

11. The Book of Revelation—2:20-21

(7/29/20)

In chapters 2 and 3 Jesus dictates 7 letters to 7 churches in Asia Minor (Turkey)—why these 7 when there were other larger and more important churches than these?

It was because these 7 churches contain conditions that could be applied *spiritually* and *practically* allowing Jesus to use them to address His Church as a whole throughout history in a way that would be beneficial to its purity and growth going forward.

1. They had a local application

These were 7 real churches that existed at that time and these letters were addressed to them by the Lord Jesus as a kind of ‘report card’ to show each of them how they were doing in His sight.

2. They have an historic application

These 7 churches, in a symbolic way, speak to different periods of Church history from the Apostolic period (1st century) to the Rapture (close of the Church Age)—and therefore the order they appear in chapters 2 and 3 is significant.

3. They have a timeless application

They speak to *all* churches in *all* ages and in *all* places throughout the world—each church having its own *distinctive* character:

Ephesus—the *loveless* church.

Smyrna—the *persecuted* church.

Pergamos—the *compromising* church.

Thyatira—the *idolatrous* church.

Sardis—the *dead* church.

Philadelphia—the *faithful* church.

Laodicea—the *apostate* church.

4. They have a personal application

We are the Church of Jesus Christ not the building.

These letters are a ‘mirror’ that every Christian should look into from time to time and use to examine our own individual walk and relationship with the Lord—is it *loveless, compromising, dead, faithful*, etc.

Last time in our study in the Book of Revelation we got as far as the letter to the Church of Thyatira—an *idolatrous* church.

Symbolically, the Church of Thyatira represents that period of Church history from about 600 thru 1500 AD.—a period commonly called the Dark Ages or the Medieval Period.

So, what is in view here is the Medieval Roman Catholic Church (RCC).

The Church of Thyatira (the idolatrous church)—v.18-29

As we said last time, this is the longest letter, addressed to the smallest and most insignificant church of the seven—proving that you can have big problems in small churches (little country churches are not necessarily idyllic and problem free—comment).

Jesus takes a harder line with this church—His letter is stern even harsh because of the seriousness of the sin in their midst.

Revelation 2:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write..."

The **angel** is the reference to the pastor there in the city of Thyatira.

What do we know about the city of Thyatira?—well, we don't know much about the city.

We know that it was about 30 or 40 miles inland from Pergamos and that it sat in a valley which meant it was not really a good strategic location from which to defend the city and so consequently, it never really became a metropolis—it never really became a big mega-city because cities in valleys were indefensible.

I mean, you wanted to put a city up on a hill where your enemies had to go up to fight and you could defend the city from above—but Thyatira wasn't like that and so consequently they had problems—until Rome annexed them in about 190 B.C. and that brought peace to the region.

And because they were located on a major trade route that went from Pergamos to Sardis, overnight they became a commercial center—not a strong city militarily, but they went on to become a very great commercial center (we talked last week about the purple dye they were famous for—Lydia, Acts 16).

The Commendation

Revelation 2:19 (NKJV)

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

The Condemnation

Revelation 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who

calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

The main problems that Jesus addresses concerning this church didn't come from *without* (such as the persecution the church of Smyrna faced from the Jews and the Romans)—they came from *within* (like with the church of Pergamos).

This church is not being injured from the *outside*, it's being injured from the *inside* through false doctrine and idolatrous practices (and continues to be injured if we see it symbolically as looking forward to the RCC).

There was a woman in this church that was calling herself a "*prophetess*."

That in and of itself wasn't wrong—Phillip the Evangelist had 4 daughters that were prophetesses (Acts 21:9).

The problem was that the church in Thyatira wasn't exercising any discernment or judgment in what she was prophesying.

We are commanded in Scripture (1Cor.14:29) to let "*2 or 3 prophesy and let the others in the church judge*"—based on the Word of God—"*Test all things, hold fast to what is good.*"

1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Today, many in the Church are acting like prophets and are going around saying, "*Thus says the Lord...*" and if you try to challenge what they are saying in the name of the Lord, they will hit you with, "*Touch not the Lord's anointed.*" (Comment)

Apparently, this woman was claiming that she had some *'new revelation'* from God—that it was alright for Christians to be members of the guilds (today's trade or labor unions).

