



THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Bible Study Day 3

Text: Rev. 2:12-29

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Texts: Rev. 2:12-29

[Greek NT](#)

[Gute Nachricht Bibel](#)

[NRSV](#)

[NLT](#)

QUICK LINKS

[Studies 8 & 9:](#)

[Rev. 2:12-18](#)

[Rev. 2:19-29](#)

Pergamum & Thyatira

Greek NT

12 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·

Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν· 13 οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπάς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ. 14 ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλακ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι. 15 οὕτως ἔχεις καὶ σὺ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν [τῶν] Νικολαϊτῶν ὁμοίως. 16 μετανόησον οὖν· εἰ δὲ μή, ἔρχομαί σοι ταχὺ καὶ πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου.

17 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.

18 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας γράψον·

Gute Nachricht Bibel

12 »Schreibe an den Engel* der Gemeinde in Pergamon:

So spricht Er, der das scharfe, beidseitig geschliffene Schwert hat: 13 Ich weiß, wo ihr wohnt: dort, wo der Thron des Satans steht. Und doch haltet ihr am Bekenntnis zu meinem Namen fest und habt euren Glauben an mich nicht widerrufen, nicht einmal, als mein treuer Zeuge Antipas bei euch getötet wurde, dort, wo der Satan wohnt.

14 Trotzdem habe ich einiges an euch auszusetzen: Bei euch gibt es Anhänger der Lehre Bileams*. Der stiftete Balak an, die Israeliten zur Sünde zu verführen. Da aßen sie Fleisch vom Götzenopfer* und trieben Unzucht. 15 Solche Leute gibt es auch bei euch – solche, die der Lehre der Nikolaiten* folgen. 16 Kehrt um! Sonst komme ich in Kürze über euch und werde gegen diese Leute mit dem Schwert aus meinem Mund Krieg führen.

17 Wer Ohren hat, soll hören, was der Geist* den Gemeinden sagt! Allen, die durchhalten und den Sieg erringen, werde ich von dem verborgenen Manna* zu essen geben. Jeder und jede von ihnen wird einen weißen Stein bekommen; darauf steht ein neuer Name, den nur die kennen, die ihn empfangen.«

18 »Schreibe an den Engel der Gemeinde in Thyatira:

So spricht der Sohn Gottes, dessen Augen wie Feuer glühen und dessen Füße glänzen wie

NRSV

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

18 "And to the angel of

NLT

12 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum.

This is the message from the one who has a sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know that you live in the city where that great throne of Satan is located, and yet you have remained loyal to me. And you refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you by Satan's followers. 14 And yet I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you who are like Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to worship idols by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. 15 In the same way, you have some Nicolaitans among you -- people who follow the same teaching and commit the same sins. 16 Repent, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 "Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Everyone who is victorious will eat of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one knows except the one who

Τάδε λέγει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνω· 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, ἔαν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, 23 καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ἀποκτενώ ἐν θανάτῳ. καὶ γινώσκονται 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, οἵπινες οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ ὡς λέγουσιν· οὐ βάλλω ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος, 25 πλὴν ὃ ἔχετε κρατήσατε ἄχρι[ς] οὗ ἂν ἴξω.

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 σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, 28 ὡς κἀγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν. 29 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

gleißendes Gold: 19 Ich weiß von all dem Guten, das ihr tut: von eurer Liebe, eurer Glaubensstreue, 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 Isabel, 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 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!«

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 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.

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.

receives it.

18 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira.

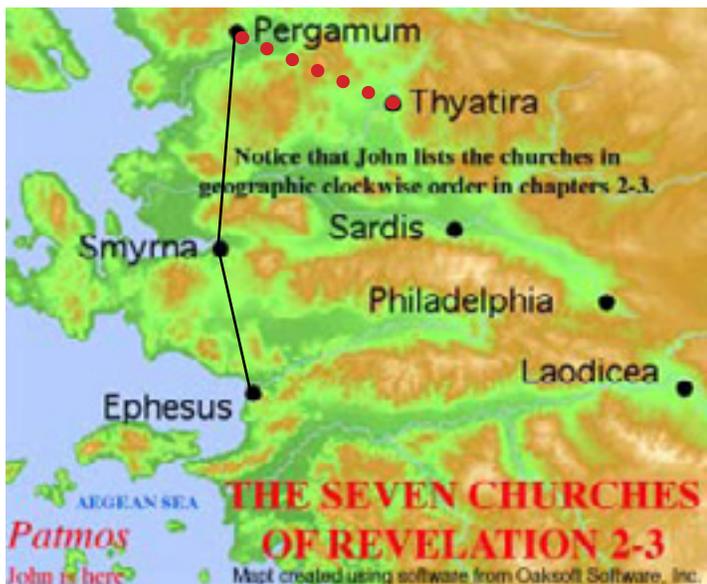
This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are bright like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze: 19 "I know all the things you do -- your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things. 20 But I have this 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 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

The first two churches that we examined in the previous study began what will turn into a circular route that begins at Ephesus and ends at Ephesus, at least

in the manner which the later church fathers indicated that the apostle John conducted much of his ministry after settling at Ephesus in the 70s after the destruction



of the Jerusalem temple. As a part of the huge Jewish migration out of Palestine with the disastrous consequences of the First Jewish War (68-70 AD), John and other Jewish Christians settled in the highly prosperous province of Asia which already had possessed a substantial Jewish population for well over two centuries. Through the ministry of the apostle Paul in the mid-first century, communities of Christian believers were also scattered over a large portion of the province in both the large cities and the countryside in the small towns and villages. It would be a relatively comfortable place for John to finish out his service to the Lord before his death around the end of the first Christian century. The short 'imprisonment' to Patmos that evidently lasted less than two years was but an interlude to the direct ministry with substantial numbers of the churches in the province. It provided him opportunity to compose the book of Revelation to be sent to seven of these churches in his physical absence.

Again the same structural pattern as with the first two messages prevails in these two messages and provides the organizing framework for each message:

- a) **Adscriptio with the command to write**, that introduces each message.
- b) **The *Τάδε λέγει*, these things says...**, formula begins the second section in every message.
- c) **The Narratio section** begins the defining of the demonstrative pronoun *Τάδε*.
- d) **The Dispositio segment** contains both praise for the good qualities in each church, and stern warnings to change the bad traits existing in each church.
- e) **The Command to Listen** segment begins the last two elements of each message. Here is a formula statement that is identical in all seven messages: *Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις*, **The one having ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.**

- f) **The Victory Promise** formula is the final segment in each letter.

The following lists the specific texts for both messages:

	Pergamum:	Thyatira:
a)	2:12a	2:18a
b)	2:12b	2:18b
c)	2:13-15	2:19-21
d)	2:16	2:22-25
e)	2:17a	2:29
f)	2:17b	2:26-28

Note that Thyatira is the point where the Command to Listen and the Victory Promise reverse sequences. Here the reason for the shift is clear: The Victory Promise is closely linked to parts of the Dispositio section in vv. 22-25. But this is not particularly the case in the subsequent three instances.

There is nothing in the text to suggest a 3 + 4 grouping of these seven messages, even though this one feature could suggest such. Later on, in the two series of sevens, the seals and the trumpets, a clearly defined 4 + 3 grouping occurs around the two themes of the wrath of God and God's protection of His people. But no such signal emerges here with these seven messages. The simplest explanation for the 3 plus 4 pattern is that the fourth pattern needed to be shifted because of its conceptual link to the Dispositio and John just kept that in that sequence the rest of the way with no particular purpose in mind. If one pays close attention to the texts, the Victory Promise in the last four messages is longer and more detailed than in the first three messages. This is the only noticeable difference.





THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Bible Study 08

Text: Rev. 2:12-17

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1 Αποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἀποστόλου ἡμετέρου ἧν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἃ δεῖ γίνεσθαι, καὶ ἐπέστειλεν τὸν ἄγγελόν αὐτοῦ μαρτυρῆσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ ἀποστόλου ὅσα εἶδεν. 3 Μακάριος ὁ ἀκούσκων καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐν αὐτῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου. 4 Ἡ γέγραμμένη ἐστὶν ἐπιφθένη καὶ ἐπιφθένη ἐστὶν ἡ προφητεία τούτου.

QUICK LINKS

1. What the text meant.

Historical Aspects:

External History

Internal History

Literary Aspects:

Genre

Literary Setting

Literary Structure

Exegesis of the Text:

A. Command to write, v. 12a

B. Situation of the church, vv. 12b-16

C. Admonition and promise, v. 17

2. What the text means.

Message to Pergamum

Greek NT

12 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον· Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν·

13 οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπάς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ. 14 ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλακ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι. 15 οὕτως ἔχεις καὶ σὺ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν [τῶν] Νικολαϊτῶν ὁμοίως. 16 μετανόησον οὖν· εἰ δὲ μή, ἔρχομαί σοι ταχὺ καὶ πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου. 17 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.

17 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.

Gute Nachricht Bibel

12»Schreibe an den Engel der Gemeinde in Pergamon: So spricht Er, der das scharfe, beidseitig geschliffene Schwert hat:

13 Ich weiß, wo ihr wohnt: dort, wo der Thron des Satans steht. Und doch haltet ihr am Bekenntnis zu meinem Namen fest und habt euren Glauben an mich nicht widerrufen, nicht einmal, als mein treuer Zeuge Antipas bei euch getötet wurde, dort, wo der Satan wohnt. 14 Trotzdem habe ich einiges an euch auszusetzen: Bei euch gibt es Anhänger der Lehre Bileams. Der stiftete Balak an, die Israeliten zur Sünde zu verführen. Da aßen sie Fleisch vom Götzenopfer* und trieben Unzucht. 15 Solche Leute gibt es auch bei euch – solche, die der Lehre der Nikolaiten folgen. 16 Kehrt um! Sonst komme ich in Kürze über euch und werde gegen diese Leute mit dem Schwert aus meinem Mund Krieg führen.

17 Wer Ohren hat, soll hören, was der Geist* den Gemeinden sagt! Allen, die durchhalten und den Sieg erringen, werde ich von dem verborgenen Manna zu essen geben. Jeder und jede von ihnen wird einen weißen Stein bekommen; darauf steht ein neuer Name, den nur die kennen, die ihn empfangen.«

NRSV

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

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NLT

12 Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum.

This is the message from the one who has a sharp two-edged sword:

13 I know that you live in the city where that great throne of Satan is located, and yet you have remained loyal to me. And you refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you by Satan's followers. 14 And yet I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you who are like Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to worship idols by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. 15 In the same way, you have some Nicolaitans among you -- people who follow the same teaching and commit the same sins. 16 Repent, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Everyone who is victorious will eat of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

INTRODUCTION

This third message of the Son of Man continues the exact same literary form as found in the previous two messages. But the thematic content is where the difference surfaces. To be sure, some of the themes in the first two messages resurface here, but even these have some different twists in them. The repeated themes simply underscore the universal message reserved for all seven churches.

