

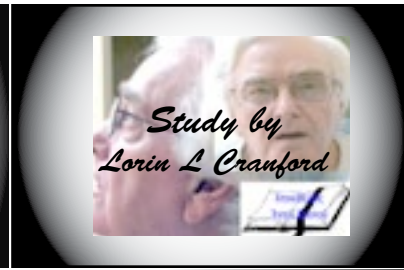


THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Bible Study 09

Text: Rev. 2:18-29

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Message to Thyatira

Greek NT

18 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας γράψων·

Τάδε λέγει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρρῶς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὁμοιοὶ χαλκολιβάνῳ·

19 οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου, καὶ τὰ ἔργα σου τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων. 20 ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι ἀφείξ τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἣ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφητίαν καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἔμοῦς δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα. 21 καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς. 22 ἰδοὺ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ' αὐτῆς εἰς θλίψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, 23 καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ, καὶ γνώσονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἐραυνῶν νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας, καὶ δώσω ὑμῖν ἐκάστω κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν. 24 ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς ἐν Θυατείροις, ὅσοι οὐκ ἔχουσιν τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην,

Gute Nachricht Bibel

18 Schreibe an den Engel der Gemeinde in Thyatira:

So spricht der Sohn Gottes, dessen Augen wie Feuer glühen und dessen FüÙe glänzen wie gleißendes Gold:

19 Ich weiß von all dem Guten, das ihr tut: von eurer Liebe, eurer Glaubenstreue, eurem Dienst füreinander, eurer Standhaftigkeit. Ich weiß auch, dass ihr in all dem jetzt noch eifriger seid als früher. 20 Aber eins habe ich an euch auszusetzen: Ihr duldet diese Isebel, die sich als Prophetin ausgibt. Mit ihrer Lehre verführt sie meine Diener und Dienerinnen, Unzucht zu treiben und Fleisch von Tieren zu essen, die als Götzenopfer geschlachtet worden sind. 21 Ich habe ihr Zeit gelassen, sich zu ändern; aber sie will ihr zuchtloses Leben nicht aufgeben. 22 Darum werde ich sie aufs Krankenbett werfen. Alle, die sich mit ihr eingelassen haben, werden Schlimmes durchmachen müssen, wenn sie nicht den Verkehr mit dieser Frau abbrechen. 23 Denn auch sie alle werde ich töten durch die Pest. Dann werden alle Gemeinden wissen, dass ich die geheimsten

NRSV

18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze:

19 I know your works— your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. 20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. 22 Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. 24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call “the deep things of Satan,” to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden;

NLT

18 Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira:

This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are bright like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze:

19 I know all the things you do -- your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things. 20 But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman -- that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet -- to lead my servants astray. She is encouraging them to worship idols, eat food offered to idols, and commit sexual sin. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she would not turn away from her immorality. 22 Therefore, I will throw her upon a sickbed, and she will suffer greatly with all who commit adultery with her, unless they turn away from all their evil deeds. 23 I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will

οἴτινες οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ ὡς λέγουσιν· οὐ βάλλω ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος, 25 πλὴν ὃ ἔχετε κρατήσατε ἄχρι[ς] οὗ ἂν ἦξω.

26 Καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, ὀψώ αὐτῶ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν 27 καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾶ ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, 28 ὡς κἀγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ ὀψώ αὐτῶ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν.

29 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

Gedanken und Wünsche der Menschen kenne. Ich werde mit jedem von euch nach seinen Taten verfahren. 24 Den anderen in Thyatira, die dieser falschen Lehre nicht gefolgt sind und die so genannten 'Tiefen des Satans' nicht kennen gelernt haben, sage ich: Ich will euch keine weiteren Einschränkungen auferlegen. 25 Aber haltet fest, was ihr habt, bis ich komme!

26 Allen, die den Sieg erringen und sich bis zuletzt an das halten, was ich gelehrt und vorgelebt habe, werde ich Macht über die Völker geben; 27 sie werden die Völker mit eisernem Zepter regieren und zerschlagen wie Tontöpfe. 28 Es ist dieselbe Macht, die ich von meinem Vater bekommen habe; und als Zeichen dieser Macht werde ich ihnen den Morgenstern geben.

29 Wer Ohren hat, soll hören, was der Geist den Gemeinden sagt!

25 only hold fast to what you have until I come.

26 To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end, I will give authority over the nations; 27 to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered— 28 even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star.

29 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

give to each of you whatever you deserve. 24 But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them -- depths of Satan, really). I will ask nothing more of you 25 except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come.

26 To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, I will give authority over all the nations. 27 They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. 28 They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!

29 Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

INTRODUCTION

From Ephesus the route goes northward to Smyrna and continued on northward to Pergamum. Now we travel southeast from Pergamum to Thyatira. The Christian community there receives some commendations from Christ, but He is especially troubled by the influence of the heresy group in the church under the leadership of a 'Jezebel' type woman. Here we learn some more details about the common false teachings circulating in the churches at Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira. We also get a glimpse into the intense anger of Christ against these churches that tolerated such teaching and did not take stern disciplinary actions against it as had been done at Ephesus.

There is much for us to learn from the experience



of this congregation so many years ago.

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

Several background issues emerge here as important to the interpretive process. Exploration of the main ones will be attempted in this section.

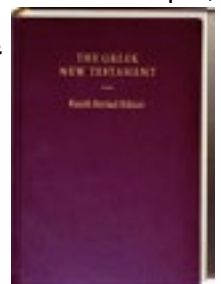
Historical Aspects:

A number of historical factors play an important role here, especially regarding the 'Internal History' aspect.

External History. In the history of the hand copying of this passage in the known manuscripts, three places emerge where the editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev. ed.) felt it important to list them since these could impact the translation of the passage.

First, in verse twenty to τὴν γυναῖκα, *that woman*, is added the possessive (singular) pronoun σου, *your*.¹

¹{B} γυναῖκα & C P 205 209 1611 2050 2053 2329 2344 it^{ar}, sig.
^t vg cop^{sa, bo} arm eth Epiphanius Andrew; Tertullian Ambrosiaster Tyconius Beatus // γυναῖκα σου (A add τὴν after σου) 1006 1841 1854 2351 Byz [046] syr^{ph, h} Cyprian Primasius [Kurt Aland, Mat-Page 2



The reading then becomes “your wife Jezebel.” This assumes that the τῷ ἀγγέλῳ is a local bishop of the church with a questionable wife. Very likely this alternative reading is due to confusion over the placing of σου in several instances in verses 19 and 20.² The weight of evidence favors leaving σου out.³

Second, in verse twenty-three, εἰς κλίνην, **on to a bed**, is replaced by a variety of alternative expressions in order to heighten the level of punishment stated.⁴ But the clear weight of evidence favors the reading εἰς κλίνην.⁵ Although the meaning seems less clear on the

Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).

²“On the basis of what was regarded as preponderant testimony, a majority of the Committee preferred the reading γυναῖκα without σου (⊕ C P 1 1611 2053 2344 Old Latin vg cop^{sa,bo} arm eth Tertullian al). The reading with σου (‘your wife Jezebel’), which requires ἀγγελος in ver. 18 to be taken as the bishop or leader of the church at Thyatira, is supported by (A) 046 1006 1854 syr^{ph,h} Cyprian al, and appears to be the result of scribal confusion arising from the presence of several instances of σου in verses 19 and 20.” [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 664.]

³“The manuscript support for the reading without the pronoun σου (your) after the noun γυναῖκα is better than that which includes the pronoun. The reading with σου (‘your wife Jezebel’) appears to have arisen because a copyist was confused by the presence of several instances of σου in vv. 19 and 20. It is sometimes suggested that the reading with the pronoun ‘you’ requires that ἀγγελος in v. 18 be taken as the bishop or leader of the church at Thyatira. But this reading does not require that γυναῖκα σου be taken as the literal wife of a bishop or other church leader. Rather, “‘your’ must refer to the corporate church in Thyatira because the preceding four uses of singular ‘your’ in vv 19–20 clearly do” (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 263). NJB indicates in a footnote that some manuscripts read ‘your wife Jezebel.’ That same footnote also indicates that ‘her name is symbolic, cf. 2 Kgs 9:22’.”

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 528–29.]

⁴{A} κλίνην ⊕ C 205 209 1006 1611 1841 1854 2050 2053 2329 2344 2351 Byz [P 046] it^{ar}, sig^t vg syr^{ph,h} cop^{bo} (eth) Andrew; Tertullian Cyprian Ambrosiaster Tyconius Primasius // φυλακὴν A // κλιβανον arm // ἀσθένειαν cop^{sa} // luctum mss^{acc.} to Primasius

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

⁵“Instead of κλίνην, which has excellent manuscript support, several witnesses have introduced various comments in order to increase the punishment threatened against Jezebel. Manuscript A reads φυλακὴν (prison), probably taken from v. 10. Other readings include κλιβανον (an oven, furnace), ἀσθένειαν (illness), and luctum (sorrow, affliction). A literal translation reads ‘I am throwing

surface, realizing the idiomatic nature of the expression ‘being thrown on to a bed’ of illness as a punishment for sin makes the meaning clear.

Third, also in verse twenty-two the phrase ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, **of her doings**, is re-written differently in different manuscripts.⁶ Some have ‘their doings.’ A few omit the prepositional phrase completely.⁷ But again the evidence strongly favors the text reading ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς over the alternatives.⁸

Of course, these are not the only places where variations in wording come to the surface. The text apparatus in the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (UBS 27th

her on a bed’ (NRSV). But such a translation may suggest rape or some other incorrect meaning. Beale (*The Book of Revelation*, p. 263) comments that “‘cast on a bed’ is metonymic for illness, which itself is generally figurative for suffering.” For this reason, a rendering such as ‘So I will throw her on a bed of pain’ (REB), ‘I will throw her on a sickbed’ (RSV), or ‘I will punish her with illness’ may be preferable.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 529.]

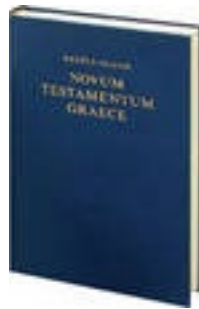
⁶{A} ἔργων αὐτῆς ⊕ C 1006 1611 1841 2050 2053 2351 Byz [P 046] it^{sig} vg^{ww, st} syth eth Tertullian Tyconius Beatus // ἔργων αὐτῶν A 205 209 1854 2329 2344 it^{ar, t} vg^{cl} syr^{ph} cop^{sa, bo} arm Andrew; Cyprian Ambrosiaster Apringius Primasius // omit ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς cop^{bo, mss}

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

⁷“Instead of αὐτῆς (which is strongly supported by ⊕ C P 1006 1611 2053 it^{sig} vg syth cop^{sa, bo} Tertullian al), the Textus Receptus, following A 1 1854 2081 2344 it^{ar} syr^{ph} arm eth Cyprian al, reads αὐτῶν. The latter reading appears to be secondary, having been introduced either unwittingly (a mechanical repetition of the preceding termination) or deliberately (so that the repentance should be for their own works rather than for another’s). Several singular readings reflect scribal eccentricities.” [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 665.]

⁸“Instead of the pronoun αὐτῆς, which has strong manuscript support, the Textus Receptus, in agreement with some witnesses, reads αὐτῶν (of them). The reading αὐτῶν appears to be secondary, having been introduced accidentally (by an unthinking repetition of the ending of ἔργων) or deliberately (so that the repentance should be for their own works rather than for the works of Jezebel). REB may provide a useful model for translating the text: ‘unless they renounce what she is doing.’ But even if the pronoun αὐτῆς is followed, the sense of ‘repent of her doings’ seems to be ‘unless they realize how wrong her conduct is, and stop participating in it’ (William Barclay’s translation). Compare also TEV (and FC): ‘unless they repent of the wicked things they did with her.’ NJB appears to follow the variant reading: ‘unless they repent of their practices.’” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 529.]

rev. ed.) lists some 27 places where different wordings surface in the existing manuscripts of this passage.⁹



Offenbarung 2,18

* τω A sy^h (τῷ is inserted before τῆς)
| – C

* A pc (ἐκκλησίας is omitted)

*¹ A pc latt sy^{ph} (αὐτοῦ is omitted)

* φλοξ κ pc (φλόγα is replaced with φλόξ)

Offenbarung 2,19

* κ* (τὴν διακονίαν καὶ is omitted)

* κ pc ar gig t; Prim (σου after ὑπομονήν is omitted)

Offenbarung 2,20

* πολυ κ 2050 M^A gig (it) sy^{ph} (either πολὺ or ὀλίγα is added after κατὰ σοῦ)

| ολίγα pc vg^{cl}

* αφηκας κ¹ 1611. 2050 pc vg^{ms} sy co (ἀφεῖς is replaced by ἀφηκὰς)

* σου (A : + την) 1006. 1841. 1854. 2351 M^K sy; Cyp Prim (σου is inserted after γυναῖκα)

* την –σαν κ¹ 1854. 2050 M^A (ἡ λέγουσα is replaced with τὴν λέγουσαν or ἡ λέγει)

| ἡ λεγει 1006. 1611. 1841. 2351 M^K

| txt κ* A C 2053. 2329 pc

* αυτην κ 046 pc (ἐαυτήν is replaced by αὐτήν)

*¹ ειναι κ 2050. 2344 ar t (εἶναι is inserted after προφητιν)

Offenbarung 2,21

* κ* al sa^{ms} (καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι is omitted)

* ουκ ηθελησεν A; Tyc Prim Bea (οὐ θέλει is replaced with οὐκ ἠθέλησεν)

Offenbarung 2,22

* βαλλω κ² P 046. 1006. 1611. 2050. 2329. 2351 al gig t vgl sa; Tert (βάλλω is replaced with either βάλω or κάλω)

| κάλω κ*

* φυλακην A (κλίνην is replaced with φυλακὴν)

*¹ † –σουσιν κ A (2050) (μετανοήσωσιν is replaced with μετανοήσουσιν)

| txt C M

*² αυτων A 1854. 2329. 2344 M^A ar t vg^{cl} sy^{ph}; Cyp (αὐτῆς is replaced with αὐτῶν)

Offenbarung 2,23

* A (καὶ is omitted)

* αυτου 046. 2050. 2329 pc ar t co; Apr (ὅμων is replaced with αὐτοῦ)

| – κ*

Offenbarung 2,24

* και τοις 2329 (pc) ar vg^{cl} (καὶ is inserted before τοῖς)

* βαθη κ 2050. 2053. 2329. 2344 M^A lat (βαθέα is replaced by βάθη)

* του θεου αλλα 2329 (τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ is added after βαθέα)

*¹ βαλω κ 046. 1611. 2050. 2329. 2351 al ar vg; Tyc Prim (βάλλω is replaced with βάλω)

Offenbarung 2,25

*[†] αχρι κ C 1611. 2053. 2329. 2351 pc (ἄχρις is either replaced with ἄχρι or ἀχρέως or omitted)

| εως A pc

| – 1854

| txt M

* (ex itac.) ανοιζω 1006. 1841 M^K (ἄν ἤζω is replaced with ἀνοίζω)

Offenbarung 2,27

Careful examination of each of these variations reveals that the majority are stylistic improvements, and a few are careless mistakes in copying. None of the variations significantly changes the idea expressions inside the passage.