Archaeologists have confirmed that Thyatira was loaded with guilds (goldsmith guilds, leather worker guilds etc.)—and these guilds were at the center of many of the problems that plagued this church. (Comment)

This prophetess said she had a word from God that it was okay for Christians to belong to the guilds—she might have even said, “*So what if the pagans are worshipping Apollo the sun god—you can just imagine that you are worshipping Jesus the Son of God.”*

This woman was teaching the believers in Thyatira how to compromise their Christian faith with the Roman religions and idolatrous practices of the guilds, so that Christians would not lose their jobs—their livelihoods.

If we try hard enough, we can justify just about anything—but are we really honoring God and being faithful to Him? (Compare this to the Church at Smyrna which refused to compromise their faith to work in the guilds)

In essence she had mixed the worship of the true God with the paganism of her day—and the final product (for the Christians in Thyatira) was idolatry.

Revelation 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ ... you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality [*'spiritual fornication'*—unfaithfulness to God] and eat things sacrificed to idols.

After animals were sacrificed to these pagan deities—the meat was then eaten in a great feast thus making the worshipper and deity 'one' with each other. (Explain)

It is not likely that this woman was actually named “**Jezebel**” since no parent in their right mind would call their daughter *Jezebel* anymore than they would call their son '*Judas.*'

I believe the name is symbolic—that Jesus gave her that ‘*nickname*’ because she was doing the same things that Jezebel in the Old Testament had done.

Jezebel was the idolatrous queen who seduced Israel into adding Baal worship (a Canaanite fertility god) to their religious ceremonies (see 1 Kings 16–19) to the God of Israel.

And if we’re going to fully understand this letter it becomes vital for us to understand who Jezebel was and what she was all about.

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon and priest of *Ashtarte* (another name for Semiramis—the city of Thyatira used to be called *Semiramis*)

His daughter Jezebel married Ahab, king of Israel—and their union (the demonic duo of the O.T.) led to what the Bible itself describes was the worst period in Israel’s history. (1Kings 16:31-33)

But in particular there is an incident recorded in 1Kings 21 of how Jezebel acquired some land wrongfully that causes many commentators to see in the letter of Thyatira a reference to the Roman Catholic Church of the medieval period.

➔ **Relate the story of Naboth’s vineyard (1Kings 21)**

There is a classic title for this very procedure that comes to us out of history where lands were acquired by the church through the use of false accusers who brought against innocent land owners false charges of heresy in order to execute them and steal their property—we call it the **Inquisition**.

These were horrible atrocities committed by the church in the name of Christ during what we commonly call the Dark Ages—which is why many commentators see in this letter a portrayal of the Roman Catholic Church.

Consequently, the Catholic Church is extremely wealthy due to their land and financial holdings.

For nine hundred years (600-1500 A.D.), vast amounts of money, property, and treasures were accumulated by the church using this practice—as well as thru the selling of *indulgences*.

An indulgence amounted to '*forgiveness in advance*'—for example, if you were going to a feast (party) of some kind on Saturday evening, you could buy an *indulgence* from a priest, and thus be “pre-forgiven” for any ensuing sin (drunkenness, idolatry, adultery, fornication...etc.).

During this time, the doctrine of “*purgatory*” was also developed, which stated one could speed up the process of the purging of a deceased loved one’s soul by buying an indulgence to hasten their release from purgatory—but also by buying candles and lighting them on his or her behalf—and then later thru the use of ‘Mass Cards’.

As Satan corrupted a large segment of the Church by marrying Christianity with paganism the result being—the birth of the Roman Catholic Church.

This eventually led to a civil war within the Church called the “Protestant Reformation” (we’ll talk more about this when we get to the letter to Sardis).