The problem of general orthodoxy with some real holes in it is not limited to ancient Pergamum. Their problem was discontinuity between belief and practice. It is a hugely modern problem in contemporary church life as well. What Christ had to say to this ancient Christian community contains critically important lessons for us today.

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

Background issues loom important here for interpreting the passage. The literary aspects are relatively easy to identify, while some of the historical aspects are challenging to understand clearly.

Historical Aspects:

As always numerous historical issues impact how accurately we can understand the meaning of Christ's words to the church at Pergamum.

External History. The history of the hand copying of this text over the centuries following its composition are important to examine. This is essential for us to be certain of the correct wording of the original language biblical text.

As has been the case in the two previous messages in Revelation chapter two, the editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev. ed.) did not consider any of the variations in wording to be sufficiently significant so as to impact the translation of the passage.¹ Consequently, no variations

¹One side note that is important. Although there will be a few instances show up in the text apparatus of the UBS Greek NT where significant variations surface, one of the reasons behind this minimal number is that a much smaller number of manuscripts containing much or any of Revelation are known to exist than is true for virtually all the remaining content of the New Testament. Often times the deterioration of a manuscript over time means that the beginning and ending sections completely disintegrate and are lost from the manuscript. This would especially be the case in a single scroll where Revelation would have been at the top surface of the scroll. In the codex (book style manuscript) format, Revelation coming on the bottom side was more exposed to elements of sun, water etc. and thus deteriorated faster. Since the beginning of most of the mss start with other documents outside the NT, the Gospel of Matthew does not suffer such a fate as does Revelation.

are listed in the text apparatus of this printed Greek text of the New Testament.

But in the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (UBS 27th rev. ed), the text apparatus lists sixteen places where variations of wording surface in the existing manuscripts containing this passage.² But careful examination of each of these instances reveals scribal efforts to update the style of the Greek, or in a few instances just careless copying mistakes.

Thus we can exegete the adopted reading of the

²Offenbarung 2,12

* τω 2050 pc sy^h (the article τῷ replaces τῆς in some mss)

Offenbarung 2,13

* τα εργα σου και M sy^{h**} (The phrase τὰ ἔργα σου from 2:2 is added here after οἶδα)

| txt κ A C P 1854. 2050. 2053. 2329 pc latt sy^{ph} co

* σου κ* (μου replaces σου in codes Sinaiticus)

* κ M gig t vg^{ms} sy^h; Prim Bea (καὶ is omitted in some mss)

| txt A C 1854. 2050. 2053. 2329 pc ar vg sy^{ph} co

* αις 1006. 1841. 2351 M^k sy^h (a variety of different words are added after ἡμέραις in different mss)

| εν αις κ(*) 1611. 1854. 2050 mA gig t

| μου 2329

| txt A C 2053 pc ar vg

*¹ κ M latt sy^{ph} (μου is omitted in some mss)

| txt A C 2050. 2053. 2351 pc sy^h

*² 2016 pc vg^{ms} (ὄς is omitted in these mss)

Offenbarung 2,14

* C 1611. 1854. 2053 pc ar vg^{ww} sy^h (bo); Prim (ὄτι is omitted in these mss)

* -ξεν 1006. 1841. 2351 M^k (ἐδίδασκεν is replaced with ἐδίδα ξεν in some mss)

* εν τω Βαλααμ τον Βαλ. M^A (τῷ Βαλάκ is replaced with ἐν τῷ Βαλάκ τὸν Βαλάκ)

| - κ*

* και 1006. 1841. 2351 M^k vg^{ms} sy^h (καὶ is added before φαγεῖν)

Offenbarung 2,15

* A C 1611. 1854 M^k (τῶν is omitted in some mss)

| txt κ 1006. 1841. 2050. 2053. 2329. 2351 M^A

* ομ. (-1 pc) ο μισω M^A (ὁμοίως is replaced with ὁμοίως ὁ μισῶ)

Offenbarung 2,16

* κ 2053. 2329. 2351 M^A latt sy^h sa^{ms} (οὖν is omitted in some mss)

Offenbarung 2,17

* αυτ. φαγειν 1611. 1854. (2050). 2344. 2351 M^A ar gig t sy^{h**} sa; Bea (αὐτῷ is replaced with αὐτῷ φαγεῖν)

| - κ pc vg^{cl} sy^{ph}

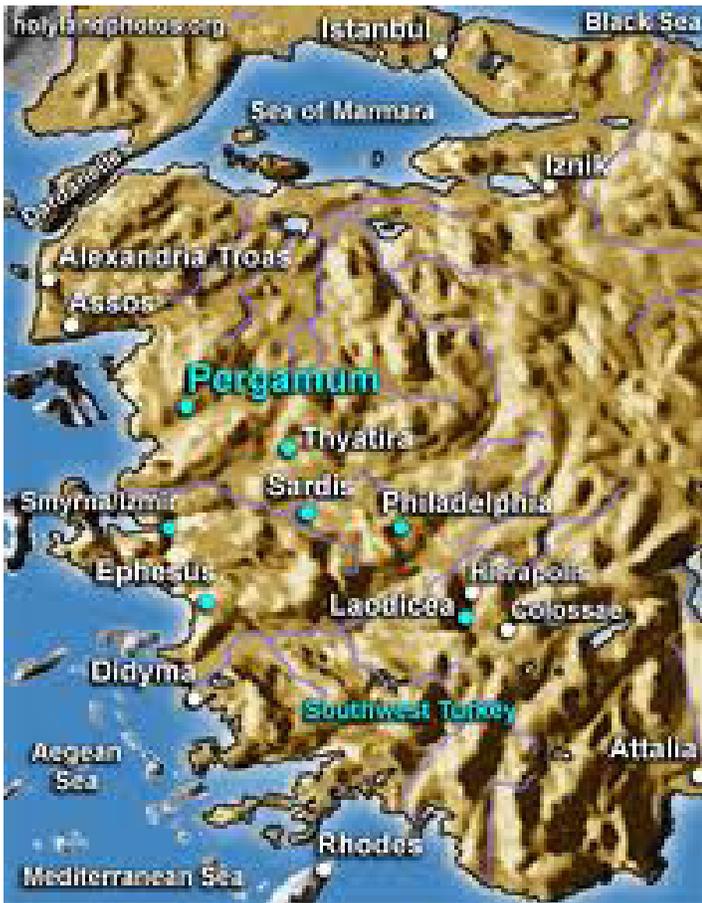
* απο (εκ κ 2050 pc) τ. μ. κ 2050 M^A (ἀπό or ἐκ is added before τοῦ μάννα)

| απο τ. ξυλου P

* κ pc (δῶσω αὐτῷ is omitted)

[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 635-36.]





conservatively it seems to have at least had about 120,000 residents. It had a long and rich history.⁴ Its rise to prominence seems to have begun with Alexander the Great first as a major military center and subsequently as a political center.⁵ Having functioned for centuries as a typical Greek city with local council rulership, the coming of the Romans created problems for the city. Gradually in the first Christian city Ephesus replaced Pergamum as the dominant city of the region, in part due to geography and likely also because earlier Pergamum had come out on the losing side of the war between the Romans and Mithridates of Pontus (89-84 BCE). Recovery began slowly with Augustus as the first Roman emperor, but it was the substantial growth of the temple of Asclepius that centered on medical training which spurred the city to become a major intellectual center for the region. But it took until well into the second century AD for the city to reach its highest point of prominence and influence. The Attalids, as the original ethnic group of the region were called, were the most loyal supporters of the Roman empire in the Hellenistic world.

The old city was situated some fourteen miles in-

⁴“One of the seven cities whose Christian community was addressed in the book of Revelation (1:11; 2:12). Also known by the form ‘Pergamon,’ this city had a long history. Pergamon (modern Bergama; 39°07’N; 27°11’E) emerged as the center of the most important kingdom in W Asia Minor during the early 3d century B.C. and remained one of the cultural and political centers of the region into the 4th century A.D.” [D. S. Potter, “Pergamum (Place)” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 228-29.]

⁵“The earliest record of settlement at Pergamon comes in the course of Xenophon’s description of the Spartan campaigns of 399 (Hell. 3.1.6). He says that the city was one of several which had been given to the descendants of the Spartan king Demaratus, who had been driven from his throne in 490 and became a close adviser to the Persian king Xerxes. The city itself does not appear to have been a very important place at this point, and it is possible that the Persians discouraged extensive development on a site of such great natural strength. It was not until after Alexander the Great’s conquest of Asia (334–323 B.C.) that Pergamon began to emerge, first as a major military center, and then as a major political center. By the time of the battle of Courepedium, fought between Lysimachus and Seleucus in 281, the last of the diadochoi or ‘successors’ of Alexander, the acropolis had become one of the most important fortresses in western Asia Minor. It was here that Lysimachus had deposited a significant portion of his treasury under the care of the eunuch Philetaerus. In the confusion which had preceded Lysimachus’ defeat at Courepedium, Philetaerus had begun to assert his independence from the king (283) (Allen 1983: 11). The years after the battle were even more confused, because of the chaos in the Seleucid court after the murder of Seleucus I shortly after his victory, and because of the Celtic invasion of Asia Minor in 278/277. Philetaerus took advantage of these troubles to begin building up his own kingdom around Pergamon (283–263).” [D. S. Potter, “Pergamum (Place)” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 229.]

text with full confidence that it reflects accurately the original wording of what was first written.

Internal History. Quite a few time and place markers are present in vv. 12-17, but most all of them relate better to exegetical concerns than to background issues. They will be addressed in the exegesis below.

The one place marker of background importance is the reference to the city of ἡ Πέργαμος (also in ancient Greek, τὸ Πέργαμον), spelled in English either as *Pergamus*, *Pergamon*, or *Pergamum*. Several helpful issues emerge here needing clarification.

A number of fascinating aspects about the city lie behind much of what is said to the church there.

Estimates³ vary about the size of the city, but

³“The population of Roman Pergamon has been estimated at 200,000 (Magie, *Roman Rule* 1:585; Frank, *Economic Survey* 4:812–16). A different, and perhaps more realistic, estimate is provided by the second-century A.D. physician Galen, who put the population of Pergamon, including women and slaves, at 120,000 (*De cognoscendis* 9). In *De propriorum anim.* 9, Galen says that Pergamon had 40,000 citizens and equal numbers of women and slaves, i.e., ca. 22 percent to 25 percent of the total population. Based on this evidence, Duncan-Jones (*Economy*, 260–61 n. 4) claims that Pergamon in the second century A.D. had a free adult population of ca. 80,000 together with 40,000 slaves, suggesting a total population of about 180,000. Duncan-Jones assumes that the free adult male population is 28.6 percent of the free population (*Economy*, 264 n. 4).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 181.]