Consequently we can exegete the adopted reading of the text in full confidence that it represents the wording of the original text.

Internal History. In the time and place markers inside the passage, most of them have more to do with exegetic issues, than with background concerns.



The one place marker that does deserve background treatment is Θυατείροις¹⁰ as an identification

* –βησεται M lat (συντριβεται is replaced with συνβήσεται)
| txt κ A C 1854. 2050 pc gig co

[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 636-37.]

¹⁰Θυάτειρα (-ιρα), ων, τά (Polyb. 16, 1, 7; 32, 27, 10; Strabo 13, 4, 4; Ptolem. 5, 2, 14; Appian, Syr. 30 §150; ins. On the acc. in-αν Rv 1:11 v.l., s. B-D-F §57; Mlt-H. 128) Thyatira, a city in Lydia in Asia Minor, on the Lycus R. betw. Pergamum and Sardis, founded by Macedonian Greeks (s. Strabo loc. cit.; OGI 211 w. note 2). Its busy industrial life included notably the dyeing of purple cloth. There was in Th. a guild of dyers (βαφεῖς), the existence of which is attested by numerous ins (CIG 3497–98 [=IGR IV, 1213; 1265]; 3496; other ins in WBuckler, *Monuments de Thyatire*: Rev. de philol. 37, 1913, 289–331. Also the ins that the guild of purple-dyers in Thessalonica dedicated to a certain Menippus of Thyatira: LDuchesne and ChBayet, *Mission au Mont Athos* 1876, p. 52

of the city where this Christian community was located.¹¹ The plural form Θυατείροις from either Θυάτειρα

no. 83). **Ac 16:14; Rv 1:11; 2:18, 24.**—EZiebarth, RhM 51, 1896, 632ff; AWikenhauser, Die Ap-Gesch. 1921, 410f (lit.); CHemer, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting '86, 106–28 (for epigraphic sources, s. p. 244f); Kraft, Hdb. '74, 67ff; BHHW III 1981; Pauly-W. VI/1, 657–59.—M-M.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 460.]

¹¹“THYATIRA *thī-ə-tīrə* [Gk *Thyateira*] (Acts 16:14; Rev. 1:11; 2:18, 24). A city in Asia Minor, lying off the main highway between Pergamum to the west and Sardis to the southeast (for the NT relevance of this see S. Johnson, JBL, 77 [1958], 1), 80 km (50 mi) NE of Smyrna on a branch of the Hermus River; today the town of Akhisar. In ancient times the region was sometimes classed as Mysia, although it was more properly in the northern part of Lydia.

“Not much is known about the early history of the town. It was apparently first founded as Pelopia, a shrine of the Lydian sun-god Tyrimnus. This solar-deity background might plausibly underlie the description of Christ as having eyes ‘like a flame of fire’ and feet ‘like burnished bronze’ (Rev. 2:18). On coins, however, Tyrimnus is represented simply as a horseman with a (Hittite) double-headed battle-ax. Seleucus Nicator (301–281 B.C.) rebuilt the town and made it an important frontier garrison. It became a center of small manufacture and trade, vassal to Pergamum after 190 and to Rome after 133.

“Thyatira was famous in the ancient world both for its highly organized trade unions (actually ‘cooperatives’) and for its special technology for producing ‘purple’ (Turkish red) dye from the madder root rather than shellfish. The first recorded Christian convert beyond Asiatic soil was Lydia at Philippi (Acts 16:14). Since she was from Thyatira, it is not merely coincidental that she was a seller of purple goods. It is going too far to see in her a matriarch inaugurating a ‘tradition of female leadership’ that was abused by an incumbent called Jezebel in Rev. 2:20–25 (E. M. Blaiklock, *Cities of the NT* [1965], p. 110).

“Acts 16:14 characterizes Lydia as ‘a worshiper of God’ who prayed with other women on the sabbath by the river outside Philippi. This is usually interpreted to mean that she was a gentile convert to Judaism, and that therefore a colony of Jews had earlier become established at Thyatira. Acts 19:10 states, however, that gentile as well as Jewish residents of the coastal towns of Asia Minor heard Paul’s preaching during his two years in Ephesus (ca 52–55), and it is possible that a Christian community was founded in Thyatira at this time.

“At any rate, the Christian community that was firmly established in Thyatira by A.D. 95 had special local problems arising from the semireligious traditions of the trade guilds (see W. Ramsay, *Social Basis of Roman Power in Asia Minor* [1941]). A more general problem was that of eating at banquets meat that had been slaughtered under the invocation of false divinities (Rev. 2:20; cf. Acts 15:29). Some Christian casuists of Thyatira seem to have argued that membership in a trade guild was necessary for earning one’s living, and that participation in its banquets did not necessarily involve a religious commitment to the deities being honored. Such Christians probably reasoned that one day their enrollment in a guild would be sufficiently strong to ‘secularize’ it, but this could never happen unless for a time they conformed minimally to



or Θυάτιρα was common with many of the Greek cities in the ancient world, over against a singular spelling of the city name.

According to the Roman historian Strabo, the town was actually a colony of Macedonians, at least in its beginnings. This probably explains in part at least why Lydia, although from Thyatira, had migrated to Philippi in Macedonia where Paul met her on the second missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:34). She being “a God fearing” Gentile may suggest contact with Judaism in her home town of Thyatira, although this is not clear.

Interestingly, this message is the longest and is addressed to perhaps the least important of the seven churches.¹² The wool industry and the purple dye

existing guild practices.

“Some exegetes see these compromises as the ‘immorality’ or ‘deep things of Satan’ that were inculcated by ‘Jezebel’ (Rev. 2:20, 24). Although this view might be correct, the text affords no real proof that the harsh name of JEZEBEL (an allusion to the OT queen) is here applied to an active member of the Christian community rather than, e.g., the known priestess of an oracular Sambethe cult (Pauly-Wissowa, VI, 657ff). Despite the warning against cooperation with Jezebel, the local churchgoers are specially praised for continuing their faithful works (Rev. 2:19, 24f). See also SEVEN CHURCHES.

“Thyatira has a few remains of the temples and other buildings for which Caracalla (A.D. 211–217) received the title “Local Benefactor.” Explorers have found smaller monumental remains, mostly columns or tombstones built into humble homes. From ca 200 the city was wholly Christian but Montanist (Epiphanius Haer. 51.33; LTK, X, 176f). In 1313 the neighboring Muslim metropolis of Manisa took over Thyatira, thenceforth named Ak-Hisar from its ‘White Castle.’ It was incorporated into the Ottoman empire after 1425.

“See Der Kleine Pauly (5 vols, 1964–1975), p. 5804 (E. Olshausen).”

[*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 4:846.]

¹²“From the perspective of Roman Asia, the choice of Thyatira as the fourth congregation is a somewhat surprising one. Though our knowledge of early Christian foundations in Asia is rather sketchy, there may well have been more impressive contenders for inclusion among the ‘seven congregations of Asia’. Magnesia-on-the-Meander, for example, which certainly had a well-es-

industry were among the best known features of the town. Additionally the trade guilds of Thyatira were well organized and dominated most of the commercial life. It is evidently these guilds which posed the greatest challenges to believers in the city. Their patron deities and banquets with sex orgies made participation by Christians very difficult, and yet making a living outside of participation in them was extremely difficult. Interestingly, by 200 AD Christianity dominated the city according to records from the church fathers.¹³ The religious orientation of the city was standard for that time. Remains of temples to Apollo, Tyrimnaeus and Artemis Boreitene, Helius and to emperor Hadrian have been uncovered.¹⁴

The city lay at an intersection of roads between the regions of Lydia and Mysia on the plain of the river Lycus. It was about 55 miles northeast of Smyrna and was on the road between Pergamum and Sardis. The location of the city at the junction of some major trade routes created an instability by making the city vulnerably to attack and looting by various groups. It did not have either natural or man made fortifications to help protect it to any significant degree.

Literary Aspects:

Again these aspects are important to consider as background to interpreting the passage.

Genre: The genre issues remain virtually

established church by Ignatius' time, was also located on the circular route which the Apocalypse presumes (situated between Laodicea and Ephesus). There is surely something significant in Revelation's addressing not simply the 'high fliers' among Asian cities, but also those which, from the empire's perspective, appear more modest." [Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2006), 62.]

¹³“ In the beginning of the 3rd cent. Thyatira was a stronghold of Montanism. Its bishop, Sozon, took part in the Council of Nicaea (325), and another bishop, Basil, is mentioned in 879. The modern city, named Akhisar, had a small Christian community until the 1920s.

“In 1922 the head of the newly-founded Orthodox Exarchate of W. Europe was given the title ‘Metropolitan of Thyatira’ by the Patr. of Constantinople. In 1963 the Exarchate was divided into four and since 1968 the spiritual leader of the Greek Orthodox communities in Britain has been styled ‘Abp. of Thyatira and Great Britain’.”

[F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1632.]

¹⁴“Very few architectural remains have been found at the site, but inscriptions show an active civic and social life from the 2d century B.C. until the 3d century A.D. They mention shrines to Apollo Tyrimnaeus and Artemis Boreitene, to Helius, and to Hadrian; three gymnasiums full of statues; stoas and shops; and a portico of 100 columns in which the gerosusia met.” [John E. Stambaugh, “Thyatira (Place)” In vol. 6, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 546.]



identical to the previous messages. The one point of difference is in the reversal of the victory formula and the hearing command at the end in vv. 26-29. The overcoming expression here is greatly expanded from the similar forms in the other letters.¹⁵ Additionally, John pulls an interpretive paraphrase of LXX Psalm 2:8-9 into the expanded victory expression in vv. 26b-27.¹⁶

¹⁵“καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, ‘And as for the one who conquers and keeps my works until the end.’ This promise-to-the-victor formula differs from the parallel formulas in Rev 2-3 in that the substantival participle ὁ νικῶν (τῶ νικῶντι in 2:7, 17) is coordinated with an additional substantival participle, ὁ τηρῶν, ‘who keeps,’ which serves to further delineate the specific meaning of ὁ νικῶν. Though both substantival participles are masculine singular, they clearly imply that all Christians (whether men or women) who conquer and keep the works of Christ will receive the promised reward.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 208-09.]

¹⁶ “Vv 26b-27 are closely modeled after Ps 2:8-9, as the following synopsis indicates:

Rev 2:26b-27

^{26b}δώσω αὐτῷ
I will give to him
ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν
authority over the nations

²⁷καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς
and he will rule them
ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ
with an iron rod
ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ
as ceramic pot
συντρίβει
is shattered.

LXX Ps 2:8-9

⁸αἰτήσαι παρ' ἐμοῦ,
Ask of me,
καὶ δώσω σοι
and I will give to you
ἔθνη τὴν κληρονομίαν σου
nations as your inheritance
καὶ τὴν κατάσχεσίν σου
and as your possession
τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς
the ends of the earth.

⁹ποιμανεῖς αὐτοῦς
You will rule them
ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ
with an iron rod
ὡς σκεῦος κεραμῆως
as a clay pot
συντρίψεις αὐτούς.
you will shatter them.

Various quotations or allusions to Ps 2 are found in some parts of the NT (Acts 2:26-27; 4:25-26; 13:33; 19:15; Heb 1:5; 5:5), and Ps 2:7 in particular was understood in early Christianity as a messianic psalm (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Justin Dial. 61.6; 88.8; 122.6; see Lindars, *Apologetic*, 139-44). The motif of the Chris-

The reversed, expanded pattern here seems to be driven more by content and context than by any other intention. Otherwise the structure with the sub-genre forms is the same as is for all the messages.¹⁷

tian sharing sovereignty with Christ is also found in Odes Sol. 29:8 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP): ‘And He gave me the sceptre of His power, that I might subdue the devices of the Gentiles, And humble the power of the mighty.’ The Messiah is spoken of in 12:10 as possessing ἐξουσία, ‘authority,’ and similarly ἐξουσία over every ‘tribe and people and language and nation’ is given to the Beast in Rev 13:7, presumably by God (passive of divine activity).”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 209-10.]

¹⁷For a detailed discussion of these sub-genre forms see study #06 on Rev. 2:1-7 under **Genre**.

¹⁸ And
68 to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:
69 These things says the Son of God,
the one having his eyes
like a flaming fire
and
70 His feet (are) like burnished bronze;
71 ¹⁹ I know your works
and
your love
and
your faith
and
your ministry
and
your endurance,
and
72 your last works are greater than the first one.
²⁰ But
73 I have something against you,
because you allow that woman Jezebel
who calls herself a prophetess
and
teaches
and
deceives my servants
to practice immorality
and
to eat meat offered to idols.
²¹ And
74 I gave her time
so that she might repent,
and
75 she does not want to repent
from her immorality.
²² Behold,
76 I am throwing her
on a bed

Literary Setting: The literary context is largely determined by geography. This is the fourth of the seven messages and follows the logical circle established by the geographical location of the seven cities, as is illustrated on the above map. Were one to have traveled a circuit visiting these seven cities with Ephesus as the starting point and Smyrna as the first one to visit from Ephesus, then Thyatira would logically have been visited after Pergamus and before Sardis.

Literary Structure: The block diagram below highlights the internal structure of the primary and secondary ideas found in the passage.

and
those committing adultery
with her,
into great affliction
unless she repents
from her deeds,

23 and
77 **her children I will kill**
in death.

And
78 **all the churches will know**
that I am the One searching minds and hearts,
and
79 **I will give to each of you**
according to your deeds.

24 But
80 **to you I say,**
the rest of those in Thyatira
whoever does not have this teaching
whosoever does not know the deep things of Satan
as they say
"I will not throw on you another load,"
25 nevertheless
81 **what you possess hold on to**
until the time that I may come.

