in strongholds and caves will die of a plague...29 Then they will know that I am the LORD**

The Hebrew in v.27 says they will die by a plague, but the LXX says θανάτῳ ἀποκτενῶ (I will kill them with death). Also,

Ez.33:29 καὶ γνώσονται ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος

Rev.2:23 καὶ γνώσονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι ο...

(“**Then they will know...that I am...**”)

Also, in Rev.6L8 & 18:8 θανάτῳ is used in the sense of “plague.”

To kill with death here is a Hebraism referring to dying by a plague. It comes from Ez.33.

In that chapter Jerusalem, because of idolatry, is destroyed by an invading army.

And then God says, “Those of you who survived the war and are hiding in the ruins will be cut down with the sword. And those who survive that because they are out in the country will be killed by wild animals. And those who are safe from the wild animals because they are in caves will die from a plague.”

So this is a way of referring to judgment that is inevitable and inescapable.

The Lord doesn’t mince words when it comes to compromise with the world.

So often we fail to take worldliness seriously. We have appetites for some of the pleasures of the world, and we indulge a little here and a little there, and we brush it off as no big deal.

This is a sin of our culture that is so prevalent in today’s church, that we tend not to think much of it (much like in David’s day the sin of polygamy was so common that even people who were otherwise godly didn’t think it was any big deal – like King David).

We look at that and say, “How could genuine believers be so ungodly as to marry multiple wives?”

I really think if they looked at us, and how immersed we are in the decadence of our culture through the media and entertainment, and if they saw how we go to the world for spiritual counsel and but into worldly ideas on spiritual matters and say, “How could genuine believers be *that* worldly?”

Just like they winked at polygamy, so we tend to wink at worldliness. But the words in Scripture can hardly be more harsh.

James 4:2-6 is talking about indulging our desires. **You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight...When you (pray), you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.**

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Those words are chilling. They are more frightening to me than any words in the Bible.

Because I know I'm effected by my culture, and there is a very unsettling attraction I have to the world.

It would be one thing if it said "Friendship with the world makes you a below average Christian" or "Friendship with the world makes God a little sad"...

but "friendship with the world makes you an adulterer! It equals hatred toward God. It means you are an enemy of God!"

James 1:26-27 **If anyone...does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: ...to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**

This church had compromised with the world, and the Lord was coming in judgment.

23 Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

The words translated **minds** is actually the word for kidneys. It refers to the deepest emotions.

God can see your deepest emotions. He knows the things you really long for. He knows everything about your motivations, and what thoughts go through your head.

It is so ridiculous to think we can fool a God like that with our actions.

How is it that all the churches are going to know about Christ's omniscience just because these people meet a disastrous end?

The reason this judgment will demonstrate Jesus' omniscience must mean that their guilt isn't immediately obvious on the outside.

I'm sure there were people who, through membership in the guilds, were very wealthy, and the church probably depended upon their offerings.

I'm sure Jezebel was an intelligent, well-spoken woman who seemed like a wonderful person.

I'm sure on the outside this whole thing was very presentable and appeared to be respectable.

But Christ's fiery eyes saw right through all that.

This is a reference to Jer.17:10 **"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."**

Once again a verse that speaks of Yahweh is applied to Christ, because Christ is the Almighty – the one true God.

Judgment For the Christian

This is clearly designed to make every Christian sit up and take notice. Every Christian needs to heed this warning.

Regardless of what you believe about the eternal security debate, one thing you have to acknowledge is that Scripture is very clear on the fact that even believers will face a day of judgment.

Jas.2:12 **Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law**

5:9 **Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!**

Some people teach that will be a time of reward only. But that's not true. It will be a time when the Lord will confront us about our sins.

Ecc.12:14 **For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.**

2 Co.5:10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.**

We will have to give an account. That word means to give an explanation for something that went wrong (Acts 19:40). God is going to demand an explanation for each sin

for every word - Mt.12:36

on gray areas and issues of conscience - Ro.14:10-12

for ministries and responsibilities - Heb.13:17

No excuses will fly - Heb.4:13 **Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

God is going to demand an explanation for each sin and we aren't going to have them.

Then what? If we are forgiven for our sins, what kind of consequence could there be?

There are a couple passages that seem to imply that we may experience shame at Christ's coming (Php.1:20, 1 Jn.2:28 – those passages talk about taking steps to see to it that we are not ashamed on that Day).

That would make sense. It's not unthinkable to imagine that on judgment day we will experience shame even though we are forgiven.