Model of the Acropolis in the Pergamon museum in Berlin

land from the Aegean Sea and on an unusually high hill some 1,300 feet above sea level. The plain of the Caicus river spread out at the base of the hill. The well fortified acropolis at the top of the hill was the center of the town which spread out over the hill and into the area below.

A later Roman historian named Eunapius of Sardis suggests that Christianity had been in the city since the first century but had not grown to become a dominating presence like in some of the other cities. The implication from his writings is that the influence of the temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, remained a powerful and dominating influence throughout this period of time.⁶

⁶“The vigorous intellectual life of the city is eloquently reflected by inscriptions; remarks in Philostratus’ *Lives of the Philosophers*; in the works of Galen, the greatest doctor of antiquity, who was born in Pergamon in 129 and practiced there in his early years; and in the remarkable spiritual autobiography, *The Sacred Tales*, of the professional rhetorician or sophist, Aelius Aristides, who lived in the Asclepium for many years (for the intellectual life of this period, see Bowersock 1969; for Galen, see Bowersock 1969: 59–75; for the Asclepeium, see Habicht 1969: 6–18). Even though the city seems to have suffered in the course of the 3d century — as did the other cities of Asia Minor — the writings of the 4th-century historian and biographer Eunapius of Sardis provide further glimpses of life in the city which suggest that it retained its importance as an intellectual center into his own time. His evidence also suggests that, despite the presence of a Christian community in the city since the 1st century (Habicht 1969: 19), the city as a whole was very slow to adopt the new faith. One reason for this may have been the importance to the city of the cult of Asclepius, who was himself a god of healing, and the feeling among many pagans that the healing miracles which Asclepius was believed to have performed proved that he was a true protector of his people. It is therefore not surprising that it was at Pergamon that the future emperor Julian first encountered important teachers of the Neoplatonic school. This was a decisive point in the intellectual odyssey which ended in his apostasy from the Christian faith and his effort to restore the worship of the pagan gods during his brief reign (361–363). The continuing importance of the cult of Asclepius may also be illustrated by the fact that one of Julian’s closest advisers was the doctor Oribasius, who was a native of the city (Bowersock 1978: 28–29).” [D. S. Potter, “Pergamum (Place)” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Dou-



Pergamon Altar

The religious life of Pergamum in the late first Christian century is at the heart of most of the issues treated in John’s words to the church there in vv. 12-17. From all available evidence the city possessed an unusually high number of temples to a wide variety of deities in the first century world. It was one of the chief centers of emperor worship in this region of the Roman empire. Perhaps beyond the temple of Asclepius⁷ was the great altar probably dedicated to the worship of both Zeus and Athena, or just to Athena.⁸ This huge altar and related items are now housed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Germany. Many are convinced that John’s reference to ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, *Satan’s throne*, is an allusion to this altar. But we will explore this in greater detail in the exegesis section below. Clearly from the *narratio* section of v. 13, the Christian community in Pergamum faced substantial obstacles from the many other religious traditions with deep roots and large followings in the city.

Literary Aspects:

Again the importance of the literary aspects cannot be stressed enough. At this point because of the repetitious nature of each of the messages, the genre issues are already set and merely repeat what preceded in the first two messages. The literary setting is simple: this is the third of seven messages. It is the Literary Structure where the changes from the previous messages show up, since each message is custom-

bleday, 1992), 230.]

⁷One should remember that the cult of Asclepius was widely worshiped across the Roman empire with numerous sacred locations. “The most famous temple of Asclepius was at Epidaurus in north-eastern Peloponnese. Another famous healing temple (or *asclepieion*) was located on the island of Kos, where Hippocrates, the legendary ‘father of medicine’, may have begun his career. Other asclepieia were situated in Trikala, Gortys (in Arcadia), and Pergamum in Asia.” [“Asclepius,” Wikipedia.org]

⁸“The structure is 35.64 meters wide and 33.4 meters deep; the front stairway alone is almost 20 meters wide. The base is decorated with a frieze in high relief showing the battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods known as the Gigantomachy. There is a second, smaller and less well-preserved high relief frieze on the inner court walls which surround the actual fire altar on the upper level of the structure at the top of the stairs. In a set of consecutive scenes, it depicts events from the life of Telephus, legendary founder of the city of Pergamon and son of the hero Heracles and Auge, one of Tegean king Aleus’s daughters.” [“Pergamon Altar,” wikipedia.org]

ized to the needs of the individual congregations.

Genre: Here we merely summarize the existing structures and refer you to study #6 on 2:1-7, which has the detailed background analysis of each of these subforms.

Eight clearly identifiable subgenres surface in each of the seven messages, many of them using identical wording repeated seven times. For those who know ancient Greek, this borders on the miraculous given the immense diversity of possible idea expression in Koine Greek (easily over a thousand times greater than with American English).

Each message begins with an **Adscriptio**, which only varies in wording with the naming of the city to which the message is addressed: Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν ----- ἐκκλησίας. Only the first message omits the Καὶ, and. The message is targeting the τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ...ἐκκλησίας, to the angel of the church. What becomes increasingly clearer with the study of each message is that this phrase really means, To the angel which is the church. Such a grammatical understanding was commonplace in ancient Greek with τῆς ...ἐκκλησίας in the Genitive of Apposition case function.

This introductory form is linked to the **command γράψων**, write. This Aorist imperative verb form is directed to John and is the only part of the message with him as the focus. It comes in the ancient Hebrew prophetic pattern of the prophets seeing a vision of God's will and the subsequent command to speak it to God's people. Uniquely, Jeremiah was also instructed by God to write this message down, which his writing secretary Baruch did for him. The actual writing then took place sometime after seeing the vision. Interestingly, the Hebrew concept of inspiration centered on the prophet seeing the vision but not on the writing down of what he saw.

The third subform is **the Τάδε λέγει formula** which is repeated exactly the same in all seven messages, and at exactly the same place in all seven messages. The formula comes out of the LXX formula for introducing the prophetic speech to the people in God's behalf, "Thus says the Lord...". Therefore the one speaking these words is actually God, and not just John.

The subject of the verb λέγει in the above formula is expressed differently in each letter. But to make it clear that God is speaking appropriate elements of the portrait of the risen Son of Man in chapter one are chosen as title designations of Christ as the speaker.

The heart of each message surfaces in the words anticipated by the demonstrative pronoun Τάδε. Here is where the customization to each congregation comes to the surface the greatest. This always contains two sections: *the narratio* and *the dispositio*.

The **Narratio section** is always introduced by the

verb οἶδα with a direct object specifying certain things about the church known by the risen Christ. This section highlights the complete knowledge that Christ has about both the past and the present situation that exists inside each congregation. Since these were real, functioning congregations in late first century Christianity, the situation in each church will not be exactly the same as that in any of the other six churches. Some of these do overlap but each description is unique to each church.

This section is followed by the **Dispositio section** which issues commands and commendations to each church based in the evaluation summarized in the preceding narratio. In three of the four letters a negative emphasis surfaces with the introductory ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ (ὀλίγα) ὅτι, but i have a few things against you, because.... Mostly, this section highlights commendations and promised blessings.

The final two subforms bring the message to a close.

The Hearing command is repeated exactly the same way in all seven messages: Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, The one having a ear must listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Again this formula plays off the OT prophetic speech command for the people to Hear the Word of the Lord, as well as a common emphasis on many of Jesus' teaching in His earthly ministry. The point is to underscore the critical importance of paying close attention to what God has spoken in the message.

This command to listen is reinforced by the **Promise of Victory formula**. Two separate formulations of the present tense Greek participle are found in these seven messages: Τῷ νικῶντι and Ὁ νικῶν. Again the promised blessing defines the Μακάριος in the opening beatitude in 1:3 more specifically. Yet each of these 'blessings' in the seven messages define the one idea of eternal salvation in Heaven.

These eight subforms combined in these seven messages give to each message a clear tone of divine authority and together push the broad genre of the entire message strongly in the direction of an ancient Imperial Decree or Edict. These edicts were delivered to their destination in written form and then read orally to gathered assemblies of citizens in the theaters of the cities across the empire. John's point is that the Ruler of the kings of the earth (cf. 1:5) has spoken His edict to these congregations and they need to pay close attention to this message.

Literary Setting: The literary setting is very clear. This is the third message of seven messages sent out to all these churches. The listing of this message in the third place is primarily due to Pergamum being on one of the major trade routes which enabled

a circuit ministry of John to the seven churches through traveling in a complete circle that began and ended at Ephesus. In such a route Pergamum would have come third on the list of these seven cities. Interestingly, Pergamum due to being further north from Smyrna actually lay outside the official territory of the province of Asia,

but was included in the seven due to John's ministry to these seven churches over the years.

Literary Structure: The block diagram of the Greek text, below in literalistic English translation, highlights the internal arrangement of ideas found in this passage.

12 And
56 to the angel at the church in Pergamum write:
57 These these says the One has the sharp two-edged sword:
58 13 I know
 where you are living,
 where Satan's throne is,
 and
 you are holding fast to My name
 and
 you have not denied faith in Me
 and

 in the days
 of Antipas
 my faithful martyr
 who was killed among you
 where Satan lives.
14 But
59 I have a few things against you,
 because you have there those holding fast to the teaching of Balaam,
 /-----|
 who was teaching Balak
 to put a stumbling block
 before the sons of Israel
 so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols,
 and
 would commit fornication.
15 Thusly
60 you have those holding fast to the teaching
 likewise of the Nicolaitans.
16 Therefore
61 repent;
 and
 if not,
62 I will come to you
 quickly
 and
63 I will wage war
 against them,
 with the sword coming out of My mouth.
17 The one having an ear
64 let hear
 what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
 To the one overcoming
65 I will give to him from the manna
 that is hidden

and
 66 I will give to him a white stone
 and
 on the stone
 67 (there is) written a new name
 which no one knows
 except the one receiving (it).

Analysis of Rhetorical Structure:

Regarding the arrangement of ideas inside the passage, both the genre subforms and the Greek grammar structures determine how they are connected to one another. This is reflected in the above diagram.

The **Adscriptio** in statement 56 sets up the message with instructions to John.

The message itself (# 57-63) is introduced by the *Τάδε λέγει* formula in statement 57. This is followed by the content of the message first in the **narratio** (# 58) and then in the **dispositio** (#s 59-63) sections. The **narratio** (# 58) lists a series of complements given by Christ to the church against the backdrop of them living where Satan’s power and influence is unusually strong. But the **dispositio** (#s 60-63) issues stern demands for repentance because of the church allowing false teachers to operate who corrupted the message of the Gospel.

The conclusion of the message contains the **Hearing Command** (# 64) and the **Victory Promise** (#s. 65-67). The logic here is to admonish the readers to pay close attention to the message. This is re-enforced with the promise of eternal life expressed in terms uniquely appropriate to those living in Pergamum.