26 And
the one overcoming
and
the one keeping...my deeds
until the end
82 **I will give to him authorization**
over the nations

27 and
83 **he rule them**
with an iron rod
as when clay pots are shattered
28 as I have also received
from My Father,
and
84 **I will give him the morning star.**

29 The one having an ear
85 **let him hear**
what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Analysis of Rhetorical Structure:

As has been the case with the previous three messages, this passage follows the internal arrangement of ideas built largely around the sub-genres that give structure to all seven messages. But within that framework distinctive content is developed that is appropriate to each church situation.

The *Adscriptio* in statement 68 follows the standard formula with the insertion of the city name of Thyatira.

The *Τάδε λέγει* formula (#s 69-70) is then completed by the verb subject designation of both ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, Son of God, which interestingly is only found here in the entire book. But it is amplified by the reference to flaming eyes and bronze feet which come from the earlier references in 1:15-16.

The standard *narratio* follows in statements (#s 71-75). The evaluation of the church at Thyatira contains some exact terminology to that found in Ephesus: οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα, *I know your works*; ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ,

but I have something against you. Some displeasure is expressed against the church for allowing this woman to develop a following inside the church (#s 73-75). Interestingly, where the Ephesians had ‘lost their first love,’ Christ commends the Thyatirans because τὰ ἔργα σου τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων, *your last deeds are greater than your first ones*.

The *dispositio* in statements 76-81 centers largely on punishment of the Jezebel and her followers inside the church. Unless repentance turns these people around Christ in very blunt terms threatens to execute them. This He claims will get the attention of everyone else in the Christian community that He is very serious about the purity of His message being maintained.

Unlike the other six messages, the victory expression and the hearing formula are reversed. First comes the very lengthy victory expression in statements 82 - 84, that incorporates materials from Psalm 2:8-9. Last, then comes the hearing command using the exact same wording as found in the other messages (#85).

Exegesis of the Text:

Because of the use of the standard sub-genre forms as found in the other six messages, the outlining of our exegesis of the text will follow the same pattern used in all of the seven messages. Only the variations in the content of most of these sub-genres provides the distinctive materials for each of the messages.

A. Command to write, v. 18a

Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας γράψον·
And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

As has been the point in the preceding messages, the ‘angel’ is the church at Thyatira¹⁸ viewed from an apocalyptic perspective.

¹⁸ **Θυάτειρα (-ἰρα), ὄν, τὰ** (Polyb. 16, 1, 7; 32, 27, 10; Strabo 13, 4, 4; Ptolem. 5, 2, 14; Appian, Syr. 30 §150; ins. On the acc. in-αν Rv 1:11 v.l., s. B-D-F §57; Mlt-H. 128) **Thyatira**, a city in Lydia in Asia Minor, on the Lycus R. betw. Pergamum and Sardis, founded by Macedonian Greeks (s. Strabo loc. cit.; OGI 211 w. note 2). Its busy industrial life included notably the dyeing of purple cloth. There was in Th. a guild of dyers (βαφεῖς), the existence of which is attested by numerous ins (CIG 3497-98 [=IGR IV, 1213; 1265]; 3496; other ins in WBuckler, Monuments de Thyatire: Rev. de philol. 37, 1913, 289-331. Also the inscription that the guild of purple-dyers in Thessalonica dedicated to a certain Menippus of Thyatira: LDuchesne and ChBayet, Mission au Mont Athos 1876, p. 52 no. 83). **Ac 16:14; Rv 1:11; 2:18, 24.**—EZiebarth, RhM 51, 1896, 632ff; AWikenhauser, Die Ap-Gesch. 1921, 410f (lit.); CHemer, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting '86, 106-28 (for epigraphic sources, s. p. 244f); Kraft, Hdb. '74, 67ff; BHHW III 1981; Pauly-W. VI/1, 657-59.—M-M.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 460.]



The ruins of Thyatira in ancient Asia Minor (modern Turkey)

Regarding the founding of the Christian community at Thyatira¹⁹ little is known. The assumption of most commentators is that it came into being, along with the other churches during Paul’s lengthy Ephesian ministry on the third missionary journey (as described in Acts 19). This would be confirmed somewhat from the account of the conversion of Lydia at Philippi during the second missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:14-15). Her hometown was Thyatira (πορφυρόπωλις πόλεως Θυατείρων) and by the time she migrated to Philippi she had become a ‘God-fearer’ (σεβομένη τὸν θεόν), meaning a non-Jew who was sympathetic to the teachings of Judaism. But she was not yet a Christian. Although this religious shift toward Judaism and away from her pagan background could have happened after arriving at Philippi, most commentators are convinced it took place prior to leaving her hometown of Thyatira. Considerable evidence outside the New Testament points to a Jewish community in the city. When she moved from the city, there was no Christian community in existence.²⁰ Now almost half a century later this message

¹⁹“TIATIRA. Ciudad de Asia Menor, en Lidia, cerca del límite con Misia, en el camino de Pérgamo a Sardis. Entre el 301 y 281 a.C., Seleuco Nicátor estableció allí una colina de macedonios, y la llamó Tiatira. La ciudad existía anteriormente con el nombre de Pelopia y de Eutipia (Plinio, Historia Natural, 5:31). Sus habitantes sobresalían en el arte de teñir las telas de púrpura. Lidia, la comerciante de púrpura, era originaria de Tiatira (Hch. 16:14). Una de las siete iglesias de Asia, estaba situada en esta ciudad (Ap. 1:11; 2:18-29). En la localidad de Ak Hissar, sobre el emplazamiento de la antigua Tiatira, se hallan fragmentos de columna que datan de la ciudad antigua.” [Samuel Vila Ventura, *Nuevo Diccionario Bíblico Ilustrado* (TERRASSA (Barcelona): Editorial CLIE, 1985), 1146-47.]

²⁰Chronological time frame:

* Paul’s visit to Philippi on 2nd missionary journey: appx. 49-50

* Lydia’s move to Philippi from Thyatira: prior to Paul’s visit

* Paul’s lengthy ministry in Ephesus on 3rd miss journey: appx. 52-55 AD

* Message to church at Thyatira in Revelation: mid 90s.

comes to the Christian community in Thyatira, that had been in existence well over four decades.

Later Christian history, however, reflects confused and often contradictory views about the church through the second century. What seems to have happened is that at some point during the second century the heresy of *Montanism* swept through the church and overwhelmed the Christian community there. Originating from Montanus in Phrygia to the east of this region in Galatia, the teaching emphasized speaking in tongues and direct 'prophecy' completely detached from either scripture or apostolic tradition. By the 160s increasing numbers of churches ban the movement and excommunicated its followers, especially in Asia. Consequently one Christian writing denies that a Christian church existed in Thyatira until it had been purged of this influence by the end of the second century.²¹

B. Situation of the church, vv. 18b-25

Τάδε λέγει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ·

19 οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου, καὶ τὰ ἔργα σου τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων. 20 ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι ἀφείξ τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφητιν καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἔμους δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα. 21 καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς. 22 ἰδοὺ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ' αὐτῆς εἰς θλίψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, 23 καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ. καὶ γνώσονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἔραυνῶν νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας, καὶ δώσω ὑμῖν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν. 24 ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς ἐν Θυατείροις, ὅσοι οὐκ ἔχουσιν τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ ὡς λέγουσιν· οὐ βάλλω ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος, 25 πλὴν ὃ ἔχετε κρατήσατε ἄχρι[ς] οὗ ἂν ἴξω.

18b These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze:

19 I know your works—your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. 20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. 22 Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; 23

and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. 24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call 'the deep things of Satan,' to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden; 25 only hold fast to what you have until I come.

It is here in the *Τάδε λέγει* section which introduces the *narratio* and *dispositio* sections that we encounter most of the very distinctive material in this message. Again, the standard threefold sections are used for structuring the message: *Τάδε λέγει* (v. 18b) and *οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα* (v. 19a) to introduce in direct discourse first the *narratio* (vv. 19-21), and then the *dispositio* (vv. 22-25).

Τάδε λέγει. The message comes in the tradition of the Old Testament prophetic "Thus says the Yahweh..." as this formula statement asserts, by following the LXX translation of the Hebrew assertion, *כה אמר יהוה* (*kōh 'amar YHWH*, "thus says Yahweh").

But the speaker is here defined in two ways: 1) ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, *the Son of God*, and 2) ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ, *the one possessing eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze*.

First, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, *the Son of God*. This is the only use of this phrase in the entire book of Revelation.²² Very likely in the background here is the use of a similar expression often by Roman emperors in their issuing of imperial decrees. Often this was their official title that stood behind their claim to authority. When Jesus issues His edict to the church at Thyatira He stands as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, *the Son of God*, and not as *Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Ἰουλίου υἱός*, *Emperor Caesar son of the god Zeus*, as Augustus had done years earlier in an edict issued to Ephesus. Thus the claim of superior authority to issue commands to the Christians at Thyatira is made by the risen Christ.

Second, the One issuing these commands is ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς καὶ οἱ

²²"The phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, 'the Son of God,' occurs forty-six times in the NT (and only here in Revelation), but this is the only instance in the NT in which 'the Son of God' is the subject of a transitive verb of speaking. In the NT the title is used of the exalted Jesus (as here) in just a few passages: Acts 13:33; Rom 1:3; Col 1:13; 1 Thess 1:9-10; Heb 1:5; 5:5. Roman emperors characteristically claimed in their titulature introducing official letters and decrees that they were 'sons of god' in the special sense that they were sons or adopted sons of their deified predecessors. A letter from Augustus to Ephesus begins this way: *Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Ἰουλίου υἱός*, 'Emperor Caesar, son of the god Julius' (J. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* [London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1982] document 12, line 1, p. 101). " [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 201-02.]

²¹In 374-375 AD, Epiphanius of Salamis (died 403 AD) in his substantial writing *Panarion* (Πανάριον, "Medicine Chest," later translated into Latin as *Adversus Haereses* (= "Against Heresies"). makes such a charge of Montanist heresy at Thyatira in the second century (cf. 51.33.1-4).

πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ, *the One who possesses eyes like a flaming fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze*. These two depictions are taken from the initial portrait of the risen Christ in 1:14-15.²³ Both images stress thorough knowledge and authoritative power, thus re-enforcing the initial title of Son of God.²⁴ The full picture of the speaker emerges from both titles: He is God and speaks out of complete knowledge and absolute power.

οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα. Consequently when He declares here “I know your deeds,” He is not blowing hot air. The *narratio* which emerges from this declaration reflect a thorough understanding of what the church at Thyatira was facing.

To Thyatira (2:19)	To Ephesus (2:2)
I know your works	I know your works
	and
your love	your labor
	and
your faith	your endurance
	and
your ministry	that you do not tolerate evil doers,
and	
your last works are greater than the first one.	

First, comes an amazing string of compliments to the church. This really stands out in comparison to the somewhat similar set given to the church at Ephesus: Christ stacks up the compliments greater for the Thyatirans than He did for the Ephesians. Two aspects stand in strong contrast between the two churches. Whereas the Ephesians had lost sight of ministry to others as an integral part of their devotion to God (i.e., τὴν ἀγάπην σου

²³Although the ‘funny’ Greek dropped out of the picture at the end of chapter one, it begins making a come back here in verse 18c. Grammatically, the phrase καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ, *and his feet like burnished bronze*, doesn’t fit grammatically the parallel participle phrase, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρός, *the one having his eyes like a flame of fire*, with which it stands together. Rather than the required accusative of direct object τοὺς πόδας in order to function as a second direct object of the participle ὁ ἔχων parallel to τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, *his eyes*, John instead inserts the nominative form οἱ πόδες that is incorrect grammar. Although not a huge grammatical blunder, it would have caught the attention of first century listeners to this text being read at church. And perhaps therein lies one of John’s motives for doing this.

²⁴“This repetition is part of the author’s program of atomizing the constituent descriptive features of the vision of 1:9–20 and utilizing them in Rev 2–3 to link these sections together. The phrase φλόγα πυρός is a possible allusion to LXX Ps 103:4 [104:4 MT], quoted in Heb 1:7; 1 Clem 36:3 (see D. A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, NovTSup 34 [Leiden: Brill, 1973] 46, 180).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 202.]

τὴν πρώτην), the Thyatirans had steadily grown in their ministry to others over the years since their beginning. But from the other angle, the Ephesians had worked hard at maintaining doctrinal purity, while the Thyatirans had become tolerant of the heresy group that the Ephesians had strongly resisted.

Christ expresses five compliments in affirmation of the church at Thyatira: σου τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου, *your deeds, your love, your faith, your ministry, and your endurance*. Note that the possessive pronoun σου functions as boundary markers at the beginning and ending of the listing, thus grouping these five traits together as a list.

The first term τὰ ἔργα, deeds, functions somewhat as an inclusive umbrella term implying the remaining four qualities. Next is mentioned the ἀγάπην of the church. Unlike the ἀγάπην at Ephesus which was deficient, that of those at Thyatira was healthy and balanced the way Christ expects. They were devoted to God and to others in a proper ἀγάπην. Additionally, their πίστιν, *faith*, is complimented. That is, they possessed a genuine faith surrender commitment to Christ. Very closely connected is the next trait, διακονίαν, *ministry*. The pair, τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν, actually define the biblical meaning of τὴν ἀγάπην in the framework of the vertical / horizontal nature of true commitment to God. The final quality, τὴν ὑπομονήν, *endurance*, stresses consistency of commitment over a period of time. With this package of compliments the folks at Thyatira would have been content had Christ’s words stopped right there.²⁵ Actually, the list of positive traits here is the longest and most inclusive of any of the parallel sections in all seven messages.²⁶

²⁵“In 2:2, the concepts κόπος, ‘labor, toil,’ and ὑπομονή, ‘endurance,’ are subordinated to τὰ ἔργα, and here too it appears that ἔργα, ‘works,’ is a general term more closely defined by the four nouns in the polysyndetic list that follows. This indicates that the four terms ‘love and faith and service and endurance’ are all terms that emphasize various aspects of the behavior of Christians.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 202.]