In the days of Martin Luther, who himself was an Augustinian Catholic monk, the RCC had become a '*circus of corruption*' using every scam it could think of to fill the coffers of the church from the money sacks of the gullible.

Author Dave Hunt explains—

“There were tiny vials of “true milk from the Virgin Mary’s breasts,” pickled fingers and toes of this or that “saint,” and enough pieces of wood in Europe venerated as parts of the “true cross” to build a cathedral. Even toenails of “saints” were worshiped by the deluded devout. Peter’s toes were uncommonly prolific. There were enough “certified trimmings” in Europe’s cathedrals to fill a gunnysack. The biggest scam was selling “indulgences” to release deceased relatives from purgatory—and who would refuse to buy Aunt Maria’s release from the flames! From such blood money, St. Peter’s Basilica was repaired and expanded to its present form.”

Just a little more background on Jezebel—in Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:15-30 there is an expression Jeremiah uses—the “Queen of Heaven”—it’s a Babylonian phrase.

Jezebel allowed herself to be worshipped as the “*Queen of Heaven*”—a title given to a Babylonian goddess by the name of Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod, who together founded the whole Babylonian system of pagan worship.

The worship of the Queen of Heaven was forbidden by God but has continued through the centuries and has come down through the RCC (and other so-called ‘Christian’ churches) in the form of ‘*Mary worship*’—to whom the RCC has given the title “*Queen of Heaven.*”

➔ Give an example from an old Catholic Bible my family used to own.

However, that title goes all the way back to Semiramis the wife of Nimrod (Genesis 11).

This could be the reason Jesus introduces Himself as “**the Son of God**”—He’s coming against the worship of the “*Queen of Heaven*”

And so, because of all of this many have seen in this letter strong inferences to the RCC—not to mention the name *Thyatira* means ‘continual sacrifice.’

That is important because everyone of the names of these 7 churches is significant and pertinent to the overall letter Jesus dictates to them.

Once again, *Thyatira* means ‘continual sacrifice.’

You see, the Catholic Church teaches that during the Mass the elements (bread and wine) are transformed into the literal, physical body and blood of Christ in a process called *transubstantiation.*

The word '*transubstantiation*' means—“*change of substance.*”

After the bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ at each celebration of the mass—they are then offered to God as a new sacrifice of Christ, ending with the priest saying, “*let us pray that our sacrifice is acceptable to God*”.

This means, in Roman Catholic theology, the priests literally (or so they believe) handle Christ's body and that the mass is a constant reenactment or redoing of Christ's sacrifice.

They think that the *continual* sacrifice of Christ is what really brings the grace required for salvation—which is in direct contrast to what Jesus declared from the cross when He cried, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30)—in other words, the price is paid, the work is done!

Revelation 2:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols [idolatry]. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality [spiritual fornication], and she did not repent.

The Church is the Bride of Christ and must be *faithful* to her Bridegroom.

Idolatry is '*spiritual fornication*'—unfaithfulness to the Lord.

Once again, the Catholic Church teaches that during the mass the elements (bread and wine) are transformed into the literal, physical body and blood of Christ called the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is idolatry because it reduces God to an image or substance for the purpose of worship.

After the bread (wafer) is converted into the body of Christ during the Catholic mass—it is then placed on display in a little standing chamber/holder called a *monstrance* to then be worshipped as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

In Roman Catholic theology, the Eucharist, which means “*thanksgiving*”, (also called ‘*Holy Communion*’) is efficacious meaning it has the power to produce a desired effect.

In the case of the Catholic Mass it has the power to earn *installments of “grace”* which (along with keeping the other sacraments) accrue and someday will be sufficient for the *purchasing* of salvation for the faithful Catholic who remains in good standing with the church.

In Roman Catholicism salvation is *sacramental* (participation in a ritual for the purpose of getting something in return) as opposed to what the Bible actually says about salvation—that it is a *free* gift we receive through our *faith* in Christ alone. (Eph.2:8-9)

When Catholics partake of the Eucharist, they believe they are literally consuming the body of Jesus and that by ingesting the Eucharist (eating the body of Christ) they believe that this brings them everlasting life.