Exegesis of the Text:

The exegesis of this passage will follow the internal structure of the text as analyzed above. Closely related items in the second and third headings below will be grouped together for clarity but treated individually as a sub section of the outline.

A. Command to write, v. 12a

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

As we have noticed in the first two messages, John is instructed to write the message to the angel of the church at Pergamum. But the content of the message that follows directs these words to this ἀγγέλω, as though he were the church itself. The uniform use of the second person singular references in vv. 1b-16 dramatically highlight this in the Greek text,⁹ although

⁹These forms include κατοικεῖς, κρατεῖς, ἡρνήσω, σοῦ, ἔχεις, ἔχεις καὶ σὺ, μετανόησον, σοί. Interestingly, one plural form ὑμῶν surfaces in reference to the martyrdom of Antipas in the city. But clearly this form refers to the church, as does this host of second person singular references in spite of going back to ἀγγέλω in verse 12. This is a further signal that ἀγγέλω and ἐκκλησίας are referring



The Acropolis at the top and the Theater on the side of the hill

in English translation this becomes obscure because of the ambiguity of English in not distinguishing between the singular and plural forms of the second person references. All the other modern western languages maintain this clear distinction, and thus the translation retains a clear expression at this point.

Thus, clearly the ‘angel’ and the ‘church’ are one and the same both here and in all the other six messages as well.

What do we know about the Christian movement at Pergamum? In truth, very little! Some possible insight from a non-Christian comes in the fourth-fifth century AD from Eunapius of Sardis, who wrote extensively about ancient Anatolia, although most of his writing centered on the Sophist movement in the ancient world. Eunapius claims that Christianity made very little inroads into the residents of the city. But he reflects a bitter hostility toward Christianity, and this may possibly have biased his depiction of their influence in Pergamum which he claims to have not been very significant over the four plus centuries of the existence of the church in the city.¹⁰

to the church itself, rather than two separate entities.

¹⁰Eunapius’ comments come in the midst of his treatment of the life of Emperor Julian (reigned 361-363 AD), the last pagan emperor before Constantine came to power in the 300s. Prior to his coming to power in 361, Julian had visited the city and was influenced by the very popular Neoplatonic school located there. Eunapius praises Julian’s reign as “one of sweetness and gold.” He along with most all the philosophers living at the time saw the beginning of the Christian domination of the empire as signaling the death of meaningful Roman and Greek culture. For more details

Pergamum is mentioned by name only twice inside the New Testament at Rev. 1:11 and 2:12. These references provide no details about the beginnings of the church there and only minimum information about the situation of the church at the end of the first Christian century. When Paul came to Troas, also in Mysia, on the second missionary journey his route was north of where Pergamum lay quite some distance to the south of Troas. Then when he came directly from Galatia / Phrygia to Ephesus on the third missionary his route was considerably south of Pergamum. Thus there is no indication that the apostle ever visited the city. It is pure speculation that during the lengthy ministry at Ephesus on the third missionary journey that the apostle traveled the 160 kilometers north from Ephesus to Pergamum in order to establish the church. Nothing in the church fathers suggests this, and clearly nothing inside the NT even hints at it. That Paul was later esteemed by Christians at Pergamum is clear, but nothing suggests this was due to him having established Christianity there.¹¹

Consequently we know virtually nothing about the beginnings of the Christian community there. Evidently it came into being during the substantial growth period beginning with Paul's missionary activity at both Troas and Ephesus in the mid first century and continuing through the end of the first Christian century. By the end of the century, a Christian congregation existed there, and already had a martyr named Antipas. It never achieved the significance in later centuries that Ephesus and many of the other churches in the region gained.

B. Situation of the church, vv. 12b-16

12b *Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν·*

13 *Ὁῖδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ. 14 ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδασχὴν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλάκ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ*

see "*The Emperor Julian: Conceptualizations of Ideal Leadership and Martial Manliness in the Histories of Ammianus and Eunapius*," at Academia.edu.

¹¹Recorded martyrs [in the city] besides Antipas are Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonike under Decius (LTK, VIII, 273). A ruin called Red Basilica in the plain beneath the lower agora of the Pergamum Acropolis, excavated in 1934–38, may have been a temple built to Egyptian Serapis before 200 B.C. but transformed into a Byzantine church of St. Paul (Boulanger, p. 289). Hadrian visited Pergamum in A.D. 123 (PaulyWissowa, I/1, 505). Three temples to Roman emperors explain Pergamum's title of 'thrice temple-warden' (PaulyWissowa, XIX/1, 1235–63)." [*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Revised, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 3:769.]

φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθута καὶ πορνεῦσαι. 15 οὕτως ἔχεις καὶ σὺ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδασχὴν [τῶν] Νικολαῖτων ὁμοίως. 16 μετανόησον οὖν· εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἔρχομαί σοι ταχὺ καὶ πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου.

12b These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The One speaking carries a double edged sword in His right hand. Now that should get your attention! Of course this is the second time that mentioning of such a sword shows up in Revelation; the first instance is in 1:16, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ῥομφαία δίστομος ὀξεῖα ἐκπορευομένη, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword. In 2:12 no mention is made of it coming out of His mouth via ὁ ἔχων, the one having. But this is intended as is reflected at 2:16 in the same message: πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου, I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. This strange picture of a sword sticking out of the mouth of Christ surfaces again in 19:15, 21, ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται ῥομφαία ὀξεῖα, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη, From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations (v. 15), and καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου τῇ ἐξελοῦση ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth.

Two important points here: the nature of the sword, and the meaning of a sword sticking out of the mouth of a powerful person. Uniformly John uses ῥομφαία for sword in Rev. 1:16; 2:12; 6:8; 19:15, 21. This term (7x; 6 of the 7 times in Rev.) is in contrast to the more commonly used term μάχαιρα inside the NT (29x), which is also translated as sword. μάχαιρα is only used in Rev. 6:4; 13:10 and 13:14, and never refers to a sword that Christ has. This contrast seems to be intention by John since μάχαιρα defines a small sword referred to as less than 16 inches long in biblical archaeology. But ῥομφαία refers to a sword from two feet and longer in length. John's point in referring to the sword in Christ's mouth as a ῥομφαία rather than as a μάχαιρα is to emphasize that Christ has the real fighting weapon rather than a measly dagger in His mouth.¹² What people are

¹²τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν, 'Thus says the one with the sharp two-edged sword.' This repeats

able to gain is only the μάχαιρα, which is rather useless in combat with one possessing a ρομφαία, something strongly emphasized in the chapter 19 references. And in Revelation only Christ possesses the ρομφαία.

But why in the world is this sword sticking out of Christ's mouth rather than being held by His right hand? In the background both in the Old Testament and in the Greco-Roman literature is the figurative meaning of a sword, either μάχαιρα or ρομφαία, sticking out of the mouth of a person suggesting the power -- usually destructive -- of words spoken by the individual. This meaning is strongly suggested in 19:15 by the purpose clause ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη, *so that with it the nations may be stuck down*. Christ merely by speaking has the power to strick down any and all who oppose Him.¹³ Such words take on the power of a deadly military weapon in the hands of a well trained Roman soldier. Thus His words seem as though they are τὴν ρομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν, *a sharp two-edged sword*, that comes out of His mouth.

Thus readers beware. The Lord Christ is poised

the mention of sword in 1:16, which is sharp and two-edged, and which also issues from the mouth of the exalted Christ (1:16; 2:16). The author has chosen to place the first motif ('sharp, two-edged') here and delays mentioning the second motif ('of my mouth') until 2:16. Thus the statement that the exalted Christ 'has' the sword in v 12 means not that he holds it in his hand but that it issues from his mouth (W. Michaelis, TDNT 6:667). The sword proceeding from the mouth of Christ is further mentioned in 19:15, 21. The term ρομφαία was normally used to refer to a large sword used both for cutting and piercing, while μάχαιρα was used for a short sword or a dagger (the somewhat arbitrary rule of thumb for archaeologists is that the latter is sixteen inches or shorter). The Hebrew term *ḥereb* is used in the OT for both the two-edged short sword or dagger (Judg 3:16; LXX: μάχαιρα δίστομος) and the single-edged long sword (Josh 6:21; see A. M. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour of the Greeks* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1967] 97–98; see O. Kaiser, TDOT 5:155). The phrase 'sharp as a two-edged sword' occurs in Prov 5:4, and the two-edged sword is also mentioned in Ps 146:6; Sir 21:3. This is similar to the proverb found in Ahiqar 2.18 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP 2:500): 'A king's word is gentle, but keener and more cutting than a double-edged dagger.' Reason, effective speech, or God's word is often compared with a sword or dagger (Pss 52:2; 57:4; Wis 18:15–16; Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12; the term μάχαιρα is used in the last two references). In Isa 49:2, in the context of the second Servant Song, the speaker says 'He [God] made my mouth like a sharp sword.'¹⁴ [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 181–82.]

¹³“To the Roman the sword was the symbol of the highest authority; cf. the phrase *ius gladii* given to an officer, such as the proconsul of the province who wielded power over life and death. Here, therefore, we have the Christ depicted as a warrior king in language derived from Isa 11:4, 49:2; cf. 2 Thess 2:8. The implication is that the power of life and death belongs to the Messiah, not the emperor.” [J. Massyngberde Ford, vol. 38, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 398.]

to speak such words. Those with any intelligence at all will pay close attention to what He is about to say. Although not mentioned directly here, John has clearly indicated already that when the Son of Man speaks it is not in a quiet, soft voice. Instead, “his voice was like the sound of many waters,” ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν (1:15).

The *narratio* in vv. 13–15 is introduced by the standard οἶδα, *I know*.¹⁴ Two direct objects define what Christ knows about the church at Pergamum. First, ποῦ κατοικεῖς, *where you are living*. The precise meaning of this is then defined by the appositional ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, *where Satan's throne is*. Second, the next direct object is actually a doublet expression in antithetical parallel form: κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου, *that you are holding fast to my name and have not denied faith in Me*. This somewhat complex system of direct objects to the verb οἶδα is intended as a huge compliment to the church at Pergamum. In a place where it was more difficult than normal to be a Christian these folks were maintaining their Christian faith commitment exceptionally well. This compliment is enhanced yet further by the example of Antipas, a member of the church there, who had earlier suffered martyrdom as a believer in the city. Thus the church was gaining inspiration from the example of Antipas in maintaining its unwavering commitment to Christ.

Let's take a closer look at each of these direct objects in order to understand more clearly how Christ complimented the church.

Christ refers to Pergamum as ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, *Satan's throne*. At Smyrna He had indicated that the Jewish synagogue in the city belonged to Satan rather than God, συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ (1:9). But Satan's throne was located in Pergamum.¹⁵ Many di-

¹⁴“The opening sentence (all of v. 13) is one of the more convoluted in the entire book, and has rightly been broken up in the NIV into something more manageable in English.” [Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 34.]