²⁶“It is also striking that each of these terms occurs in the Second Edition of Revelation, with one possible exception: (1) ἀγάπη (2x: 2:4, 19), (2) πίστις (4x: 2:13, 19; 13:10; 14:12 [the last two are almost certainly expansions]), (3) διακονία (1x: 2:19), and (4) ὑπομονή (7x: 1:9 [First Edition]; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12 [the last two are almost certainly later additions]). ἀγάπη occurs just twice in Revelation, here and in 2:4 (see Comment there). Here πίστις (which occurs four times in Revelation; see Comment on 2:13) means ‘dependability, faithfulness’ (Karrer, Brief, 204 n. 283). The term διακονία, ‘service, ministry’ (which occurs only here in Revelation), occurs a total of thirty-three times in the NT and is found in two very different lists of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12:4–6 (which speaks of ‘varieties of gifts ... varieties of service [διακονιών] ... varieties of working’) and Rom 12:6–8; however, there is no similarity between other items on these lists and

But Christ isn't finished with His compliments. Added to this listing is the supreme compliment: *καὶ τὰ ἔργα σου τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων*, and your last works are greater than the first. True spiritual maturity was developing among the Thyatirans. They were progressing in their spiritual experience steadily as should be the norm for all believers.

But not everything was okay in the church at Thyatira: *ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ*, but I have something against you, because you tolerate the woman Jezebel. First, the woman who was leading the splinter group at Thyatira was not named Jezebel. This is a label rather than a personal name. We don't know her actual name. John compares her to the Old Testament figure of Jezebel, who married King Ahab in the northern kingdom and led the Israelites there to worship the Canaanite gods of Baal and Asherah rather than Jehovah.²⁷ Since then she has stood often as a symbol of compromising true religious devotion to God in favor of something else.²⁸

Rev 2:19. *διακονία* has the basic meaning of speaking or acting on behalf of others or attending someone for the purpose of performing a range of tasks (Collins, *Diakonia*, 77–95). The genitive (here σου) after the abstract noun *διακονία* usually designates the person or agent carrying out a task. Cognates of *διακονία* were used for servants, waiters, priests, statesmen, tradesmen, messengers, and so forth, i.e., a spectrum of roles from menial to privileged (the menial aspect of *διακονία* is emphasized by H. W. Beyer, TDNT 2:82–87). However, when Collins (*Diakonia*, 339) refers to this usage of *διακον-* as 'churchmen,' he is wide of the mark, for the σου refers to the angel of the church at Thyatira, who exercises the ministry of service as a surrogate for the entire community." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 202.]

²⁷"The author has derived the name 'Jezebel' from the name of the wife of Ahab king of Israel (869–850 B.C.), the daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre and Sidon, famous for influencing Ahab to worship Canaanite gods (1 Kgs 16:31; Jos. *Ant.* 8.317). The story of Jezebel is narrated in 1 Kgs 18–21; 2 Kgs 9 (and in a rewriting of the biblical account with some additional material in Jos. *Ant.* 8.316–59; 9.47, 108, 122–23) and includes her campaign to kill the prophets of Yahweh (1 Kgs 18:4, 13; Jos. *Ant.* 8.330, 334; 9.108), her support of 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah (1 Kgs 18:19; Jos. *Ant.* 8.330, 334), her attempt to kill Elijah (1 Kgs 19:1–3; Jos. *Ant.* 8.347), how she framed Naboth, who was consequently stoned to death (1 Kgs 21:1–16; Jos. *Ant.* 8.355–59), and how, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Elijah (1 Kgs 21:23), Jehu had Jezebel killed by defenestration, after which she was eaten by dogs on the street (2 Kgs 9:30–37; Jos., *Ant.* 9.122–24). Though Jezebel is accused of 'harlotries and sorceries' (2 Kgs 9:22), there is nothing in the preceding narrative to support such charges, which suggests that they are metaphors for abandoning the worship of Yahweh (note that the Tg. Ps.-J. 2 Kgs 9:22 reads 'idols and sorceries' in place of 'harlotries and sorceries'). Jezebel was also remembered as a 'painted woman' (2 Kgs 9:30; *Hippolytus Comm. in Dan. on 13:31 [Susanna]*). [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 203.]

²⁸Important here for the use of Jezebel as a symbol is how she

Second, what role did this woman play in the church at Thyatira. In the Jewish background through the province of Asia is a substantial number of inscriptions signaling clearly that Jewish women in that region played a significant role in synagogue life, one that most likely would not have been possible in Judea.²⁹ Clearly inside the NT, despite one or two statements of the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, women played significant leadership roles in the early Christian movement.

In all likelihood this "Jezebel" was a patroness who hosted a house church group in her home at Thyatira. At this level she was functioning much in the same role as Phoebe (*διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας*) at Cenchreae just outside Corinth (Rom. 16:1-2).³⁰ At a lesser level of in-

was subsequently interpreted among the Jews both inside the OT beyond the initial depiction in 1 Kings 18-21 and other Jewish writings outside the OT. It is this interpretative history that John utilizes as much as the biblical story of Jezebel itself. Consequently, the references in the above footnote to Josephus and a few other Jewish writers are important background perspectives.

²⁹"Since 'Jezebel' apparently occupied a very influential position in the Christian community of Thyatira, it is important to consider the role of women in leadership positions in both Anatolian Judaism and Christianity.

There are some nineteen inscriptions from ca. 27 B.C. through the sixth century A.D. in which women bear such titles as *ἀρχισυνάγωγος* and *ἀρχισυναγωγίσσα*, "head of the synagogue," *ἱέρισσα*, "priestess," *μήτηρ συναγωγῆς*, "mother of the synagogue," *πρεσβυτέρα*, "elder," and *προστάτης* and *ἀρχήγισσα*, "leader." Cohen (*Conservative Judaism* 34 [1980] 25–26) and Brooten (*Women Leaders*) argue convincingly that these are functional rather than honorific titles. One of the more relevant evidential inscriptions is from Sardis (CIJ 741). In the Greco-Roman world, inscriptional evidence suggests that women frequently played the role of patronesses; see R. MacMullen, "Women in Public in the Roman Empire," *Historia* 29 (1980) 211; E. L. Will, "Women's Roles in Antiquity: New Archeological Views," *Science Digest* (March 1980) 35–39. In early Christianity, several women of probable Jewish origin held important offices. Junia was an apostle (*ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις*) (Rom 16:7); Phoebe was a deacon and a *προστάτις*, 'patroness' (Rom 16:1–2; on her role a patroness, see P. Jewett, "Paul, Phoebe, and the Spanish Mission," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, ed. J. Neusner et al. [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988] 142–61); Prisca was a teacher and missionary (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3–4; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).

"It is possible that 'Jezebel' was a patroness or hostess of one of the house churches that made up the Christian community at Thyatira who found herself in conflict with other Christian patrons, probably over an attempt to accommodate Christian practices to the surrounding culture by justifying the eating of meat offered to idols (see Excursus 2D: *Eating Food Sacrificed to Idols*)."

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 203–04.]

³⁰**Rom. 16:1-2.** 16.1 Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν [καὶ] *διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας* τῆς ἐν Κεγχραεῖς, 2 ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἁγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρήζη πράγματι· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ *προστάτις* πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ.

16.1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, *a deacon of the church* at Cenchreae, 2 so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been *a benefactor* of many and of myself as well.

The term προστάτις can only mean patroness (προστάτης = patron) in the ancient world:

The unwillingness of commentators to give προστάτις its most natural and obvious sense of “patron” is most striking (TDNT 6:703 and Maillot are unusual in translating “protectress, patroness”; contrast, e.g., Köhl, comparing προϊστάμενος in 12:8; Lietzmann; Leenhardt; Gaugler; Murray; BGD, “she has been of great assistance to many”; so also RSV, “a helper of”; NEB, “a good friend to”; NIV, “a great help to”; NJB, “come to the help of”). That the word should be given full weight = “patron, protector” (or alternatively, “leader, ruler,” as Swidler, 310–11) is very probable, however. (1) The masculine equivalent, προστάτης, is well known and was well established in this sense, not least for the role of some wealthy or influential individual as patron (and so protector) of Hellenistic religious societies (Poland, 346; BGD, προστάτις; in Philo, e.g., Virt. 155, and Josephus, e.g., Ant. 14.157, 444—Trebilco, 116); there are two occurrences of it in the Jewish inscriptions from Rome (CIJ 100, 365), probably in this sense (Leon, 191–92). The Latin equivalent, patronus, was equally significant, and would be familiar to Paul’s readers in reference to patronage of collegia or clubs (OCD, “Patronus”; MacMullen, Social Relations, 74–76). (2) The use of the feminine προστάτις in this role was long unattested in epigraphical and papyrological evidence (MM), but now appears with similar force in a second-century papyrus (Montevicchi; further data and discussion in NDIEC 4:242–44). In the long Jewish synagogue inscription from Aphrodisias (third century), line 9 on face a reads Ἰαηλ προστάτης; despite the masculine form of the title, Ἰαηλ could be taken as feminine, since it was most likely given (or taken) in honor of the only Jael of significance in Jewish history (Judg 4:18–22; 5:24–57) (Trebilco, 114–15; otherwise, Reynolds and Tannenbaum, 101). (3) There was a stronger tradition of women filling roles of prominence in this period than has previously been realized—women with titles, for example, of ἀρχισυνάγωγος or γυμνασίαρχος (LSJ cite IGRom. 3:802; see further Brooten, Women Leaders, particularly chap. 1; Trebilco, chap. 5), and acting precisely as protectors and benefactors (“perhaps a tenth of the protectors and donors that collegia sought out were women”—MacMullen, cited by Meeks, 24; on Phoebe, 60). Women also have a higher profile in the Judaism of the period than has previously been realized, if Judith, T. Job (the prominence given to Job’s wife—21–26, 39–40) and Pseudo-Philo (the prominence given to Deborah—Ps. Philo 30–33) are anything to go by. In Rome they would be familiar with the prominent role played by such women as Fulvia (see OCD). Nor is it without significance that of the following list of 28 greeted in vv 3–16 no less than nine are women (seven by name, three of them among the first five, and four of them noted for their hard work = leading roles); though Richardson (237) notes the absence of women in the list of vv 21–23 (see further 16:21–23 Form and Structure). For the subsequent tendency to “domesticate” women within the churches, see Richardson; and for review of related literature see Kraemer.

In short, Paul’s readers were unlikely to think of Phoebe as other than a figure of significance, whose wealth or influence had been put at the disposal of the church in Cenchreae. In the Greek cities there were patrons who looked after the interests of foreign residents (LSJ, προστάτης III.2); in view of Cenchreae’s role as a port and the description of Phoebe already as διάκονος (v 1), it may be that we

fluence but at a similar role is that of Lydia at Philippi (Acts 16:14–15; 17:12 etc.). Earlier in Jesus’ public ministry wealthy women played somewhat similar roles in His ministry according to Luke 8:3.

One should note very clearly that Christ’s criticism of her in this passage is not that she was a woman in a leadership role in the church. This was completely okay with the risen Christ. Rather, His condemnation of her centered exclusively on the false content of what she was teaching in the church. In other words, it was **what** she was teaching, **not that** she was teaching as a woman, that upset Christ.

In the initial complaint Christ expresses displeasure with the church for allowing her to teach false doctrine in the community of believers: ὅτι ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, *because you tolerate that woman Jezebel*. The clear contextual meaning of the verb ἀφεῖς from ἀφήμι is “*you allow her to teach what she is teaching.*” Just as we have observed with the church at Pergamum (2:14–16), Christ demands that the church take stern disciplinary action against this woman and her followers (vv. 22–25; for details see the exegesis of the *dispositio* below). It is the corrupting influence of this false teaching that deeply disturbs Christ. The intensity of the demand for disciplinary action is grounded on the image of absolute authority and power in the portrait in v. 18b.

What then was this woman teaching? In the last two verses of the narratio (vv. 20b–21) a summation is given: v. 20b ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφήτιν καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἔμοῦς δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα. 21 καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, 20b *who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication.*

First comes ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφήτιν, *who calls herself a prophetess*. The term προφήτις in the feminine form is connected to προφήτης in the masculine form. Both nouns play off the verb προφητεύω, *I preach / prophecy* and the abstract noun προφητεία, *prophecy* or

should see the two roles as linked—“*deacon*” of the church because of her well-known patronage of “many” foreign visitors, including resident Jews and visiting Christians. There is no difficulty in reading the καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ as Paul’s recollection of a particular occasion (or more than one) when he had been the beneficiary of Phoebe’s patronage and protection (cf. Acts 18:18). The chapter is dotted with such reminiscences (vv 4, 5, 7, 13). Lydia is another example of a wealthy patron, though probably not so influential (Acts 16:14–15), and note Acts 17:12: Paul was not the first leader of the new movement to benefit from the patronage of influential or wealthy women (cf. Luke 8:3!), and he certainly was not the last.

[James D. G. Dunn, vol. 38B, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 888–89.]

preaching disclosing the divine will.³¹ The personal noun προφήτις is only used twice in the NT in reference to the Jewish prophetess Ana in the temple at Jesus' circumcision (Luke 2:36) and this "Jezebel" here in Rev. 2:20. But with the verb προφητεύω, females serve as the subject in several places inside the NT: Acts 2:17--sons and daughters will prophecy; Acts 21:9 -- Phillip's four daughters at Caesarea prophesied; 1 Cor. 11:5 -- a woman praying or prophesying in the gathered assembly of believers must have her head covered.

A part of the underlying tone of Christ's reference to this "Jezebel" at Thyatira is λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφήτιν, *she calls herself a prophetess*. She had taken upon herself this label in order to legitimize her teaching as authoritative. She was a self-appointed prophetess.

This led then to two inner related actions: καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἔμοὺς δούλους, *and she teaches and deceives My servants*. The first verb διδάσκει is neutral. It is the second verb which defines the nature of the first verb that is the problem: πλανᾷ. Note that τοὺς ἔμοὺς³² δούλους, *my servants*, is the direct object of both verbs. "Jezebel" both taught and misled τοὺς ἔμοὺς δούλους. The collective plural form here refers to both men and women members of the church. δοῦλος in its most literal meaning of slave defines believers as unconditionally committed to and possessed by Christ. The teaching of this woman in the church is undermining that commitment to Christ by leading them into activities contrary to His will and desires. This contrary nature of her teaching is asserted by the verb πλανᾷ. The verb πλανᾷ with a personal direct object defines actions that intentionally lead others falsely and into activities that stand against the defined standard of conduct. But πλανᾷ misleads by convincing others that the alternative path is the correct one to follow, when it isn't.