I'm forgiven right now, yet I still experience shame over my sin. Peter was a believer – forgiven of all his sin, and yet was it not appropriate for him to go out and weep bitterly when he denied Christ?

So that's a strong possibility.

But the only place that mentions a specific consequence is 1 Co.3:15. There it says that God is going to test the things you have poured your effort into in this life.

If you have spent your energy on earthly things, they will burn up. The only things that will survive the flames of testing will be those things that are of eternal value.

So when a man's work is tested, **If it is burned up, he will suffer loss**

So we will suffer loss.

It doesn't say loss of what – just that he will suffer loss and will still be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

So on Judgment Day, for the Christian, you will experience the anxiety and sorrow that goes with experiencing some great loss.

Many of you have lost something very precious to you in this life, and so you know something of what that will be like (if you have lost some treasured thing, or lost a loved one).

But this will be a specific kind of loss.

Have you ever worked really hard on something for a long time, and then have that thing destroyed or have it turn into a complete waste – so that all your efforts were wasted?

Suppose you spent 20 years and your life savings developing a new kind of compact disk. And just before it's finished technology advances and the CD is totally obsolete and goes the way of the 8 track.

Your work is meaningless. That illustration is very minor compared to this, because even in a situation like that you could find some good. You could think about lessons learned or skills gained, etc.

But on judgment day when you watch the worthless parts of your life get burned up, they will utterly burn to nothing, and there won't be any good.

It seems to me that will cause tremendous sorrow.

"You mean something negative might happen to me on J day as a result of my sin even though I'm a Christian?"

Why do you think 1 Pe.1:17 **Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in fear.**

Even for the Christian, the knowledge of Judgment Day should serve as a motivation to holy living.

Well, let's look now at v.24. At this point Jesus turns around and addresses those who haven't been involved with the false teacher.

And when He turns around, the fierce, frightening, terrifying wrathful posture is gone.

He speaks in the gentlest terms.

2. All He requires is that we grow spiritually

24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira,

To those associated with the Jezebel woman He says, "Repent."

To those tolerating them He says implies they should do so no longer.

And now He addresses the rest – those who oppose her and do not tolerate her.

to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets

There is no word for "secrets." It's just **the deep things of Satan**.

It's hard to think of any other time in the Bible when someone is commended for *not* knowing something.

Sometimes people who are caught up with prophecy begin to form an elitist kind of mentality in which you are kind of second class if you don't know the special secrets.

I spoke with a man a couple months ago who was telling me about the secret part of the Gospel that very, very few people know, and that can only be learned through the Holy Spirit.

He wouldn't tell me what that secret was, even though I wanted to know!

That's probably the kind of thing this woman was doing. She had likely had some prophecy about Satan – and she called it **the deep things of Satan**, and only her group was privy to them.

That kind of thing can lead to sinful behavior. They get this special knowledge, and that's all they care about. You talk to them about abstaining from meat sacrificed to idols, immorality, drunkenness, etc. and they say, "Those are just surface things. They don't mean anything."

And so Jesus says to those who are out of that loop – "Good for you! You don't know the deep things of Satan."

Some people actually teach that you have to experience evil to really understand it.

to really do spiritual warfare you have to meet Satan on his own turf. You have to really know his strategies, which means you have to experience sin yourself.

But there are some things we are better off to be ignorant about. And if you wonder what they are, it's any spiritual concept not revealed in the Bible.

In our day the temptation is not the deep things of Satan but the deep things of man (psychology).

I've told you before there is nothing wrong with making observations about human behavior, but the psychology world has gone way beyond that.

They make all kinds of pronouncements about how to solve spiritual problems with human wisdom.

And the vast majority of their garbage has been swallowed hook, line and sinker by most of the church.

They say the Bible is shallow and not sufficient to address our deep needs. The only people who can do that are the ones who know the deeps things of the soul – the complex psychological theories.

There's only one kind of deep knowledge you need. 1 Cor.2:10 **The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.**

So the Lord praises this church for being ignorant and naive about the deep things of Satan.

(I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold (κρατήσατε) on to what you have (ἔχετε) until I come.

Christ had praised them earlier for their spiritual progress in love and faith, and those who are doing that and who are not involved with tolerating that woman He just says, "I don't require anything else. Just keep that up to the end."

Christ is pleased with a church that simply continues in love and faith.