¹⁵“Attalus III (138–133) at his death bequeathed his kingdom to Rome, and it became the Roman province of Asia. Pergamum's influence waned, however, after it joined Mithridates VI of Pontus in his war against Rome in 89–84 B.C. and executed all its Roman citizens. After Cornelius Sulla's defeat of the coalition, Pergamum went into nearly a century of decline, and Ephesus replaced it as the central city of the region until the reign of Augustus, when Pergamum regained its status.

“Its regaining of status was made possible primarily by the architectural innovations of Eumenes II (197–159), who built up the acropolis by adding a circuit wall, the temple of Athena, a great altar to Zeus, and a library that held two hundred thousand volumes. Along with Athens and Alexandria it became a major intellectual center. Eumenes II was directly responsible for popularizing writing sheets made from animal skins that became known as περγαμηνή (*pergamēnē*), known today as ‘parchment’ (tradition

verse interpretations have arisen as to the meaning of Satan's throne in Pergamum.¹⁶ The best clue probably

says it was invented there, but that has been disproven). Therefore, by the first century A.D. Pergamum had become not only an important political center but a major intellectual and religious center as well.

"The city also became the leading religious center of Asia. Temples, altars, and shrines were dedicated to Zeus (king of the gods and known there as 'savior-god' from the primary titles taken by the Attalid kings), Athena (goddess of victory and patron of the city), Dionysus (patron god of the dynasty, symbolized by a bull), and Asklepios (god of healing, symbolized by a serpent). A huge area of the city and a temple were dedicated to Asklepios and the healing arts. As a result Pergamum became a medical center as well as the Lourdes of its day. The great altar to Zeus, forty feet high, depicting the victory of Attalus I over the Galatians and with a frieze around the base depicting the victory of the Hellenistic gods over the giants of the earth (civilization over paganism), stood on a high terrace at the top of the mountain. In addition, Pergamum was the center of the imperial cult in Asia. It was the first city to be allowed a temple to a living ruler when in a.d. 29 Augustus allowed a temple to be erected to him. There was a great deal of precedent for this. Attalus I called himself 'savior,' and Eumenes II labeled himself 'savior' and 'god.' A temple with royal priests and priestesses was erected near the palace, and Pergamum three times was named *neōkoros* (temple sweeper or warden of the imperial worship). This honor more than anything else made it the leading city in the province."¹⁷

[Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 138-39.]

¹⁶"There are a number of possibilities that have been suggested for identifying the 'throne of Satan,' some very specific and others very general: **(1) The temple of Augustus and Roma** (Zahn, 1:249; H. Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1961] 29; Hemer, *Letters*, 87), also known as the 'Sebastion.' This temple was built, perhaps at the foot of the acropolis of Pergamon, by permission of Augustus in 29 B.C. (its site has never been located). It was the first imperial temple in the Roman province of Asia and was one of the more important centers of the imperial cult (Mellor, *ΘΕΑ ΠΙΩΜΗ*, 140-41; J. C. Fayer, *Il culto della dea Roma: Origine e diffusione nell'Impero* [Trimestre Pescara, 1976] 109-11). In the second century A.D., Telephus of Pergamon wrote a two-volume book about this sanctuary, now lost (FrGrHist 505 T 1). This view coheres well with the view expressed in T. Job 3:5b; 4:4c, where a pagan temple is called *ὁ τόπος τοῦ Σατανᾶ*, 'the place of Satan.'

(2) The Great Altar of Zeus Soter (Deissmann, *Light*, 280 n. 2; Lohmeyer, 25; Rohde, *Pergamon*, 60-62; cf. L. L. Thompson, *Revelation*, 173). This elaborate columned structure was constructed during the reign of Eumenes II (197-59 B.C.) to commemorate a Pergamene victory of the Gauls in 190 B.C. It was decorated with elaborate bas-reliefs depicting the Gigantomachy (battle between the Olympian gods and the giants) and, like the Temple of Augustus and Roma, was located on the acropolis (Pausanias 5.13.8). Reportedly, this acropolis could be seen from all sides at a great distance (Aristides Or 23.13). Further, the equation altar = throne is an ancient one.

(3) The judge's bench or tribunal (βῆμα) where the proconsul sat to judge could be referred to here as the throne of Satan. The term *θρόνος* is occasionally used for a judges bench (Plutarch

arises from a later reference to Satan's throne in 13:2, where he, the old Dragon (cf. 12:9), gives his throne to the Beast from the Sea. Here against the history of

Praec. ger. reipub. 807b). The Roman proconsul resided in Pergamon, and it was to Pergamon that Christians in the surrounding area were brought after being denounced by informers even at a later date (*Mart. Carpus* 1-23). The Province of Asia was divided into first nine, then eleven, regions; in the main city of each area (one of which was Pergamon), the *conventus iudicis*, 'judicial assembly,' was convened by the proconsul or the legates and a court of provincial judges called the *centumviri*. In a trial, the first stage involved a hearing *in iure*, i.e., before the jurisdictional magistrate (the *praetor*), while the second stage of the trial was the *iudicium centumvirale*, i.e., an appearance before a court selected from the *centumviri* (Philostratus *Vitae. soph.* 1.22; Berger, *Roman Law*, 386, 521).

(4) The temple of Asklepios (Bousset [1906] 211; Swete, 34; Zahn, 253-63; Hadorn, 48; Schmitz, TDNT 3:166; Kraft, 64). Pergamon was one of the major centers for the cult of Asklepios (Lucian *Icar.* 24; Pausanias 2.26.8; Polybius 32.15.1; Galen *De anat. admin.* 1.2; Aristides *Or* 42.4; Statius *Silvae* 3.4.21-25; Philostratus *Vita. Apoll.* 4.34), though Epidaurus (on the eastern part of the Peloponnesus) remained the primary center. The cult was founded in Pergamon by Archias, who purportedly brought it from Epidaurus (Pausanias 2.26.8; Aristides *Or* 39.5; E.J. Edelstein and L. Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1945] 2:249). This temple was located about one mile from the acropolis and included a number of temples, including a large temple of Asklepios and three smaller ones for Asklepios, Hygeia, and Apollo, a theater that could accommodate ca. 3,500. Aristides called Pergamon 'the hearth of Asklepios' (*Or* 23.15). The temple of Asklepios was dedicated to Asklepios Soter ('savior') and his mythical daughter Hygieia (Aristides *Or* 23.15; 39.6); later he was called Zeus Asklepios. A new temple of Zeus Asklepios was built as part of the Asklepieion by L. Cuspius Pactumenius Rufinus in A.D. 142 (Aristides *Or* 42.6; Galen *De anat. admin.* 1.2; see Behr, Aelius Aristides, 27-28). Asklepios was linked in special ways with the symbol of the serpent, which Christians associated with Satan (Rev 12:9, 14, 15; 20:2; 1 Cor 11:3).

(5) Pergamon as a center of Christian persecution, exemplified by the execution of Antipas (2:13b). Eichhorn (1:93) construes 'the throne of Satan' as *Satanae imperium*, 'the dominion of Satan,' which caused the oppression of Christians in Pergamon.

(6) Pergamon as a major center of the imperial cult (Bousset, [1906] 211-12; Charles, 1:61; Kraft, 63-64; Hemer, *Letters*, 82-87). While Pergamon did function as one among many important centers for the imperial cult, there is no explicit evidence in 2:12-17 (or in Rev 2-3) to suggest that the imperial cult was a major problem for the Christians of Asia or for the author of the final edition of Revelation.

(7) Pergamon as an important center for Greco-Roman religion generally (Andreas *Comm. in Apoc.* 2.13 [Schmid, *Studien* 1/1, 29], describes the city as *κατείδωλος*, 'full of idols'; Ramsay, *Letters*, 291-98; Roloff, 54; Metzger, *Code*, 34-35).

(8) The shape of hill on which the city was built. Wood (ExpTim 73 [1961-62] 264) has suggested that this is an allusion to the shape of the major hill within the city, particularly when approached from the south."

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 182-83.]

the late first century stands a clear reference to the imperial cult that worshiped the emperor as a god. This corresponds easily with the fact that Pergamum was the first city in that region to adopt the worship of the emperor and remained its most vigorous advocate for several centuries. Add to this emperor Domitian's revival and expansion of emperor worship during his reign of the late 80s and 90s, and the answer to what Satan's throne in Pergamum means is narrowed down somewhat. The alternatives move between literally identifying it with one of the temples, perhaps the Temple of Augusta and Roma, or figuratively identifying it with the opposition of Rome to Christians living in the city. The subsequent references to either Satan's throne (13:2) or the throne of the Beast (16:10) clearly refer to a figurative meaning of the idea of throne as a symbol of their power and dominance. This would tend to favor the figurative understanding here in 2:13. But one may not need to push a sharp distinction between the literal and figurative meanings. The emperor cult emphasis in the city coupled with the unusually large number of other temples to pagan deities (unlike what Paul encountered in Athens where he mostly saw numerous statues to many different pagan deities) may well have been bundled up by John into this graphic image of ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ. Pergamum was a city where the power of Satan reigned supremely. Living there as a believer in Christ would have been unusually challenging.

Thus Christ's compliments in the second direct object pair takes on even more significance. These two verbs, κρατεῖς and οὐκ ἠρνῆσω, stand in contrast to each other in a complementary relationship as a doubled emphasis on faithfulness to Christ.¹⁷ The first positive line, κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου, literally means "you have a tight grip on my name." Remembering the Hebrew significance attached to names,¹⁸ to hold fast to My name signifies that these believers remained absolutely loyal to Christ Himself although they were living where Satan's throne was located.

The converse of holding fast would be to deny. The verb ἀρνέομαι means simply to renounce loyalty to someone or something, and thus stands an antonym

¹⁷In the background stands the very common Hebrew antithetical parallelism structure which served as one of the several ways in both ancient Hebrew and Greek to heighten emphasis on one central point, usually the one set forth in the first strophe of the doublet. The conceptualization is simply "by doing this and then not doing its opposite you really did this."

¹⁸One's name equals himself. This is much more than the modern concept that a name merely references a person by providing a point of identification. This Hebrew perspective lays behind the 'name changing' that sometimes took place in the Old Testament. Some life changing event changed the essential character of the individual. This triggers a name change intended to reflect the impact of this event on the individual who is now a different person.

to κρατέω in the first strophe. The negating expression οὐκ ἠρνῆσω, you did not deny, adds heightened emphasis to the first line of holding fast. The two direct objects, τὸ ὄνομά μου, my name, and τὴν πίστιν μου, faith in me, further complement one another. To hold fast Christ's name was to be loyal to Him. To refuse to renounce faith commitment to Christ says the same thing from the opposite perspective.¹⁹

Then as a further affirmation Antipas²⁰ is mentioned as a possible additional direct object expression.²¹ Even earlier in the church's history they did not denounce faith in Christ although one of their members, Antipas, -- perhaps a leader²² -- was executed in

¹⁹"You hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith: this is one compliment, stated first positively and then negatively. To 'hold (fast) the name (of)' means to be true to, to be faithful and loyal to the person named. For name see 2:3. The statement you did not deny my faith means 'you did not give up your faith in me,' 'you did not stop believing in me,' or 'you have always been loyal to me.' The genitive phrase my faith is objective: 'faith in me,' not 'the faith I have' (see the parallel statement in 3:8, "you ... have not denied my name")." [Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 52.]