What then were the wrong actions that she was teaching church members to do? These are stated explicitly as πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα, *to engage in immorality and to eat things offered to idols*. At first glance, this seems rather bizarre for Christians to be doing. Several interpretive debates emerge from these two infinitive phrases. Some interpreters see both expressions as referring to religious actions. Compromising Christian ethical purity with a figurative rather than literal meaning for πορνεῦσαι, *to act immorally*. A rather

³¹For details, see appropriate references in Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

³²"ἔμοὺς. Here only in Apoc. but 37 times in Gospel." [R.H. Charles, vol. 1, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 39.]

strong argument can be made in favor of this view.³³ The charge here of πορνεῦσαι seems to be connected to a similar charge against the "Great Whore of Babylon" in Rev. 14:8; 17:2; 18:3; 19:2. In these references both πορνεύω (verb) and πορνεία (noun) seem to be referring to spiritual prostitution rather than physical prostitution in the pattern of the OT prophetic charge by Hosea against the Israelites in the northern kingdom.³⁴

But in my view, this overlooks several important dynamics both culturally and linguistically. Both πορνεία and πορνεύω are supposedly only used figuratively inside the book of Revelation, and no where else in the NT where the obvious meaning is literal rather than figurative. Additionally, some of the references in Revelation can more naturally be taken as literal than figurative, e.g., 2:14, 20. Further, the connection between the pagan religions of the first century world and sexual conduct outside of marriage is well established, even despite one of the assurances to the emperor by one Ephesian governors (SIG 820 [83/84 A.D.]) that "the annual autumn fertility festival was conducted 'with much chastity and due observance of established customs'."³⁵ The complete disconnect between religion and morality in the Greco-Roman world outside Judaism, Christianity, and Mithraism opened the door for enormous amounts of immoral sexual conduct.

The banquets of the trade guilds, normally held in the temple of the patron deity, quite frequently ended with prostitutes being provided to the men for their pleasure, and was considered completely acceptable behavior in that world for both married and unmarried men.³⁶

³³The alternative view of G.K. Beale, [*The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999] that this was a church wide problem with "Jezebel" representing a collection of leaders in the church completely flounders on lack of concrete evidence and incorrect interpretation of parts of this message in 2:18-29. It represents a tendency of modern western interpreters to see such repugnance in sexual immorality in the name of Christianity as impossible for early Christianity and thus come interpretive attempts to move away from this being a problem in the churches of Revelation.

³⁴"Nearly all the uses of the πορν- cognates in Revelation are figurative rather than literal; the only exceptions are found in three vice lists in 9:21; 21:8; 22:18. The term 'fornication' is probably used here in the sense of 'apostasy,' a usage found frequently in the OT." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 204.]

³⁵William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 854.

³⁶Note the stern rebuke of Paul in 1 Cor. 6:12-20 to men in the church at Corinth to stop going to the brothels after becoming Christians.

This understanding of religion and immoral sexual behavior is considerably strengthened with the realization that what Jezebel was teaching at Thyatira is the same as that of the “Balaamites” at Pergamum who also were called the Nicolaitans there (vv. 14-15) and were found at Ephesus under the same title (v. 6).

The cumulative weight of evidence falls in favor of the view to take both *πορνεῦσαι* and *φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα* at their foundational literal meaning. And to understand that both these actions had religious tones and connections.

Now precisely what was that religious tone? Some propose that this “Jezebel” belonged to one of the pagan religious cults engaging in both activities as well as functioning as a leader in the church. Consequently she was trying to seduce church members to participate in these cultic activities. But from a social viewpoint the far more likely scenario was that the wealthy “Jezebel” woman had little taste for Christian ethical teaching that would seriously jeopardize her ability to make money through limiting participation in the trade guilds or even by limiting connections to the pagan temples that dominated the city. Thus she came up with the outwardly “legitimate” reception of special revelations as a supposed *προφήτις* that overrode the orthodox Christian teaching. Remember that at this point the only written scriptures available to Christians was the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament. Perhaps an early collection of Paul’s writings were beginning to be circulated, but can’t be clearly documented until the beginning decades of the second Christian century. Thus the ‘charismatic’ personality of Christian leaders played a very significant role in shaping the contours of Christian belief and practice. In a couple or so decades after the writing of this NT document, the power of the charismatic personality would explode with the Marcionite movement built solely around the personality of its founder.³⁷ This would significantly push the rest of Christianity toward a written canon of Christian scriptures that defined boundaries of belief and practice.

The second infinitive phrase *φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα*,³⁸ has reference to eating food that had been dedicated to idols.³⁹ This the woman “Jezebel” at Thyatira is ac-

³⁷But even Marcion realized the pivotal role of written scriptures for Christians apart from the OT with his proposed NT ‘scripture’ that he published and promoted.

³⁸Note the series of words connected to idols in NT usage: *εἰδωλεῖον*, *ου*, *τό*; *εἰδωλόθυτος*, *ον*; *εἰδωλολατρεύω*; *εἰδωλολάτρης*, *ου*, *ός*; *εἰδωλολατρία*, *ας*, *ή*; *εἰδωλομανής*, *-ές*; *εἰδωλον*, *ου*, *τό*. The concept in the ancient world was distinctly Jewish and Christian. It depends on a monotheistic assumption about deity.

³⁹“*εἰδωλόθυτος*, *ον* (s. *εἰδωλον* and *θύω*; 4 Macc 5:2), only subst. *τὸ εἰδωλόθυτον*, *someth. offered to a cultic image/idol*, *food sacrificed to idols* an expr. which (s. *εἰδωλον* 2) was possible only within Israelite tradition (cp. Ps.-Phoc. 31 [an interpolation

cused of teaching.⁴⁰ What is not stated explicitly is the location of the eating of such food.⁴¹ If it took place in one’s own home, the apostle Paul years before had indicated that such was perfectly fine.⁴² Or, if invited to an acquaintance’s home for a meal, it was fine. Most of the meat especially that could be purchased in the market place represented the excess meat from animals offered in sacrifice at pagan temples. Christian insight

prob. based on **Ac 15:29**]; Just., D. 34, 8; 35, 1), where it was used in a derogatory sense. Polytheists said *ιερόθυτον* (s. *ιερόθυτος*). *It refers to sacrificial meat, part of which was burned on the altar as the deities’ portion* (cp. Orig., C. Cels. 8, 30, 1: *τὸ εἰδωλόθυτον θύεται δαιμονίως*), *part was eaten at a solemn meal in the temple, and part was sold in the market (so Artem. 5, 2) for home use*. Within the Mosaic tradition it was unclean and therefore forbidden. **Ac 15:29** (for lit. s. *πνικτός*); **21:25**; **1 Cor 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19, 28 v.l.**; **Rv 2:14, 20**; D 6:3. (Iren. 6, 3 [Harv. I 55, 10]).—MRauer, D. ‘Schwachen’ in Korinth u. Rom 1923, 40–52; HvSoden, Sakrament u. Ethik b. Pls: Marburger Theol. Stud. 1, ’31, 1ff; GFee, *Biblica* 61, ’80, 172–97; WWillis, *Idol Meat in Corinth*: SBLDS 68, ’85; PTomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*: CRINT III/1, ’90, 187–220; BWitherington III, *Why Not Idol Meat?*: BRev 10/3, ’94, 38–43; 54f.—EDNT. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 280.]

⁴⁰“The historical Jezebel was a worshiper of Baal (1 Kgs 16:31), perhaps specifically Melqart of Tyre. The connection here between prophecy and eating sacrificial meat has a significant parallel in Philo Spec. Leg. 1.315–17 (Borgen, Paul, 73; Borgen, Philo, 226), a passage discussed in detail by Seland (*Jewish Vigilantism*, 73–80, 98–107, 123–25, 136–37, 147–53). There Philo, alluding to Deut 13:1–11, deals with what appears to be a contemporary problem (LCL tr.):

Further if anyone cloaking himself under the name and guise of a prophet [*σχῆμα προφητείας*] and claiming to be possessed by inspiration lead us on to the worship of the gods recognized in the different cities, we ought not to listen to him and be deceived [*ἀπατωμένους*] by the name of prophet. For such a one is no prophet, but an imposter, since his oracles and pronouncements are falsehoods invented by himself.

“Philo goes on to suggest that even if such things are done by friends or relatives, they must be considered enemies and should be lynched. 11QTemple 44:18–20 also paraphrases the law of the prophet who advocates idolatrous worship (see Schiffmann, “Idolatry,” 163–66).”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 204.]

⁴¹One very important background here is the typical diet of most people in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Meat was not a regular part of the diet at any level of society outside the very wealthy aristocratic side. Invitations to banquets, dinners in private homes, and festivals held in connection with various pagan temples were the primary opportunities for eating meat rather than the normal non-meat, grain based foods that were consumed daily. Thus such opportunities for ‘eating out’ took on additional importance for people in that world beyond the social networking aspects.

⁴²See his lengthy discussion in First Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:18-11:1. Note especially his pragmatic guidelines in 10:25-30.

understood the non-existence of the idol and thus dedication to it had not impact on the food to contaminate it in any way. The qualification is the presence of another Christian who is not comfortable with eating such food. None offense of this person takes precedence over one's freedom to eat.

The other two possible locations were trade guild etc. banquets and worship ceremonies in pagan temples. The wide range of *collegia* from social to business to religious that functioned in the first century Greco-Roman world created substantial challenges to Christians. This sort of 'social networking' was essential to operating a business and gaining esteem in that culture. The challenge to Christians came about through most all of these groups having a patron deity or deities. The meetings of these groups nearly always began with a religious service that included dedication of the food for the meal to the patron god. This was followed by a banquet type meal where through socializing one established the needed connections for his / her business. Frequently, the meeting ended, after a time of discussion of some issue that was on the agenda for the evening, in a sexual orgy with prostitutes or slave girls brought in for the men in the group.

For a Christian to participate in such gatherings clearly was problematic. Huge pressure was put on everyone to be a part, and refusal could have substantial repercussions. But for the believer such gatherings put him or her in a precarious position religiously. What this Jezebel seems to have been advocating was this such participation was completely okay for believers. This is where her teaching was *πλανᾷ τοὺς ἔμοιους δούλους*, *misleading Christ's servants*.

The final possible option would have been for Christians to have actively participated in worship services of pagan deities in Thyatira. Although possible, this option seems to be the least likely of all. This simply because of the deeply held monotheism belief of Christians from the outset of this spiritual journey with Christ. Thus the specific situation assumed in the text probably implies the first and/or the second of these options.⁴³ Whatever the specific occasion, the Chris-

⁴³"In the ancient Mediterranean world, sharing food was perhaps the most common way of establishing a sacred bond between individuals and between individuals and their deities. According to Greek sacrificial protocol, holocaust offerings (animal carcasses wholly consumed by fire) were rare; normally only the useless parts were burned (the bones, fat, and gall bladders), while the meat and organs were eaten by the sacrificers (see Hesiod Theog. 536–41, 553–57; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 55–59). When the number and size of the victims made immediate consumption by the participants impossible, the edible portions were sold to the public in the *macellum* or meat market (Pliny Ep.1 10.96.10: 'flesh of sacrificial victims is on sale everywhere,' a translation reflecting the emendation of Koerte, accepted by Sherwin-White, *Letters*,

tian's spiritual commitment put him or her in a difficult situation socially and religiously.⁴⁴ As is often the case

709–10) or were publicly distributed on special occasions such as festivals (Jos. J. W. 7.16; Ammianus Marcellinus 22.12.6; Augustine Ep. 29.9). The architectural remains of several *macella* from the Roman period have been discovered (Nabers, *Opuscula Romana* 9 [1973] 173–76). Of special interest is the *macellum* at Corinth. Though this *macellum* has not yet been definitively identified, two inscriptions connected with it that record the names of donors have been found (Cadbury, JBL 53 [1934] 134–41; Gill, TynBul43 [1992] 389–93; de Waele, AJA 34 [1930] 453–54). Sacrificial meat was also consumed at socio-religious occasions at temples and at the private homes of the wealthy through invitation. Such occasions at temples are reflected in the papyrus invitations to the κλίνη, 'couch,' of Sarapis; hence, κλίνη connotes 'a dinner at which one reclines to eat.' Thirteen such invitations have now been discovered (the thirteenth invitation is POxy 3693, where references to the other twelve are given; a helpful summary discussion of these texts is found in Horsley, *New Docs* 1:5–9). Surviving terra-cotta statuettes and numismatic depictions of a reclining Sarapis confirm the notion that the deity was thought to be present on such occasions (Gilliam, "Invitations," 317). Judging by the size of the banquet rooms in excavated sanctuaries, between seven and ten persons could be present (Will, "Banquets," 353–62). A striking illustration of religious life in imperial Pergamon came to light in 1976 during the excavations sponsored by the German Archaeological Institute, when what appears to have been a cultic dining room was uncovered (Radt, *Pergamon*, 307–13). An altar was found, and traces of vine branches and leaves and grape clusters on the walls suggest that Dionysos was the deity honored at sacrificial meals held there. A surviving painting of a human figure (from the waist down) clad in oriental dress suggests the syncretistic character of the cult, which may have provided the kind of setting in which Christians were tempted to compromise with paganism and eat food sacrificed to idols.

"Meat was not a regular part of the diet of most people, except when distributed publicly (Macmullen, *Paganism*, 41). Most people in Greece and Italy lived primarily on a diet of flour, in earlier times made into porridge (puls) and later baked into bread (H. Bolkestein, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum: Ein Beitrag zum Problem "Moral und Gesellschaft"* [Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1967] 365). Meat was eaten primarily in connection with religious rituals of various types. Christians, like Jews, often refused to eat sacrificial meat, and the issue is occasionally mentioned in the NT and early Christian literature (1 Cor 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; Did. 6:3; Aristides *Apol.* 15.5; Justin *Dial.* 35; Tertullian *Apol.* 9; Clement Alex. *Strom.* 4.16; *Paed.* 2.1; Origen *Contra Cels.* 8.28–30; Comm. in Mt. 11.12; Clem. *Hom.* 7.8; Clem. *Recog.* 4.36), a fact known to Lucian (*De morte Per.* 16). In Did. 6:3 (as part of the two-ways tradition that may well be derived from a Jewish source), we find the injunction ἀπὸ δὲ εἰδωλοθύτου λίαν πρόσεχε, 'But be particularly wary of meat offered to idols.' 1 Cor 8:1–13 probably refers to eating sacrificial meat in temples, while 10:23–11:1 refers to sacrificial meat sold in the marketplace (Fee, *Bib* 61 [1980] 178), indicated by the phrase πᾶν τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ πωλούμενον ἐσθίετε, 'eat everything sold in the meat market'." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 192–93.]