To justify this belief, they point to Jesus’ words in John’s gospel chapter 6—

John 6:48, 51 (ESV)

⁴⁸ I am the bread of life...⁵¹ If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

And so, the RCC takes these words of Jesus literally as referring to His physical body which the bread and wine, during the mass, are transformed into and then ingested thru the receiving of Communion.

We evangelicals believe that the Lord’s Supper *is* a spiritual experience but that the bread and wine are not *transubstantiated* (turned into the actual body and blood of Christ) as Roman Catholics believe.

Christ cannot be sacrificed again and again for sins since the Bible clearly teaches—

Hebrews 10:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ By that will we have been sanctified [set apart] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 9:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many...

And with regard to the RCC belief that Jesus has to be “continually offered” thru the mass for salvation to be accomplished in a person’s life—

John 19:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

The plain meaning of the words “**This [bread] is my body**” and “**This [wine] is My blood**” (Matt.26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1Cor.11:24-25) is—“*This bread represents my body,*” and, “*This wine represents my shed blood.*”

There are many reasons for insisting on this interpretation:

First, the disciples to whom Jesus gave the bread and wine were Jews—and Jews had been taught that it was sinful to eat flesh with the blood in it (Deut. 12:23–25).

If they had taken Christ’s words *literally*, they would have been startled or more probably shocked by his words—and yet there is nothing in the narratives to suggest this reaction.

The disciples saw no change in the bread or wine (nor would they have expected to) and therefore, they would have understood Jesus’ words to be figurative—just as many of His other sayings were figurative.

Second, the doctrine of the incarnation teaches that the Son of God took on himself a true human body, and it is the nature of physical bodies that they *cannot* be in more than one place or exist in more than one form at the same time!

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he was before the disciples in true physical, bodily form, and if he was present bodily, his body could not have been present in the bread nor his blood in the wine at that time as well.

Besides Jesus said, "*You will see Me no more until you say, 'blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.'*" (Second Coming) = "No monstrence worship"!

Third, the statement "*This is my body*" is no different from many other metaphorical statements that occur throughout the Bible, such as,

"The seven good cows are seven years" (Gen. 41:26);

"You are that head of gold" (Dan. 2:38);

"The field is the world" (Matt. 13:38);

"That rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4);

"The seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20);

"I am the door" (John 10:9);

"I am the true vine" (John 15:1); and so on.

Again, when Roman Catholics contend that Jesus was speaking *literally* of eating His body and drinking His blood here in John 6 which, they say, they do when they take communion—make sure you point them to John 6:63:

John 6:63 (NKJV)

⁶³ "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life.

This proves that Jesus wasn't speaking literally of eating His flesh and drinking His blood—He was speaking figuratively, metaphorically.

The idolatry of the RCC isn't limited to the worship of the Eucharist.

The RCC is heavily into idolatry in the area of saints, statues, relics to be kissed and trusted in, as well as the worship of Mary as the Queen of Heaven which comes right out of Babylonian worship and is forbidden by God.

Pastor Chuck Smith—

“You see, the church is to be married to Jesus Christ even as Israel was to be married to God. And married to Jesus Christ we're to be totally faithful to Him and worshipping Him. And the worship of anything else constitutes spiritual fornication.

Now, God said to the children of Israel, thou shalt have no other gods before me. You're not to make any graven image or likeness of things that are in heaven or things that are on the earth to bow down to them, to worship them. In other words, the prohibition of icons under the law. Now, with Jezebel she brought in all of these little idols of Baal. People had them in their homes. The introduction of little idols. And the worship, the looking to them for help for guidance. And so we see the introduction of images, idols that are set up within the church, around the church. Likenesses of Jesus, likenesses of Mary, likenesses of the saints venerated by the people.”

Idolatry takes all kinds of forms—it is not limited to the Roman Catholic Church and its practices.

1 John 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Anything that competes with your love for Jesus (or exceeds your love for Jesus) is an idol and needs to be removed from your life. (Finish)