²⁰Ἀντιπᾶς is often listed as the nominative case form, which it is. But Ἀντιπᾶς is also an indeclinable noun in ancient Greek meaning that it stays in the same spelling through all of the case expressions. Thus it can be understood legitimately in three possible ways: 1) οἶδα... Ἀντιπᾶς, I know Antipas, accusative of direct object; 2) οἶδα... Ἀντιπᾶς... οὐκ ἠρνῆσατο, I know that Antipas did not deny, subject nominative; or 3) ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς, in the days of Antipas, genitive of reference. The third option is taken most often by modern Bible translators. This carries with it the implicit full expression: and I know that you did not deny faith in me in the days of Antipas.

The noun phrase ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, "my faithful witness," is a nominative of apposition modifying "Antipas," which is an indeclinable noun but syntactically must be in the genitive case (for other examples see 1:5; 20:2). The name "Antipas" is anarthrous because names followed by nominatives of apposition are regularly anarthrous in Revelation (Mussies, Morphology, 191).

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 184.]

An alternative understanding of οὐκ ἠρνῆσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς is suggested by the Aorist tense of the verb and a special function of καὶ. The resulting translation would move along these lines: "and you have never denied faith in me even in the days of Antipas...". The addition of καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς... provides an earlier reference point of potential denial under severe pressure due to the execution of Antipas. Not even then nor since has there been a denial of faith in me.

²¹The syntax of the Greek sentence seems really complex at this point and moves in directions that seem hugely strange from a modern language perspective. But in terms of ancient Greek sentence structure patterns (= syntax) the expression is not unusual or overly complex. The modern complexity is derived primarily as a translation issue, and not a syntactical Greek grammar issue.

²²"It has been suggested, due to the term 'my faithful witness,' that Antipas may have been pastor of the Christian congregation at Pergamum. This is interesting but uncertain." [Ray Summers, Page 178]

persecution.

The spelling Ἀντιπᾶς is actually a short form of Ἀντίπατρος and thus also shows up in the ancient literature as Ἀντίπα as well.²³ Although consistently copied in the Greek manuscripts as Ἀντιπᾶς, many of the early versions clearly had trouble with this spelling in large part because it did not follow the more common short spelling of Ἀντίπατρος, and Ἀντιπᾶς seemed to be in the wrong case form which would have been Ἀντίπα for the genitive case demanded by the context.²⁴

One of the implications from this uncertainty about the spelling of Ἀντιπᾶς has to do with whether the name as an indeclinable proper name signals a Semitic, i.e., Jewish name, or not. While the Greek of both the LXX and the NT dominantly brings over pure Hebrew proper names as undeclined, the reality is that sometimes in secular Greek proper names clearly Greek in designation did the same thing. Consequently, one cannot

Worthy Is the Lamb: An Interpretation of Revelation. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), 115.]

²³Ἀντιπᾶς, ᾶ, ὁ (Avtei-Tdf., Avti-other edd.; declinable like Σατανᾶς, cp. gen. σατανᾶ Ac 26:18 and Rv 2:13, and for the form Ἀντίπα s. W-H., Introd: 'Notes on Select Readings' 137f [on Rv 2:13].—Sb 4206, 65; 255 [I B.C.]; RCharles, ICC Rv I 62 declared it like Κλέοπας for Κλεόπατρος short for Ἀντίπατρος [cp. Jos., Ant. 14, 10; on hypocoristic names in-ᾶ in Attic ins s. Threatte II, 71–75], found IPergamon 524, 2 et al.; but the textual problem is far more complex than indicated in N. app.: s. ἀντιλέγω, ἀντεῖπον, and Borger below) Antipas martyr (s. μάρτυς 3) in Pergamum Rv 2:13 (unless Ἀντιπᾶς is understood as indeclinable [s. GMussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek* '71, 94; idem, Antipas: NovT 7, '64, 242ff; but s. above], the syntax in N. must be considered barbarous).—WSchulze, Kl. Schr.2 '66, 67; 275 n. 1; RBorger, TRu 52, '87, 45–47.—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), 90.]

²⁴“Since the name Ἀντιπᾶς (nom.) should be in the gen. case (Ἀντιπᾶ, like σατανᾶ in v 13a), Lachmann conjectured that Ἀντιπᾶ must have been the original reading, though unsupported in the MS tradition. Yet Mussies (NovT 7 [1964–65] 242–44) has provided several examples in which proper names are treated as indeclinable on analogy with Semitic names not adapted to Gk. paradigms: CIJ 944: Παρηγορῆς υἱὸς Ἀνανίας [instead of Ἀνανίου], ‘Paregores son of Ananias’ (see also CIJ 1007, 1085, 1086). R. Borger (TRu 52 [1987] 45–47) has proposed an ingenious solution to the problem based on the italicized variant ἀντεῖπας (ⲛⲥ A together with nearly thirty minuscules; see Hoskier, Text 2:68; several similar variants are attested by a very small number of minuscules), which is a second person sing. aor. verb from ἀντιλέγειν, ‘to speak against,’ meaning ‘you [sing.] spoke against.’ Tischendorf (*NT Graece* 2:915) printed the name Ἀντεῖπας, observing that the Coptic and Syriac versions had mistakenly read Ἀντεῖπας as a verb from ἀντιλέγειν (*NT Graece* 2:916). Borger (45–47) has assembled the evidence from the Philoxenian and Harclean Syriac versions, which reflect this way of construing the text.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 178.]

conclude with confidence that Antipas was a Jewish Christian, which has often been done down through the centuries.

The referencing of Antipas²⁵ only here inside the New Testament has occasioned all kinds of speculation about his identity and circumstance. Two modifying phrases here provide the only known details about him. *First*, he was ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, *my faithful witness*. Perhaps most importantly this expression echoes Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, *from Jesus Christ the faithful witness* in 1:5. No higher compliment could be offered about Antipas than for this identical praise to be spoken about Christ Himself. Antipas had clearly recognized the value in the earlier divine command γίνου πιστός ἄχρι θανάτου, καὶ δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς, *be faithful unto death, and I will personally give you the crown, which is life* (2:10).

One of the side issues here concerns the translation of ὁ μάρτυς. Should it be translated ‘witness’ or ‘martyr’? The Greek background of the word group from which this noun comes sees the idea of ‘witness’ as foundational. But a μάρτυς is one who has given his witness through death.²⁶ A few commentators see

²⁵“The name Antipas is a diminutive form of the common Greek name Antipatros (see Reynolds-Tannenbaum, *Godfearers*, 97–98; Petzl, *Smyrna 2/2:353–54*). The shortened form is not widely attested (it is used of an Idumean and his son in Jos., *Ant.* 14.1.3–4, and of a son of Herod the Great by Malthace in Jos., *Ant.* 17.1.3 (see M. Fränkel, ed., *Römische Zeit*, vol. 2 of *Altortümer von Pergamon* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1895] 524, line 2). Antipatros was a Greek name without any Hebrew equivalent. It was popular in Greece and Macedonia in Hellenistic and Roman times (CPJ 1:29; Petzl, *Smyrna 2/2:102, 429.6*) and is used of five different Jewish men in the Jewish papyri: CPJ 1:28.20; 29.10; 125.2; 2:201.1–2 (the same person is mentioned again in 207.1–2); 3:407.3. There is not a single occurrence of the diminutive form of the name Antipas in documentary evidence from the Aegean islands, Cyprus and Cyrenaica, and the full form of the name Antipatros occurs 168 times in those regions in inscriptions and other evidence (Fraser-Matthews, *Names* 1:47).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 184.]

²⁶“The verb μαρτυρεῖν used in the sense of ‘to die as a martyr’ and the noun μαρτυρία in the sense of ‘martyrdom’ first occurs in *Mart. Pol.* 1:1, while the term μάρτυς meaning ‘martyr’ is first found in *Mart. Pol.* 14:2 (Polycarp died ca. A.D. 155/56, though the exact date is disputed); see TWNT 4:505. According to Trites (NovT 15 [1973] 73–80), there was a five-stage process whereby μάρτυς was transformed from ‘witness’ to ‘witness through death,’ i.e., ‘martyr’: (1) first, it has the original forensic sense of witness in a court of law; (2) then, it is applied to someone who testified in faith in court and is killed as a consequence; (3) death comes to be regarded as part of the witness; (4) μάρτυς comes to mean ‘martyr’; (5) the notion of ‘witness’ disappears and the terms μάρτυς, μαρτύριον, μαρτυρία, and μαρτυρεῖν are used to refer to martyrdom. However, while this development seems logical enough, semantic development is rarely so neat.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 179.]

the use of μάρτυς here as signaling the transition of the meaning of the word from 'witness' to 'martyr'.²⁷ But this is highly doubtful here, in large part because John felt compelled to add a *second* modifier, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, *who was killed among you*, as a definition of ὁ μάρτυς. This strongly implies that at this point in time the idea of 'witness' was still central to the use of μάρτυς. If a μάρτυς went to the limit of witness via death, this needed to be directly stated since it was not yet automatically implied.²⁸

Later Christianity in its glorification of martyrs began developing a theology of martyrdom that elevated such individuals immediately to full 'sainthood' and this supposedly enabled them to function somewhat as angels in a mediating role with believers on earth and Christ in Heaven. No such idea is present here and neither does this passage lay a foundation for such thinking.

The precise time when this took place is unknown: ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, Antipas, *who was killed among you*.²⁹ The Aorist verb ἀπεκτάνθη makes it clear that the execution had taken place sometime earlier, but no temporal adverb signaling how much earlier is included.

porated, 1998), 184-85.]

²⁷"This could be the first occasion of witness (Gk 'martyr') being consciously used of one who laid down his life on account of witness to Christ." [*New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Re 2:12-17.]

"The inhabitants prided themselves on their loyalty to Rome. Consequently they were unrelenting in their persecution of any who seemed to oppose themselves to any of the claims of Rome, most especially its religious claims. So we may easily understand that this church was the first to be distinguished by a martyr's blood." [H. E. Dana, *The Epistles and Apocalypse of John: A Brief Commentary* (Kansas: Central Seminary Press, 1947), 106.]