⁴⁴Diaspora Jews usually had a much better situation in which either through special imperial decrees or local governmental reg-

in modern society, those who lived in the wealthier segments of society, even as Christians, tended to be much more integrated into the society through networking for business etc. than those living in the lower classes of society.

The final statement in the *narratio* at verse 21 indicates prior efforts by Christ to convince this “Jezebel” woman to change her ways: *καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication.* Either through John or some other Christian leader, Christ had sought to convince this woman to change here ways, although she refused to budgeulations they were exempted from having to eat such food while participating in the collegia or trade guilds.

Making sacrifices to pagan gods and partaking of the edible portions of such sacrificial victims was forbidden in Exod 34:15, though occasionally Jews were forced to do precisely that (2 Macc 6:7, 12; 7:42). Since sacrificial meat was taboo for Jews (4 Macc 5:2; m. Abod. Zar. 2.3 authorities sometimes made special arrangements for Jewish communities to secure nonsacrificial meat (Jos. Ant. 14.261). Yet eating sacrificial meat was occasionally practiced by Jews, as T. Hullin 2.13 indicates, reflecting the experiences of the second century Jewish community at Caesarea (Levine, *Caesarea*, 45, where the text is quoted). A warning against εἰδωλόθουτα is found in Ps.-Phocylides *Sententiae* 631, a first-century a.d. poem of Jewish origin: αἷμα δὲ μὴ φαγέειν, εἰδωλοθούτων ἀπέχεσθαι, ‘Do not eat blood; abstain from meat sacrificed to idols’ (yet this line is found in only one MS and is probably an early interpolation; see D. Young, *Theognis*, 2nd ed. [Leipzig: Teubner, 1971] 100). The most probable source is Acts 15:29; see P. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Leiden: Brill, 1978) 135–36. Although 1 Cor 10:23–11:1 appears to assume that a Christian entering a butcher shop could not tell which cuts were sacrificial and which not, it probably refers to meat eaten in homes when the difference was no longer apparent. Other references indicate that sacrificial meat in the marketplace was somehow readily distinguishable (Pliny *Ep.* 10.96.10; Isenberg, CP 70 [1975] 272). Trypho the Jew is made to claim that he knows of Christians who eat sacrificial meat (Justin, *Dial.* 34). Justin claims that they are heretics, i.e., Marcionites, Valentinians, Basilidians, and Saturnilians (*Dial.* 35.6). Irenaeus claims that heretics (Valentinians, Basilidians, Saturnilians) both eat sacrificial meat and attend pagan festivals (*Adv. Haer.* 1.6.3; 1.24.5; 1.28.2), and Eusebius claims the same for the Basilidians (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.7.7). Yet no surviving Gnostic text (including those from Nag Hammadi) refers to eating sacrificial meat, though there are some references to libertine indulgence in sexual promiscuity (e.g., Marcus the Gnostic). In the NT eating sacrificial meat is often associated with sexual promiscuity (Acts 15:29; 21:25; Rev 2:14, 20); these two motifs are also connected in Num 25:1–2, to which Rev 2:14, 20 alludes. There are two possibilities at both Pergamon and Thyatira: the liberal elements eating sacrificial meat are either the wealthier members of their communities or the ordinary people who are tempted to participate in the civic and private festivities associated with Hellenistic religion. Participation in cultic meals united the participants; those who avoided such occasions erected barriers between themselves and their neighbors. Christians of high social status were more integrated into society than those from the lower class.

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 193–94.]

from her position.

One interpretive point of importance here is the phrase μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, *to repent of her immorality.* This seems to cover the entire expression πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθουτα, *to engage in immorality and to eat food offered to idols.* If correct, then the view that πορνεῦσαι / τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς should be considered figuratively rather than literally. Eating food offered to idols is thus spiritual immorality comparable to sexual immorality. But it is not entirely clear that this was John’s intention here. The infinitive phrase μετανοῆσαι ἐκ⁴⁵ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς could cover both actions as two distinct but connected sinful actions.

The view of this woman was deeply enough held that she refused to change her thinking, even though Christ through His human spokesmen had affirmed the wrongness of her thinking. This is not overly surprising, even inside Revelation since with the sixth trumpet most of humanity refuses to repent of its sinful actions.⁴⁶

The warnings of the *dispositio* come next in vv. 22–25 and focus primarily on this woman and her followers in the church. She has had enough time to change her ways and has refused to do so. Now Christ’s judgment is coming upon her in a stern manner. First is the promised judgment on her: ἰδοὺ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην, *Indeed I am going to throw her into bed.* Although a bit ironical, the expression is a Hebrew idiom meaning to be thrown on to a sickbed.⁴⁷ She is threatened with

⁴⁵“μετανοῆσαι ἐκ. This construction is nowhere else found in the N.T. nor yet in the LXX (where ἐπί or ἀπό follow), yet it recurs in our author in 2:22, 20, 21, 16:11.” [R.H. Charles, vol. 1, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1920), 38]

⁴⁶Rev. 9:20–21. 20 The rest of humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands or give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.

20 Καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἱ οὐκ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν ταῖς πληγαῖς ταύταις, οὐδὲ μετενόησαν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα μὴ προσκυνήσουσιν τὰ δαιμόνια καὶ τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ χρυσοῦ καὶ τὰ ἀργυροῦ καὶ τὰ χαλκοῦ καὶ τὰ λίθινα καὶ τὰ ξύλινα, ἃ οὐτε βλέπειν δύναται οὐτε ἀκούειν οὐτε περιπατεῖν, 21 καὶ οὐ μετενόησαν ἐκ τῶν φόνων αὐτῶν οὐτε ἐκ τῶν φαρμάκων αὐτῶν οὐτε ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῶν οὐτε ἐκ τῶν κλεμμάτων αὐτῶν.

⁴⁷“The expression βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην, ‘I will throw her into a sickbed,’ is a Hebrew idiom that means ‘to cast upon a bed of illness,’ i.e., to punish someone with various forms of sickness (Charles, 1:71–72; see Exod 21:18; 1 Macc 1:5; Jdt 8:3). In one part of a complex curse on a Jewish amulet from the Cairo Geniza (TS K1.42, lines 31–33), we read: ‘may they fall into bed with sickness [יפול במטה בהדרה] *yippól bammitâ bahădirâ*] as long as he dwells in the place that they stole’ (Schiffman-Swartz, *Incantation*, 85, 88). In the ancient tradition first found in Deut 13:5–11, false

sickness that could easily and quickly lead to death.

Then 'her children' are given a stern warning: [βάλλω...] καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ' αὐτῆς εἰς θλίψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, and [I will throw] those committing adultery with her into great affliction. The verb βάλλω is assumed for this second direct object phrase. What is fascinating here is that those who have come under the influence of this woman leader at Thyatira are labeled as committing adultery with her, not literally but figuratively. To adopt false teaching is to commit spiritual adultery against God and with the false teacher. It should be noted that here μοιχεύω is used rather than πορνεία or πορνεύω. The frame of reference is different in defining the relationship of this woman with her followers.

The first threat to them is θλίψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, great affliction, unless they repent of their deeds. They are given further opportunity to repent (the 3rd class protasis w. ἐὰν and the subjunctive mood verb doesn't put much expectation on their repenting). Unless they repent they will experience θλίψιν μεγάλην. Probably this implies serious illness, or possibly life threatening situations. The seriousness of the θλίψιν μεγάλην is stated again more directly in v. 23a: καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ, and I will strike her children dead (with pestilence). In Rev. 6:8, the expression ἀποκτεῖναι...ἐν θανάτῳ clearly means to put to death by pestilence. Christ threatens to punish the woman and her followers with a lethal illness. Some modern commentators seek to 'tone down' the intensity of this statement with some kind of 'figurative' interpretation, but in some truth the imposition of a temporal judgment of physical death is rather common in the New Testament, e.g., 1 Cor. 11:28-32.

The impact of this would be a dramatic demonstration of both the power and the full knowledge of Christ: καὶ γινώσκονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἐραυνῶν νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας, And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts. Here the image of Christ with flaming fire shooting out his eyes (v. 18b) comes to the forefront. Such dramatic punishment imposed on this group at Thyatira should catch the attention of all of the churches.⁴⁸ In the back-

prophets are to be executed (cf. 4Q375 = Apocryphon of Moses 1.4-5; 11QTemple 54.10-15; 61:1-2; 4Q158= 4Q Reworked Pentateucha frag. 6, line 8; Philo Spec. Leg. 1.315-17), it is surprising that 'Jezebel' is not threatened with death, though her 'children' are (v. 23).⁴⁹ [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 205-206]

⁴⁸“This is an allusion to Jer 17:10a, ‘I the Lord search the mind and try the heart,’ which is confirmed by the allusion to the second part of Jer 17:10 in v. 23c: ‘to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.’ This allusion has important christological significance, since the original speaker in Jer 17:10 was Yahweh, but now it is the exalted Christ who possesses

ground to this statement is Jeremiah 17:10, along with a long heritage of understands that God knows everything, and in the NT that Christ possesses this complete knowledge as well. The point is made that this knowledge is not merely external events. Rather He is ὁ ἐραυνῶν νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας, the One who searches minds and hearts. This knowledge extends to knowing the thoughts and motives of every person. Christ knows completely what goes on inside His churches, and will use this understanding to warn and to punish if necessary.

This full knowledge then becomes the basis for His judgments upon individuals and churches: καὶ δώσω ὑμῖν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve (v. 23c).⁴⁹ Christ's

the same omniscience. There are several passages in the Gospels in which the supernatural knowledge and insight of Jesus is emphasized (Matt 9:4; John 2:25; 4:29, 39; 16:30; 18:4; 21:17). In Judaism and early Christianity it is frequently affirmed that God knows the mind and heart of each person (1 Sam 16:7; 2 Sam 14:20; 1 Kgs 8:39; 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 6:30; Pss 44:21; 139:1-6, 23; Wis 7:1; Sir 1:30; 15:18; 42:18-19; Sus 42; Bar 3:32; 2 Macc 9:5; 2 Apoc. Bar. 83:2-3; Jos. J. W. 5.413; Philo, Opif. 69; Som. 1.87; PGM IV.3046-47 [a magical procedure possibly of Jewish origin]; Matt 6:4, 6, 18; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5; 14:25; Heb 4:12-13; Ign. Phil. 7:1; Teach. Silv. 116.3). Just as God knows everything about individuals, so prophets have insight into the secrets of a person's heart (Sir 44:3; Jos. Ant. 15.375; 18.198; John 4:19 [compared with vv 29, 39]; 1 Cor 13:2; 14:24-25; Ps.-Clement Hom. 2.6.1; see Sandnes, Paul, 96-98). In 4QMess ar 1:8, it is claimed 'he [possibly Enoch] will know the secrets of man [נְשֵׁי אַנְשֵׁי וְיָדַע רִזִּי wyd. rzy nš.], and 'he will know the secrets of all living things [אֵי כֹל חַיִּים וְיָדַע רִזִּי wyd. rzy kwl hyy.]' (see the brief commentary in García Martínez, Qumran, 21-22). Many secrets were revealed to Enoch, the secrets of the holy ones (1 Enoch 106:19), the secrets of sinners (1 Enoch 104:10; cf. 83:7), and even the secrets of God (1 Enoch 103:2; 104:12).⁴⁹ [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 206-207]

⁴⁹“καὶ δώσω ὑμῖν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν, ‘and I will give to each of you in accordance with your deeds.’ This is probably an allusion to Jer 17:10b (since v. 10a is alluded to in v. 23b), even though the LXX version of Jer 17:10b differs somewhat from the proverb found here in v. 23c: τοῦ δοῦναι ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ, ‘to give to each in accordance with his ways.’ This is one version (see also Rev 18:6; 20:12, 13; 22:12) of a widespread saying dealing with retributive justice found in the OT, in which the phrase κατὰ τὰ ἔργα is used with such verbs as δίδοναι, ἀποδίδοναι, and κρίνειν in a context of judgment (often eschatological) in early Judaism and early Christianity (Pss 27:4[2x]; 61:13; 86:2; Prov 24:12; Sir 16:12, 14; Pss. Sol. 2:16, 34; 17:8; Jer 27:9; Lam 3:64; Rom 2:6; 2 Cor 11:15; 2 Tim 4:14; Ign. [long rec.] Magn. 11:3; 2 Clem 17:4). While the OT frequently mentions that God tries the heart and the kidneys, and though the notion of recompense for one's works is also found frequently outside Jeremiah (Pss 28:4; 62:13; Prov 24:12), only in Jer 17:10 (and Rev 2:23) are the two conceptions found together (Wolff, Jeremiah, 171). This is a proverbial saying that also occurs in Ps 62:12(LXX 61:13) and Prov 24:12: God ἀποδίδωσιν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, ‘will

praise and/or punishment of churches and individuals will be based on exactly what each had done, not what they claim or believe they have done. Thus boasting of religious service is worthless. Deceiving oneself in to thinking that religious service is being done when it isn't is spiritual suicide. Christ knows exactly what we have or haven't done, and His judgments on us are based on this divine knowledge.

Next Christ re-directs His attention on those in the church at Thyatira who are not a part of the "Jezebel group": ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς ἐν Θυατείροις, [But to the rest of you in Thyatira](#). What is not stated is whether the rest were a majority or a minority group in the church.

What should be noted also here is the use of the second person plural pronoun ὑμῖν, clearly as a reference to the church members. Uniformly from v. 18-22, the second person 'you' references are in the singular number and go back to τῷ ἀγγέλῳ in v. 19a. But clearly both the singular and the plural forms refer to the church either collectively (with the singular) or individually (with this plural form).

He goes on to further acknowledge the difficult circumstances they faced with two separate relative clauses. First, ὅσοι οὐκ ἔχουσιν τὴν διδασχὴν ταύτην, [as many as do not possess this teaching](#). Clearly the demonstrative pronoun ταύτην reaches back to v. 20 in reference to the teaching of the "Jezebel" woman in the church. It is these believers who are the object of Christ's initial compliments in v. 19.