I guess that's why I never have much of an answer to people who ask about my vision for Creekside. My vision for Creekside is that we continue to grow in love and faith (and the words that result from that) and deal with sin in our midst until Jesus comes back.

"Where do you see Creekside 20 years from now?"

When I daydream about the best case scenario, I look 20 years into the future and see a church that has been growing in love and faith for 23 years.

"What are you working to achieve at Creekside?" Lots more love and faith.

This really isn't rocket science.

And it's not social science either. I don't devote a huge amount of time trying to analyze the culture.

There is some degree to which it can be helpful to know some general things about the present culture, but for the most part I don't worry too much about that,

because the same methods will work that have worked for 2000 years. You know what postmoderns need? The preaching of God's Word.

You know the best remedy for a godless, wealthy, religiously undiscerning culture like ours? The preaching of God's Word.

You know the secret to finding the key to the hearts of the kind of people who live in Boulder County? The preaching of God's Word.

Last Sunday at the church meeting we were joking about those thermometers churches sometimes use for fundraising. And I think I heard someone say he was going to make one just for fun.

Maybe a thermometer isn't such a bad idea. But instead of measuring giving with it, we could use it to track our spiritual growth.

I've told you before that I don't have a vision for Creekside, because Jesus already cast His vision.

Eph 4:11-24

It was he who gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

That's the process.

At the very bottom we start out with Christ giving teachers to the church.

Next, the teachers use Scripture to equip the body to use their gifts and carry out their ministries.

As everyone does that, the body is built up as each part does its work.

The more the body is built up, the closer we get to unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.

From there we begin speaking the truth in love.

As a result, the body grows up into Christ.

Next, we begin to become mature – no longer confused with error and false teaching.

At the top of the thermometer is we finally reach **the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**.

That's all we need to do!

Christ doesn't place any other burden on us.

But to do that we must deal seriously with sin.

Ephesus was the church that was lacking in love, but wouldn't tolerate error.

That church recovered, and regained its first love.

This church was strong on love but weak on dealing with error. How did they do?

Did they hold on?

Tradition tells us that not long after this, this church embraced the heresy of Montanism (a perversion of Christianity that emphasized tongues, prophecy, ecstasy, secret knowledge, etc.).

By the end of the second century this church ceased to exist altogether (Thomas).

Just the fact that they are growing spiritually is no guarantee that they will be overcomers. So the Lord offers an incentive.

4. Grow until the end and you will rule with Christ.

26 To him who overcomes and does my will (keeps my works) to the end

This is the first time Jesus gives a clarifying statement of overcoming. And it turns out to mean just what we thought – keeping His works all the way to the end.

That's an odd way to put it – **keep my works**. Normally we think of keeping commands, not keeping works. You don't see the concept of keeping works anywhere else in the Bible.

I think there are two reasons:

1. It's a contrast to **her works**. The problem in that church was people holding to wrong works – the works of Jezebel. So Jesus calls them to be faithful to His works rather than hers.
2. Jesus uses that unusual phrase here to get their attention and our attention and to remind us of how critical it is that we live out the Christian life all the way to the end.

There are two kinds of heresy: heresy of belief and heresy of deeds. You can be a heretic by believing and teaching false doctrine. Or you can be a heretic by believing true doctrine, but living out a false Christian life.

In fact, that second kind of heresy is probably more prominent in the NT discussion of false teaching than the first.

In places like 2 Pe.2 or Mt.23 or any of the places where Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for being false teachers and leading people astray, the emphasis is on their way of living more than their doctrine.

Make no mistake about that – you can lead just as many people astray by living out a bad example as you can by getting on TV or going door to door and preaching a false Gospel.

This is the same thing Jesus emphasized the last time He taught about the end times.

Mt.24:12-13

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

The influence of a sinful life draws more people astray than words.

Mt.23:15

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

How did they make people such sons of hell?

The answer is in v.2

"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

It wasn't their preaching that led people astray, but their lives.

I don't want to diminish the significance of doctrinal error. People live sinful lives as a result of believing the wrong way.

But you can hold to orthodoxy and still be a heretic in your actions. So Jesus calls them to maintain their orthodox lives right to the end.

Now look at how He describes salvation:

26 To him who overcomes and keeps my works to the end I will give authority over the nations- 27'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'- just as I have received authority from my Father.

Jesus is quoting some of the most precious words His Father ever spoke to Him.

It's from Psalm 2, where God speaks to the Messiah as His Son, and promises to give Him authority over the nations.