²⁸"It is tempting to translate μάρτυς by 'martyr' in the last two passages, and even R.V. yields to the temptation in Apoc. 1.c., though it is content to call Stephen and Antipas 'witnesses.' But it may be doubted whether the word had acquired a technical sense at the end of the first century; Clem. Cor. 5 μαρτυρήσας ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τόπον τῆς δόξης is not decisive. Even in the second half of the second century the title could be given to confessors at Lyons and Vienne, though it is significant that they disclaimed it as due only to the Lord (Apoc. 1:5) and to those who had died for Him. By that time the technical sense had nearly established itself (see Lightfoot's note on Clem. 1.c., and Benson's Cyprian, p. 90 f.); but in the N.T. this stage has not been reached, though the course of events was leading up to it." [*The Apocalypse of St. John*, ed. Henry Barclay Swete, 2d. ed., *Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 35.]

²⁹"The plural form of the pronoun ὑμῖν, 'you,' indicates that the address has shifted from the angel of the church to the members of the church who are now addressed directly (see the same phenomenon in 2:10, 19-20, 23-24)." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 185.]

ed. One would assume that this had taken place during the reign of Domitian (89-96 AD) since he promoted so vigorously both emperor worship and a revival of devotion to the traditional Roman deities. But such a guess is conjecture and doesn't rest on direct evidence.

Some commentators are convinced that the addition of the clause ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ, *where Satan lives*, signals by its close proximity to the reference to Antipas' execution that the execution was due to a refusal to burn incense with a pledge of loyalty to the emperor as a god. Although tempting to conclude, direct evidence confirming this just doesn't exist.³⁰ This is a likely scenario, but not a confirmed one. One of the interesting legends about Antipas in much later church tradition is that he was slowly boiled to death in a brazen bowl during Domitian's reign.³¹ The church historian Eusebius in his *Church History* will allude to later Christians who suffered martyrdom at Pergamum:³²

And there are also records extant of others that suffered martyrdom in Pergamus, a city of Asia,— of Carpus and Pappylus, and a woman named Agathonice, who, after many

³⁰"Kraft (65) suggests that the ὅπου, 'where,' indicates that Antipas was executed because he refused to sacrifice to the statue of the emperor, but this is too speculative." [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 185.]

³¹"The name is found in a third-century inscription of Pergamum,¹⁷ and he is mentioned by Tertullian.¹⁸ The legend appears in later hagiographers (Simon Metaphrastes, the Bollandists) that he was slowly roasted to death in a brazen bowl during the reign of Domitian. His name (abridged from Antipater) has mistakenly been taken to mean 'against all,' and the idea that he gained the name by his heroic stand against the forces of evil is unfounded.¹⁹" [Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 80.]

The allusion by the third century church father Tertullian is less clear. In his letter *Ad Scapulam* about 217 AD to the Roman governor at Carthage, he alludes to an Arrius Antoninus who in the last decades of the first century was pushing emperor worship hard in Asia (5.1):

When Arrius Antoninus was driving things hard in Asia, the whole Christians of the province, in one united band, presented themselves before his judgment-seat; on which, ordering a few to be led forth to execution, he said to the rest, "O miserable men, if you wish to die, you have precipices or halters."

Amazingly this story implies that Christians in Asia at the end of the first century who were under persecution voluntarily presented themselves for martyrdom to the Roman authorities. The credibility of such is questionable. Whether this refers to the execution of Antipas mentioned in Revelation is at best questionable.

³²Eusebius of Caesaria, "The Church History of Eusebius", trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Volume I: Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 192-93.

and illustrious testimonies, gloriously ended their lives.³³ What gradually emerges is a tendency of the Roman government to systematically persecute Christians in and around the city of Pergamum for a long time to come at Antipas was killed.

The clause ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ, *where Satan lives*, does seem at first glance to point to one or all of the pagan temples in Pergamum being the dwelling place of Satan. The verb κατοικέω with a supernatural reference as its subject tended to refer to a temple as the place of dwelling, but the two relative clauses here, ποῦ κατοικεῖς, *where you live*, and ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ, *where Satan lives*, point more to the city with the same verb specifying the place where both the church and Satan live.

The compliments now shift in verse fourteen to a complaint: ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα, *but I have a few things against you...* This is the second of three instances of this phrase surfacing: at Ephesus, ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ

³³“A detailed account of the martyrdoms of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice is extant in numerous MSS., and has been published more than once. It has, however, long been recognized as spurious and entirely untrustworthy. But in 1881 Aubè published in the *Revue Archéologique* (Dec., p. 348 sq.) a shorter form of the Acts of these martyrs, which he had discovered in a Greek MS. in the Paris Library. There is no reason to doubt that these Acts are genuine and, in the main, quite trustworthy. The longer Acts assign the death of these martyrs to the reign of Decius, and they have always been regarded as suffering during that persecution. Aubè, in publishing his newly discovered document, still accepted the old date; but Zahn, upon the basis of the document which he had also seen, remarked in his *Tatian's Diatessaron* (p. 279) that Eusebius was correct in assigning these martyrdoms to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and Lightfoot (I. p. 625) stated his belief that they are to be assigned either to that reign or to the reign of Septimius Severus. In 1888 Harnack (*Texte und Unters.* III. 4) published a new edition of the Acts from the same MS. which Aubè had used, accompanying the text with valuable notes and with a careful discussion of the age of the document. He has proved beyond all doubt that these martyrs were put to death during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and that the shorter document which we have contains a genuine account related by an eye-witness. These are evidently the Acts which Eusebius had before him. In the spurious account Carpus is called a bishop, and Papyrus a deacon. But in the shorter account they are simply Christians, and Papyrus informs the judge that he is a citizen of Thyatira.

“Eusebius apparently did not include the account of these martyrs in his collection of Ancient Martyrdoms, and Harnack concludes from that that he found in it something that did not please him, viz. the fanaticism of Agathonice, who rashly and needlessly rushes to martyrdom, and the approval of her conduct expressed by the author of the Acts. We are reminded of the conduct of the Phrygian Quintus mentioned in the epistle of the Smyrnæans but in that epistle such conduct is condemned.”

[*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Volume I: Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890).]

σοῦ (2:4), and at Thyatira, ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ (2:20). The strong contrastive conjunction ἀλλὰ, *but*, is common in secular Greek, but of the thirteen instances in the entire book of Revelation eight of them are in chapters two and three: 2:4, 6, 9 [2x], 14, 20; 3:4, 9. This sets Christ's complaint against the church in very strong contrast to His compliments that precede and sometimes follow this expression. The Lord is highly displeased with these three churches where this expression is used.

What so upset Him? The subsequent ὅτι-clause both defines the content and gives the reason for His displeasure. At Ephesus, it was ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρώτην ἀφῆκες, *because you have left your first love* (2:4). At Thyatira, it was ὅτι ἀφείς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, *because you tolerate the woman Jezebel* (2:20).

But here in Pergamum it is ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλάκ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθута καὶ πορνεῦσαι, *because you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication* (2:14).

The church had not taken disciplinary action against some of its members who had become devoted followers of the ‘teaching of Balaam.’ The references to Balaam and Balak clearly are not names of individuals living in Pergamum. Instead they reference two Old Testament characters. Why did John reference them this way? We don't know with certainty. A common view is that he is using a ‘guilt by association’ argument here.³⁴ The condemnation of false teachers in Jude 11

³⁴“The association of opponents with disreputable characters from the past (guilt by association) is one technique used to vilify them (du Toit, *Bib* 75 [1994] 410). The mention here of Balaam (cf. Jude 11; 2 Pet 2:15) and later of Jezebel (2:20) are examples of that technique, as are references to such paradigmatically disreputable characters elsewhere in Jewish literature as Jannes and Jambres (4Q267 = 4QDa 3 ii 14; 4Q269= 4QDd frag. 2, line 2; 6Q15 = 6QDamascus Document frag. 3, line 2; 2 Tim 3:8; b. Menah 85a; cf. Pliny Hist. nat. 30.2.11; Apuleius Apol. 90; Str-B 3:660–64; McNamara, Targum, 90–93); Nadab and Abihu (1QM 17:2); Korah (Ps.-Philo Bib. Ant. 16:1–7; 57:2). The error of Balaam is also mentioned in Jude 11 and 2 Pet 2:15 and appears to be connected with the teaching of the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:15). In rabbinic literature, Balaam and Abraham are seen as opposites, and the followers of Balaam are contrasted with those of Abraham (see *m. Abot* 5:19). Actually, the earliest evidence for regarding accomplished sinners as disciples of Balaam is found in Rev 2:14; Jude 11; 2 Pet 2:15–16 (Vermees, “Balaam,” 135, 172). The figure of Balaam, mentioned in Num 22–24, is very complex in the history of biblical tradition (Greene, “Balaam,” 57–106). In 1967 at Deir 'Alia, fragments of a book of Balaam inscribed on a plaster wall dating from the mid-eighth century B.C. (though the exemplar from which the text was copied was perhaps centuries older) were discovered (A. Lemaire, “Fragments from the Book of Balaam

and 2 Peter 2:15 as followers of Balaam is centers on false teaching as a money making scheme.³⁵ The OT character Balaam had a compromising relationship with Israel and sought to lead them to worship idols and to commit immorality.³⁶ John saw substantial moral connections of the unnamed teachers at Pergamum with this OT character, who had become a symbol of corrupting teaching, especially at the point of moral behavior in Jewish thinking. By labeling them this way he avoided the direct naming of names, which if such fell into the wrong hands could have led to severe repercussions for these individuals.

Further insight comes with exploring the connections between these people and those who are called the Nicolaitans in 2:16. This people were present at Ephesus also but not allowed influence in the church there (2:6). At Thyatira, the church was having problems with a “Jezebel” -- not her real name -- who was teaching believers “to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols,” πορνειῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθουτα (2:20). Teaching God’s people to worshiping idols and commit immorality were the two central teachings of Balaam in the OT. And these are the two emphases of those ‘Balaamites’ operating at Pergamum (2:14). These connections seem to suggest that we are look-

Found at Deir ‘Alla,” BARev 11 [1985] 26–39). The reconstructed title of at least part of this text is ‘Inscription/text/book of [Ba] laam [son of Beo]r, the man who was a seer of the gods’ (Lemaire, BARev 11 [1985] 35).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 185-86.]

³⁵**Jude 11.** Woe to them! For they go the way of Cain, and abandon themselves to Balaam’s error for the sake of gain, and perish in Korah’s rebellion.

οὐαὶ αὐτοῖς, ὅτι τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Κάιν ἐπορεύθησαν καὶ τῇ πλάνῃ τοῦ Βαλαάμ μισθοῦ ἐξεχύθησαν καὶ τῇ ἀντιλογίᾳ τοῦ Κόρε ἀπόλωντο.

2 Peter 2:14-16. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 15 They have left the straight road and have gone astray, following the road of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wages of doing wrong, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.