Second, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ ὡς λέγουσιν, [who are the kind of people who have not known out of experience the deep things of Satan, as they say](#).

repay each in accordance with his works,' and has close parallels in Rev 20:13 (the dead will be judged κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν, 'in accordance with their works') and 22:12 (ἀποδοῦναι ἐκάστῳ ὡς τὸ ἔργον ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ, 'to repay to each in accordance to his work'). This particular proverbial formulation of the principle of *lex talionis* (i.e., 'the law of retaliation') circulated in ancient Israel (Pss 28:4 [LXX 27:4]; 62:12 [LXX 61:13]; Prov 24:12), in early Judaism (Sir 35:19a[LXX 35:22]; Jos. As. 28:3; Pss. Sol. 2:16, 34-35; 17:8-9), and in early Christianity (Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 2 Tim 4:14; 1 Pet 1:17; 1 Clem 34:3; 2 Clem 11:6; 17:4; cf. 2 Cor 11:15). Many of these sayings occur in an eschatological context in which God rewards and judges the deeds of people (Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 1 Pet 1:17; 1 Clem 34:3; 2 Clem 17:4). According to Conzelmann (Theology, 147), judgment by works is the standard of the entire NT, including Paul. Here it is noteworthy that the author switches to plural pronouns. The problem is whether these pronouns refer to all the members of the congregation or simply to those who have been supporters of 'Jezebel.' Since in v 24 the author expressly addresses those who have resisted the influence of 'Jezebel' with plural pronouns and verb forms, the ὑμῖν of v 23 probably should be restricted to the followers of 'Jezebel.'" [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 207-208]

This second 'qualitative' relative pronoun οἵτινες underscores a tone of quality in the reference -- something almost impossible to translate into English naturally. He commends them for not experientially knowing the details of this woman's teachings. In reality they most likely did know intellectually the content of these teachings, which would have been stated as οὐκ οἶδασιν... What ἔγνωσαν stresses is understanding gained from participation in. This second relative clause then further defines the thrust of the first clause. These believers in Thyatira had no direct experience with the teachings of this woman.

What is both challenging and very blunt at the same time is the direct object of the verb οὐκ ἔγνωσαν. What does τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ, [the deep things of Satan](#), mean?⁵⁰ If John means this literally, then he is picking up on a phrase that surfaces often in the early second century in Gnostic heretical teachings.⁵¹ Although this meaning is a possibility here, it seems much more likely that the phrase has the same sarcastic tone as συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ, [synagogue of Satan](#), in 2:9 and

⁵⁰Here ὡς λέγουσιν, literally 'as they say,' is a citation formula that suggests that the phrase 'the deep things of Satan' is a central concern of the Nicolaitans. There are two ways of understanding this phrase: (1) The quotation can be taken at face value: the Nicolaitans were involved in a kind of Satanism that has parallels in several second-century Gnostic groups. (2) John has sarcastically substituted 'Satan' for 'God,' or has added 'Satan' to the term 'depths,' in order to convey his view of the real focus of their theology, just as he labeled Jews 'a synagogue of Satan' (2:9; 3:9), rather than a synagogue of God." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 208]

⁵¹"The 'deep things of Satan' may have originated as a Gnostic motto, though the Gnostics did not have a monopoly on the term 'depth.' 1 Cor 2:10 refers to the Spirit as searching τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ, 'the depths of God.' The phrase 'the depths' is used in prophetic contexts, such as LXX and Theod Dan 2:22, where it is said that God knows τὰ βαθέα (cf. Rom 11:33). In a possibly Gnostic context God himself can be defined as βάθος or Depth (Acts Thom. 143; Hippolytus Ref. 6.30.7), though 1 Clem 40:1 can refer to 'the depths of divine knowledge [τὰ βάθη τῆς θείας γνώσεως].' Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 2.22.1: 'they claim [dicunt] that they have found out the mysteries of Bythus [profunda Bythi].' Hippolytus, Ref. 5.6.4: 'They call themselves Gnostics, claiming that they alone know the depths [τὰ βάθη].' The Valentinian first principle is called τὸ βάθος (Clement Alex. Exc. ex Theod. 29). Similarly, according to Hippolytus (Ref. 6.30.7), the Valentinians called the Father ῥίζα καὶ βάθος καὶ βυθός, 'Root and Deep and Depth.' Clement of Alexandria speaks of 'the depths of knowledge' (Strom. 5.88.5; τὰ μὲν τῆς γνώσεως βάθη). See also Acts Thom. 143; H. Schlier, TDNT 1:517-18. In PGM IV.978 (tr. Betz, Greek Magical Papyri), 'I conjure you, holy light, holy brightness, breadth, depth [βάθος]' (see IV.970). In a spell for a divine revelation in PGM XII.155-58, 'I call upon you [several lines of voces magicae, i.e., magical gobble-dyook] let there be depth [βάθος], breadth, length, brightness.'" [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 209]

3:9. In this reference a play on συναγωγή τοῦ θεοῦ, *synagogue of God*, where the Jews claimed commitment to God, but instead were serving Satan himself by their actions. Here “Jezebel” claims to have gained knowledge of ‘deeper spiritual realities’ as the basis for her teaching through her false claim to be a προφήτις, prophetess (v. 20). But in reality, the actual source of her teachings came not from God, but from Satan himself.

The impact of these two relative clauses is to highlight a certain tension in the church. Christ is strongly critical of the church’s toleration of this woman’s teachings, but He strongly compliments those in the church who had firmly rejected her teachings.

This leads Him to make the following interconnected demands on these faithful believers: οὐ βάλλω ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος, πλὴν ὃ ἔχετε κρατήσατε ἄχρι[ς] οὗ ἂν ἴξω, *I do not throw upon you another burden, nevertheless what you possess hold on to firmly until I come* (vv. 24c-25).⁵² The primary assertion comes first with no other obligations being put on the believers. It is qualified, however, by this one proviso to remain faithful to the principles they already understood and were following.

The uniqueness of the initial demand οὐ βάλλω ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος seems to echo the similar expression in Acts 15:28:

28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no **further burden** than these essentials: 29 that you abstain **from what has been sacrificed to idols** and from blood and from what is strangled and **from fornication**. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

28 ἔδοξεν γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν **βάρος πλὴν** τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες, 29 ἀπέχεσθαι **εἰδωλοθύτων** καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ **πορνείας**, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοῦς εὖ πράξετε. Ἔρρωσθε.

The apostolic guidelines adopted at the Jerusalem conference in 48 AD do contain references to two of the issues being addressed by John at Thyatira in 95 AD: εἰδωλοθύτων and πορνείας. But how extensively this was taught in mid first century Christianity is not clear, especially in light of Paul’s modification of the idea of εἰδωλοθύτων in First Corinthians and Romans in the early to mid 50s of the first century.⁵³ Clearly outside

⁵²Note here the repeated second person plural uses with ὑμᾶς and ἔχετε. This is consistent with the initial shift from second singular in vv. 18-22. The shift in form but not in reference to the second plural begins in v. 23 with ὑμῖν and ὑμῶν.

⁵³“οὐ βάλλω ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος, ‘I will not put any other burden upon you.’ There is a relatively close parallel to this statement in Acts 15:28: μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος πλὴν τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες, ‘not to lay any greater burden on you except these necessary matters.’ Here βάλλω ἐπί, ‘put upon,’ corresponds to ἐπιτίθεσθαι in Acts 15:28, and βάρος πλὴν in Acts 15:28

Palestine, Christians and especially Jewish Christians, faced the issue of food offered to idols in virtually every place where they lived. But the Acts 15 issue centered on table fellowship at meal time between Jewish and non-Jewish believers inside a community of faith, and not on the larger issue of non-Christian associations of believers. Thus it is something of a stretch to inject the Acts 15 issue into this later issue at Thyatira.

Thus in summary, Christ commends the church for its faithfulness and spiritual growth in a very hostile atmosphere (v. 19). But He is greatly displeased at the church for tolerating the corrupting influence of the teachings of the “Jezebel” woman in the church, and threatens severe actions against them if the church doesn’t take actions first (vv. 20-23). He finishes with a commendation of those who have rejected the teachings of this woman (v. 24) and admonishes them to remain committed to the apostolic teachings they are already following (v. 25).

C. Admonition and promise, vv. 26-29

26 Καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν 27 καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ ὡς τὰ σκευῆ τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, 28 ὡς κἀγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν. 29 Ὁ ἔχων οὐς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

26 To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end,

I will give authority over the nations;

27 to rule them with an iron rod,

as when clay pots are shattered —

28 even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star.

29 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Unlike in the other six messages where the admo-

corresponds to βάρος πλὴν here in Rev 2:24c–25. The context of Acts 15:28 is the Apostolic Decree, in which abstention from meat sacrificed to idols is enjoined, just as immorality and the consumption of meat offered to idols is condemned in Rev 2:20. Many scholars think that the Apostolic Decree is clearly in the mind of the author (Zahn, 1:292–93; Bousset [1906] 221; Charles, 1:74). The problem with this conclusion is that the letter in Acts 15:23–29 is part of Luke’s editorial work, and it is extremely doubtful that John of Patmos knew and used the Acts of the Apostles (Räsänen, ANRW II, 26/2:1611), though it is possible that both Revelation and Acts were dependent on a popular catchword (Müller, *Theologischesgeschichte*, 18). The prohibitions listed in the Apostolic Decree include abstention from meat sacrificed to idols, from fornication, from what has been strangled, and from blood. Only the first two prohibitions are mentioned in the immediate context (2:20; cf. 2:14). The prohibitions in the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15 reflect the Jewish conception of the Noachide Laws, i.e., the pre-Sinaitic laws incumbent on all people, which also regulate the relations between Jews and non-Jews.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 209]

nition to hear (v. 29) is followed by the victory promise (vv. 26-28), the sequence is here reversed. Perhaps that may be in part due to the extra long victory promise to the Thyatirans, beyond what is made to the other six churches.

The victory promise in vv. 26-28 is very lengthy and the victory expression ὁ νικῶν is combined with parallel expression: ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν, *the one overcoming and keeping ...* (v. 26), Additionally the promise expression δώσω αὐτῷ, *I will give to him...*, is repeated a second time. In the first instance in vv. 26b-28a, the conceptualizations in Psalm 2:8-9 are heavily used, giving the promise a strong Jewish basis. But in the second instance in v. 28b, a purely Thyatiran custom lies in the background, largely against the backdrop of religious paganism in that Greco-Roman culture.

The victory formula serves in six of the seven messages as the promise segment of the command (the hear admonition) / promise (victory promise) coming at the end as incentive to adopt the terms of the message coming from Christ to the church. Here, however, the sequence is reversed evidently to allow for the longer emphasis on the victory promise and to tie it closer to the message from Christ in vv. 19-26. It especially links up to the command to hold on in v. 26. This largely accounts for the doublet expression ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, *everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end*, that introduces the formula.

The specification of victory comes with this introductory pair of participles ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, *everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end*. This is the only place where an additional qualification to ὁ νικῶν is stated among the seven messages.⁵⁴ And the qualification ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, *and keeping until the end my deeds*, essentially repeats the previous admonition ὁ ἔχετε κρατήσατε ἄχρι[ς] οὗ ἂν ἦξω, *what you possess hold on to firmly until I come* (v. 25).

Additionally ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου functions to specifically define the meaning of ὁ νικῶν. What does it mean to overcome? Simply it is consistently doing the deeds Christ has laid out for His people to do, and doing them to the end (ἄχρι τέλους). The works of Christ, τὰ ἔργα μου, are clearly distinct from ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, *works of Law*, which Paul utterly rejected as a part of divine salvation (cf. Gal. 2:15-21). Paul

rejected the legalism of earning one's salvation taught by the Pharisees. The works of Christ line out the path for living the Christian life of obedience to Christ as a validation of the genuineness of one's faith surrender to Christ in conversion (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Not spasmodic obedience nor momentary obedience reveal a genuine faith. Only consistent obedience over the long term of our pilgrimage reflects genuine faith commitment to Christ.

The terminus point of this obedience is defined as ἄχρι τέλους, *until the end*. This stands parallel to ἄχρι οὗ ἂν ἦξω, *until I come*, in v. 25. The basic sense is 'until the end of the world' at the second coming of Christ. Additionally, it would imply as long as the believer is alive in this world, i.e., to the end of one's life. Christian commitment to Christ is long term commitment that is intended to redirect the course of one's life from the moment of commitment until death or the second coming, depending on which one happens first.

Those who measure up to this standard are promised an interesting blessing. Essentially it is ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν, *authority over the nations*, and τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν, *the morning star*. These represent an interesting perspective on the core promise of eternal life in each of the promises in the seven messages.⁵⁵ Each of these promises relates to the individual situation being faced by believers in each city.

Here the twin promises -- one with a Jewish tone grounded in OT principle and one with a Gentile tone rooted in paganism -- relate especially to those in Thyatira where the theme of the absolute authority of Christ dominates the message. This divine power will ultimately turn in great benefit to the overcoming be-

⁵⁵ δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, *I will give him to eat from the tree of life* (2:7).

οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἑκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου, *he will never be harmed by the second death* (2:11).

περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ὁμολογήσω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ, *he will be clothed with white robes and I will never blot out his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and His angels* (3:5).

ποιήσω αὐτὸν στῦλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἐπι καὶ γράψω ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἡ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν, *I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God and he will never go out of it, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of Heaven from My God and My new name* (3:12).

δώσω αὐτῷ καθίσει μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ μου, ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα καὶ ἐκάθισα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ αὐτοῦ, *I will grant him permission to sit with Me at My throne, just as I overcame and sit down with My Father at His throne* (3:21).

⁵⁴ Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ... (2:7);

Ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ... (2:11);

Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ... (2:17);

ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν... (2:26);

Ὁ νικῶν οὕτως περιβαλεῖται... (3:5);

Ὁ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν... (3:12);

Ὁ νικῶν δώσω αὐτῷ... (3:21).

lievers at Thyatira, but not to those who have compromised their religion under the influence of the Jezebel woman.