This is the only place in Revelation where Jesus is called the Son of God. All these identifiers come from the vision in ch.1, and most of the time they are stated in more forceful terms to the church to which that aspect especially applies.

Here in place of “**son of man**” He says **Son of God**. That phrase prepares the way for the quote of Ps.2.

Ps 2:1-9

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.

The world has adopted a hostile stance against two people – against God the Father and against His Anointed One (the Messiah).

3 "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."

The world is subservient to God and to His Messiah, and they decide they don't like that, and they are going to join forces and muster the strength to break free of God.

They are going to run their own lives and be captains of their own ships.

This is man's declaration of “We will not have this God be king over us. We are no longer going to live under the tyranny of God and His Messiah. From now on we are going to be self-governed.”

So there is a revolutionary war going on against God. There is an uprising that involves all the nations.

4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

He sees this uprising and it's laughable. “What kind of a puny, wimpy, cheesy attempt at an uprising is that?”

5 Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 6 "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." (Messiah)

Now in v.7 it's the Messiah speaking. Looking back we now know who the Messiah is, so you could really put vv.7-9 in red letters.

Jesus says:

7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

That promise from the Father meant a lot to Jesus. If you have ever wondered why God bothered creating the world and mankind, here is one reason: to give the nations as a gift to His Son.

It's really a very graphic picture – He wants you to imagine a piece of pottery being smashed into a hundred pieces. That's a good picture of the eventual collapse of the world's rebellion against Christ.

10 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be

destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The Father will tolerate no insubordination toward the Son in His final kingdom.

So here Jesus passes that on to us. He takes those very precious words the Father spoke to Him, and speaks them to us.

He's going to give us authority over the nations. We will rule, and He will give us power such that there will be no insubordination.

In many ways the book of Revelation is really the story of the unfolding of Ps.2. We will see references to that Psalm in 11:18, 12:5, 19:15.

It's the story of Jesus finally getting His Kingdom.

And He turns around and offers it to us.

1 Cor.6:1-4

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

Paul expected them to know that someday the saints will rule the world, because it's promised repeatedly in the OT (for example, Dan.7:18-22)

Some people get really distressed over the fact that they don't have a lot of authority in this life.

They wish they had a more prominent position. They wish they were in charge and had control over things.

You will be in authority for all eternity – enjoy your time now under authority.

The word **rule** in v.27 is a misleading translation. The word is "**shepherd**," and it's a very gentle word. It means "to shepherd" or "to pastor."

That word is meant to clash with the image of the rod of iron and the smashing of the pottery. Christ's rule, and our rule over the Kingdom will be powerful. There will be no crime or disobedience.

Everyone who does anything wrong will be immediately caught and punished severely. So no one will need locks or security cameras or security guards.

I doubt even the banks will have vaults or even lock their doors. (They may just put the money in drawers and have it be self-serve.

So the rod of iron shows the swiftness and severity of the punishment of crime.

However, that's not to imply that Jesus will be some kind of tyrant. He won't be a heavy-handed dictator who keeps law and order by just brutalizing everyone.

Instead He will have a shepherd's heart. The word is the same word translated "pastor." He will pastor the world.

And the promise here is that we will pastor the world.

We will shepherd them. We will feed them and care for them and protect them and teach them.

And they will submit to us and obey us. Not only will the wolf lay down with the lamb, but the inner city tough guy will play in the yard with your children, and you won't have to worry about any harm coming to them.

28 I will also give him the morning star.

The morning star is the last star visible in the morning and the brightest object in the sky beside the sun and moon is (Venus).

A little trickier is figuring out what it represents here.

There are numerous theories, but I think the context points fairly consistently to one: the dawning of the reign of Messiah.

The idea that the Messiah's rule would be described in terms of a star originates, of all places, in one of Balaam's cursing attempts that God turned into a blessing.

Num 24:15-17

"The oracle of Balaam son of Beor...

17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.

The Messiah will rise up in the sky like Venus – the bright star of the morning that inaugurates the beginning of a new day.

2 Peter 1:19

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

And the only other time we see that phrase in Revelation is right at the very end:

Rev.22:16

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

So this is just another aspect of the first part of the blessing. We will have authority over the nations and shepherd them with an iron rod – in other words, the very dawning of the Messianic Kingdom – the Age to Come, will be given to us.

The King Himself will be ours – He will be our own, beloved Savior.

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

Benediction: Jude 24-25 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy- 25to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.