The first of these is δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, *I will give authority over the nations; to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered*. Very clearly this set of strophes plays off the longer version in Psalm 2: 8-9.⁵⁶ Thus the original meaning of the Psalm stands as foundational to understanding how this Psalm is being used here. The successive lines of the poetic expression cannot be taken literally but figuratively.⁵⁷ From both the NT and early Christian writings it is clear that this Psalm was considered as a Messianic psalm and is used often for such interpretation.⁵⁸ The use of this psalm here is particular-

56 “Vv 26b–27 are closely modeled after Ps 2:8–9, as the following synopsis indicates:

Rev 2:26b–27

^{26b} δώσω αὐτῷ
*I will give to him
ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν
authority over the nations*

²⁷ καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς
*and he will rule them
ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ
ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ
as ceramic pot
συντρίβει
is shattered.*

LXX Ps 2:8–9

⁸ αἰτησαι παρ’ ἐμοῦ,
Ask of me,
*καὶ δώσω σοι
and I will give to you
ἔθνη τὴν κληρονομίαν σου
nations as your inheritance*
καὶ τὴν κατάσχεσίν σου
and as your possession
τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς
the ends of the earth.
⁹ ποιμανεῖς αὐτοὺς
*You will rule them
ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ
with an iron rod
ὡς σκεῦος κεραμῆος
as a clay pot
συντρίψεις αὐτούς.
you will shatter them.*

Various quotations or allusions to Ps 2 are found in some parts of the NT (Acts 2:26–27; 4:25–26; 13:33; 19:15; Heb 1:5; 5:5), and Ps 2:7 in particular was understood in early Christianity as a messianic psalm (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Justin Dial. 61.6; 88.8; 122.6; see Lindars, *Apologetic*, 139–44). The motif of the Christian sharing sovereignty with Christ is also found in Odes Sol. 29:8 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP): ‘And He gave me the sceptre of His power, that I might subdue the devices of the Gentiles, And humble the power of the mighty.’ The Messiah is spoken of in 12:10 as possessing ἐξουσία, ‘authority,’ and similarly ἐξουσία over every ‘tribe and people and language and nation’ is given to the Beast in Rev 13:7, presumably by God (passive of divine activity).”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 209–10.]

⁵⁷“Again the αὐτῷ, literally ‘him,’ refers to all who conquer (whether men or women), underlining the figurative character of the reward, since taking it literally would mean that the entire group of conquering Christians would rule the nations as a body, which clearly is inappropriate for the kingship model presupposed here.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 210.]

⁵⁸“Various quotations or allusions to Ps 2 are found in some

ly appropriate since the initial phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, “Son of God,” is derived from this psalm.⁵⁹

Three strophes comprise the allusion to Psalm 2:8-9,

*I will give authority over the nations;
to rule them with an iron rod,
as when clay pots are shattered*
δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν
καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ
ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται,

The graphic imagery comes out of the OT background of the middle east. The picture painted here is of kingly authority being exercised harshly for the protection of his subjects and the defeat of his enemies. The use of ποιμανεῖ with the core meaning of ‘to shepherd’ is challenging to translators. Contextually it clearly connotes a negative idea of stern rule that can and does destroy the enemies to the flock or of the king.⁶⁰ The

parts of the NT (Acts 2:26–27; 4:25–26; 13:33; 19:15; Heb 1:5; 5:5), and Ps 2:7 in particular was understood in early Christianity as a messianic psalm (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Justin Dial. 61.6; 88.8; 122.6; see Lindars, *Apologetic*, 139–44). The motif of the Christian sharing sovereignty with Christ is also found in *Odes Sol.* 29:8 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP): ‘And He gave me the sceptre of His power, that I might subdue the devices of the Gentiles, And humble the power of the mighty.’ The Messiah is spoken of in 12:10 as possessing ἐξουσία, ‘authority,’ and similarly ἐξουσία over every ‘tribe and people and language and nation’ is given to the Beast in Rev 13:7, presumably by God (passive of divine activity). The ‘scepter’ and the shepherd’s ‘crook’ are closely related (the Assyrian term *hattu* can mean both ‘scepter’ and ‘staff of a shepherd,’ though the latter is always used in a figurative sense; a.d. 6:153–55). The crook is a symbol of royalty in Mesopotamian art and literature and is included in the relief at the top of the basalt Code of Hammurabi. God is referred to twice under the metaphor of shepherd in the OT (Pss 23:1; 80:2), and his possession of a comforting shepherd’s staff is part of the shepherd metaphor in Ps 23:4b; Mic 7:14. The scepter is primarily associated with the royal role of meting out justice (Isa 11:4; Ps 45:7) and is frequently used in a context of punishment (Isa 10:5, 26; 30:31; Ps 110:2; Job 9:34; 21:9; Lam 3:1).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 212.]

⁵⁹“Concluding with the promise of Psalm 2 is fitting since Christ introduced himself at the beginning of the letter as ‘the Son of God,’ a title derived from Psalm 2 (see on 2:18), which affirms further that he has begun to fulfill the prophecy of the Psalm. They will receive such rule with him at the ‘end’ (τέλος) of their lives, when it is evident finally that they have ‘kept Christ’s works.’ The ‘end’ could be Christ’s final coming, but it may include the ‘end’ of their Christian existence, which encompasses but is not exhausted by reference to martyrdom (for discussion of these alternatives see above on 1:7; 2:5, 10–11).141” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 265.]

⁶⁰“καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, ‘and he will drive them with an iron scepter, as when ceramic jars are shattered.’ This continues the allusion to Ps 2:9, which is elsewhere understood as a description of the

application by John is then rather clear. In the parousia of Christ believers will share in the sovereign reign of Christ over all creation as the beneficiaries of that reign which moves to defeat all His enemies in final judgment and destruction.

A fourth strophe, ὡς κἀγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, *as I also have received from My Father* (v. 28a), is ambiguous in terms of whether it belongs with the preceding set of lines from Psalm 2, or whether it introduces the subsequent reference to giving the morning star. Most commentators and Bible translators are inclined to see it with the Psalm 2 reference. The uncertainty stems from a lack of a direct object for the verb εἴληφα, *I have received*, which contextually could be either ἐξουσίαν, *authority*, (v. 26) or τὸν ἀστέρα, *star*, (v. 28). Probably the former was intended by John, although the ultimate meaning is very similar which ever direction is taken for the verb object.

The second victory promise comes in v. 28: καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν, *and I will give to*

Messiah (Rev 12:5; 19:15; Pss. Sol. 17:23–24) but here is applied to the conquering Christian with whom Christ will share his messianic rule (see the bestowal of the morning star, another messianic symbol in v 28). ποιμαίνειν can mean ‘to herd, tend, guide or govern,’ but this meaning is problematic, since the context strongly suggests that it has a *negative* meaning. This verse alludes to LXX Ps 2:9, where the verb form תרעם *tr·m* is ambiguous:

You shall break them [תרעם *tr·m*] with a rod of iron [בשבט ברזל] *bšbt̄ brzl*], and dash them in pieces [תנפוצם] *tēnappēšēm*] like a potter’s vessel.

“Though the pointing of תרעם *tērō·ēm* in the MT means that the Masoretes thought the verb form was derived from רעע *r·c·c* ‘to devastate, break in pieces’ (an Aramaic loanword corresponding to the Hebrew stem רצץ *rṣṣ*), the unpointed consonantal text is itself ambiguous and can be pointed תרעם *tir·ēm*, based on the trilateral stem רעה *r·h*, ‘to shepherd’ (Str-B 4:794). Allusions to Ps 2:9 are also found in Rev 12:5; 19:15 (though nowhere else in the NT), where the identical phrase found in 2:27 occurs: ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ. The phrase in 2:27 was probably derived by the author from 12:5; 19:15. Rev 12:5 alludes only to the first stichos: ‘who will drive [ὅς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν] all the nations with an iron crook’ (see Note on 12:5). Again in Rev 19:15, only the first stichos of Ps 2:9 is alluded to: ‘he will rule [ποιμανεῖ] them with a rod of iron.’ Since the LXX version of Ps 2:9 translates תרעם *tr·m* as ποιμανεῖ, ‘he will herd’ or ‘he will govern,’ it appears that the Hebrew term רעע *r·c·c* ‘to devastate, break in pieces,’ was confused with רעה *r·h*, ‘to shepherd, rule’ (Black, “Some Greek Words,” 137). It also appears that the author of Revelation (in this instance) was dependent on the LXX rather than the Hebrew text, particularly in light of the following evidence. Ps 2:9 is also alluded to in Pss. Sol. 17:23b–24a, a composition originally written in Hebrew ca. 50 b.c., though surviving primarily in Greek and Syriac translations (though the Syriac was probably dependent on the Greek):

May he smash the sinner’s arrogance like a potter’s vessel.

With a rod of iron [ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ] may he break in pieces [συντριψῆαι] all their substance.

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 213.]

him the morning star. One should note that vv. 26–28 is a single sentence in the original Greek text, but is normally subdivided into multiple sentences in most translations for the sake of clarity.

What was a ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν? For the Greeks and Romans stars were living beings equated with their gods and goddesses. Inside Revelation a lot of mentioning of stars falling, being darkened etc. surfaces (Rev. 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1; 6:13 (cf. Isa. 34:4); 8:10, 12; 9:1; 12:4 (cf. Dan. 8:10); 22:16. The background of the concept in the ancient world was that the morning star was Venus, a planet rather than a star, that appeared brightest in the early morning sky. To the folks in Thyatira with background awareness of the Greco-Roman religious tradition⁶¹ To them the appearance of this star in the early morning was the god Φωσφόρος welcoming the new day (if one were Greek). To the Romans the morning star was either Lucifer (if preceding the sun) or Hesperos (if following the sun) welcoming the new day. These signaled the coming of the life giving sun to light up the day.

But as Christ will later claim in 22:16 (in the formal Conclusio to the document), *ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ρίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυὶδ, ὁ ἀστήρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός, I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star*. It is Christ who brings the light of divine salvation to the world, not some pagan deity! What is the significance of being given the morning star? Not to possess it, clearly! But as the morning star is in reality Christ Himself, we are being given the saving light of God in salvation. The pagans could look up each morning to see Venus appear in the sky and believe that their god would give them light that day. But believers in Thyatira would look up to see Venus as a reminder of Christ’s promise of eternal salvation as the light of God Himself! The light of Venus would remind them of God’s promised salvation. What a better hope!

The message to the church at Thyatira ends with the admonition to hear in v. 29: Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, *the one having an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches*. As

⁶¹“The ‘morning star,’ ‘day star,’ and ‘evening star’ are three modern ways of referring to the planet Venus (known in ancient Babylonia as the star of Ishtar), which appears at dawn before the sun and so was understood in ancient times as the herald of a new day. Though Venus is a planet and not a star, the ancients often referred to Venus as the largest star (Pliny, Hist. nat. 2.37). According to Cicero (De nat. deor. 2.53; LCL tr.), ‘Lowest of the five planets and nearest to the earth is the star of Venus [stella Veneris]’, called in Greek Φωσφόρος [see 1 Pet 1:19] and in Latin ‘Lucifer when it precedes the sun, but when it follows it Hesperos’ (Pliny Hist. nat. 2.36–38; Manilius Astron. 1.177–78). After the sun and the moon, it is the brightest object in the sky.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 214.]

noted in the previous studies, this formula saying is repeated with the exact same words in all seven messages. Although distinctive in these seven instances in Revelation, it has basic commonality with an almost identical expression found all through the OT and the NT, as well as Jewish writings of this era. It stands as the divine mandate to pay close attention to what spokesmen for God have both said and written. Why? Because these words represent God's ideas, and not some man's thinking. The special distinctive to the expression in these seven messages, τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, [what the Spirit is saying to the churches](#), highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in taking the words of Christ and applying them to relevant situations in all of the churches, rather than just to the one church being addressed in each message.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

Just as we have discovered repeatedly in the first three messages, this fourth one to the church at Thyatira contains vitally relevant spiritual truths for every modern congregation.

First, when Christ asserted to the church at Thyatira that He knew σου τὰ ἔργα, [your deeds](#), He was not speaking hypothetically. He identified Himself to them -- and to us as well -- as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνω, [the Son of God, the One possessing eyes like a flaming fire and feet like burnished bronze](#). These apocalyptic images stress His divine authority and complete knowledge of everything taking place. No one stands in a higher authority or knows more than He does. This is the Christ that we serve today. He hasn't changed at all. He is the supreme authority and possesses complete knowledge of everything that we do.

Second, what did He mean by σου τὰ ἔργα, [your deeds](#)? In the interesting grouping of a series of things in σου τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονὴν σου, all bound together by σου, we discover how much Christ knows: our deeds, our sacrificial commitment to God and others, our faith surrender to Him, and our steadfastness in living out these commitments. In other words, Christ doesn't miss anything, and He sees every action of our life in terms of our relationship to Him. This connection to Him is the angle through which our actions and thoughts are evaluated. We don't just do good things. Such actions are worthless in themselves. Rather, believers do good things out of their relationship to Christ. This is where and why they matter.

Third, Christ commended the believers at Thyatira for growing in their commitment and actions: τὰ ἔργα σου τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων, [your last deeds](#)

[are greater than your first ones](#). This produces a haunting question to us in churches today. Would Christ be able to say the same thing about us? Is our church genuinely more spiritual today than it was a decade ago? Five decades ago? And the same principle applies to us as individual Christians.

Fourth, but the church at Thyatira was far from perfect. He was noticeably upset that the church had not taken disciplinary action against the "Jezebel" woman who was spreading spiritual corrupting teaching in the church. At the heart of her disastrous teaching was claiming that it is okay for believers πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθουτα, [to engage in sexual immorality and to eat food offered to idols](#). Central to this was giving in to the enormous pressures of the pagan society at Thyatira to conform to their values rather than maintain the high standards of Christ. It had economic motivation behind it from this wealthy "Jezebel." This teaching was falsely dressed up as a special revelation to her directly from God as His προφήτιν, [prophetess](#). But instead of being the 'deep things of God' as she claimed, in reality her teaching was τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ, [the deep things of Satan](#).

The message to us here is that Christ cares deeply about His people in His church. He has zero tolerance for individuals who poison the minds and thinking of His people with false and ruinous ideas about the Gospel. Modern Christianity would be enormously more healthy were it to take Christ seriously at this point. It is far too willing to compromise with the surrounding world and its values, than to steadfastly maintain Christ's values.

Fifth, Christ was so disturbed by this Jezebel woman that He promised to eradicate her and her followers from the church, if they did not repent and the church did not itself take action against her. In vv. 20-23, He indicates that He will impose the sentence of physical death through illness on both her and her followers. He possesses the power to do that, and the willingness to do it to those corrupting His church.

Sixth, to believers 'overcoming' by remaining faithful to doing His will to the end Christ promises the beautiful experience of sharing in His absolute sovereignty over all the world at the end of time. Believers will reign with Him while the rest of creation comes under His final condemnation. Also, He promises Himself to us as the true morning star. In that eternal reign comes the light of God's salvation. Thus every morning when we look up into the sky and see the bright star of Venus shining, we are reminded of Christ as the true Morning Star giving us this saving light.

What a message from our Christ! Something we desperately need to hear and to heed.