14 ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες μεστοὺς μοιχαλίδος καὶ ἀκαταπαύστους ἁμαρτίας, δελεάζοντες ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους, καρδίαν γεγυμνασμένην πλεονεξίας ἔχοντες, κατάρας τέκνα· 15 καταλίποντες εὐθεῖαν ὁδὸν ἐπλανήθησαν, ἐξακολουθήσαντες τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Βαλαάμ τοῦ Βοσόρ, ὃς μισθὸν ἀδικίας ἠγάπησεν 16 ἔλεγξιν δὲ ἔσχεν ἰδίας παρανομίας· ὑποζύγιον ἄφωνον ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ φωνῇ φθεγξάμενον ἐκόλυσεν τὴν τοῦ προφήτου παραφρονίαν.

³⁶“This inner compromise is explained through reference to the compromising relationship Balaam had with Israel (Num. 22:5–25:3; 31:8, 16). Israel was led to worship idols and commit immorality as a result of his deceitful counsel.” [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), 248.]

ing at perhaps three versions of essentially the same group of teachers in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira. They are Nicolaitans at Ephesus, followers of Balaam at Pergamum as well as Nicolaitans (cf. 2:15), and followers of a “Jezebel” at Thyatira.

The two central issues, at least bothering Christ, were eating food sacrificed to idols and immorality: φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθουτα καὶ πορνειῦσαι. Not to be overlooked are these two activities as forbidden in the Jerusalem conference agreement for the Gentle churches (Acts 15:29):

that you abstain *from what has been sacrificed to idols* and from blood and from what is strangled and *from fornication*.

ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας,

From the indications in both Acts 16 and following, as well as from Paul’s letters, these two emphases were consistently taught in the Christian communities where Paul had traveled, and this included Asia as a major place. Now some half a century later that emphasis was being compromised by false teachers in these three churches in Asia.

One interpretive issue with φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθουτα pertains to where such meat was eaten.³⁷ Paul speaks about Περὶ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, *concerning food sacrificed to idols*, in 1 Cor. 8:1-13. He implies that eating such

³⁷“The term εἰδωλόθυτος is a pejorative term meaning ‘animals sacrificed to idols.’ The pejorative denotation of the term suggests that it was probably coined in Hellenistic Judaism as a polemical counterpart to the neutral denotation of the Greek word ἱρόθυτος (1 Cor 10:28; Plutarch Quaest. conv. 729c; see Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 139); a related term is θεόθυτος, ‘sacrificial victim.’ There is slim evidence for the Jewish origin of εἰδωλόθυτος, however, for it occurs outside of early Christian literature only in two first-century A.D. Jewish sources, 4 Macc 5:2 and Ps.-Phocylides Sententiae 31 (reproduced in Sib. Or. 2.96). Part of the flesh of victims sacrificed in Greek temples was consumed by priests and worshipers on the premises, while the rest was sold to the public in the market place. Therefore, φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθουτα, “to eat meat sacrificed to idols” could refer to four possible situations: (1) participation in the sacrificial meal in a temple, (2) accepting sacrificial meat distributed during a public religious festival, (3) the practice of eating meat purchased at the marketplace that had originally been part of a pagan sacrifice (the possibilities are formulated too narrowly by Fee, 1 Cor., 357–63), or (4) the sacrificial meals shared by members of a club or association, i.e., an ἔθνος, θίασος, or collegium, a context in which Christians mingled with non-Christians, though scholars who imagine that such collegia had the character of trade guilds (e.g., Beasley-Murray, 86, 89–90; Yarbrow Collins, Crisis, 132), are mistaken, for there was no ancient equivalent to the medieval trade guild or modern labor union, since *collegia* had no regulatory or protective functions (Finley, Economy, 138; R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations* 50 B.C. to A.D. 284 [New Haven; London: Yale UP, 1974] 18–19). Opposition to this practice is also articulated in v 20.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 186.]

meat is okay if bought in the market place and not done in the presence of ‘weaker’ brothers who would be offended to see a Christian eating it. He clarifies this stance even further in 1 Cor. 10:23-30. What he doesn’t address and what seems to be the issue here in these three churches in Asia is the eating of such meat in the presence of the idol, that is, in the precincts of the temple of the idol. Clearly this stood in violation of the agreed upon teaching of the apostles from the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15. Refusal by Christians to participate in such actions certainly raised eyebrows and fired up hostility against them.³⁸ Thus some in the church were compromising this stance by arguing that such was okay, rather than sinful.³⁹ What may very well be behind this teaching was a desire to avoid economic persecution, especially with the emphasis on greed in the references in Jude and 2 Peter.

The other teaching stressed that it was okay *πορνεῦσαι*, to engage in immorality.⁴⁰ Of course, these

³⁸“This was no mere issue of indifferent things and matters of conscience, as some propose was the case in 1 Corinthians 8. Perhaps token public acknowledgments to Caesar are in mind or participation in pagan festivals, or even both, since all the guilds formally recognized Caesar’s deity. (Polycarp was accused of being a ‘puller down of our gods, teaching many not to sacrifice or worship’ [*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12:1–2].) In particular, what may be included are trade guild festivals involving celebration of patron deities through feasts and sometimes immoral activities. Refusal to participate in such activities could result in economic and social ostracism (cf. 1 Pet. 3:11–21). Therefore, there was much pressure to compromise. And just as Israel was influenced to fornicate both sexually and spiritually, the same was true of Christians in Pergamum.” [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), 249.]

³⁹“Like Balaam, this was a group of false prophets who were encouraging participation in idol feasts by teaching that such permission was permissible for Christians. We may speculate, as have others, that this course of action was rationalized by thinking that it was only an empty gesture that fulfilled patriotic or social obligations and was legitimate as long as Christians did not really believe in the deities being worshiped (see further on 2:24–25). And, like Balaam, they probably also believed they would be blessed for their prophetic instruction (cf. Num. 23:10). Part of the false teachers’ effectiveness, perhaps, lay in their sincere belief that they were teaching correct doctrine; while possible, it is unlikely that they were intentionally trying to deceive the church. Of course, their teaching would ultimately dilute the exclusive claims of the church’s Christian witness to the world, which was still the church’s strength. Perhaps part of the motivation for the teachers’ attitude was the threat of economic deprivation, which may have facilitated the comparison with Balaam, since the original narrative and subsequent reflections on it associate his deceptive motives with financial gain.” [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), 249.]

⁴⁰*πορνεῦω* fut. *πορνεύσω*; 1 aor. *ἐπόρνευσα*; pf. 3 pl.

people would not have labeled sexual immorality as such since in their teaching there was nothing wrong with such activity outside of marriage.

One’s first impulse is to ask how in the world supposed Christian teachers could be advocating sexual immorality as being okay for Christians.

The teachings of the Old Testament and official Judaism in that world were very clear: sexual activity is strictly limited to the marriage of a man and woman. Anything beyond this is sinful abomination to God. The teachings of Jesus and of the apostles in the documents that would become the New Testament clearly continue that emphasis and heighten the importance of sexual purity and fidelity inside marriage only.

This is the clear teaching of scripture and the Judeo-Christian religious heritage. But this teaching stood diametrically opposite of what dominated the Greco-Roman world, both in teaching and in practice. Homosexual practice was massive in that world. Sexual activity beyond one’s wife with other women was considered normal. In the Jewish world functionally, only the woman came under severe penalty for having sexual relations with men beyond her husband.⁴¹ In a

πεπορνεῦκασιν Ezk 16:34 (Hdt. et al.; LXX, En; TestAbr A 10 p. 88, 8 [Stone p. 24]; Test12Patr; Ar. 15, 4; Just.; Tat. 34, 3) of a variety of ‘unsanctioned sexual intercourse’.

1. to engage in sexual immorality, engage in illicit sex, to fornicate, to whore, in Gk. lit. freq. in ref. to prostitution (s. L-S-J-M s.v.). In a gener. sense **1 Cor 10:8ab**. Distinguished fr. *μοιχεύειν* ‘commit adultery’ (Did., Job 133, 22ff [quote fr. Hos 4:14], 25ff); D 2:2; B 19:4; **Mk 10:19** v.l. Regarded as a sin against one’s own body **1 Cor 6:18**. W. *φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα* ‘eat meat offered to idols’ **Rv 2:14, 20**.

2. engagement in polytheistic cult, fornication, in imagery (Phalaris, Ep. 121, 1), of polytheistic cult in the sense ‘practice image-worship/idolatry’ (*πορνεία* 3 and cp. Hos 9:1; Jer 3:6; Ezk 23:19; 1 Ch 5:25; Ps 72:27; En 8:2) **Rv 17:2; 18:3, 9**.—DELG s.v. *πέρνημι*. M-M. 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), 854.]

⁴¹One sociologically contributing factor in the background here was the substantial age gap between husband and wife. Normally the husband was in his 30s while the wife in her early teen years at marriage. This was true typically for virtually every culture in the Greco-Roman world of the first Christian century. Added to that was the inherent weakness of arranged marriages which meant the marital relationship was mostly formal and a contractual agreement between two families. Commitment to one another as a married couple had to develop after the wedding, if it came at all. Love for one another was a very secondary optional matter. The physical aspect of marriage primary for producing heirs to the family of the husband played the dominant role. Thus for the Greco-Roman male every non-married woman beyond his wife was ‘fair game,’ especially slave girls and prostitutes. And even other married women if he were powerful enough to defend himself against the husband.

cultural world where sexual relations outside marriage were considered normal and completely okay, it is not surprising that teachers pop up inside Christianity offering to compromise the teachings of Jesus and the apostles at this point.

Even the bizarre surfaces on occasion, like the situation at Corinth where a man was having sexual relations with his birth mother and it was touted in the church as a sign of superior spirituality (1 Cor. 5:3-8). Paul comes down hard in demanding that the church remove such a person from its congregation and have no contact with such immoral people (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

In the Jewish background of John stands the substantial tendency to link idolatry and sexual immorality closely together.⁴² Just from living in the Greco-Roman world where the worship of many of the gods and goddesses centered in sexual orgies, one could easily make such a connection. The fertility base of so many of the pagan religions linked worship of the deity with human sexual activity supposedly that pleased the deity enough to grant fertility to the soil for producing abundant harvest of crops. The very ancient Canaanite religions were some of the most corrupting religious influences at this point in the entire ancient world.

Thus these teachers at Pergamum were seriously corrupting the Gospel message and witness of the church to the surrounding pagan world by their com-

This is why the early Christian teaching on Christian marriage, for example, in the *Haustafeln* materials of Col. 3 and Eph. 5 were revolutionary teachings in that world. For Christians, marriage between a man and woman needed to be based on *ἀγάπη*, a self-sacrificing commitment to one another modeled after Christ's commitment to the church and vice versa.

For Gentile Christians especially the teachings of their new found faith in Christ posed huge demands for lifestyle change. This was a struggle, as Paul's teaching to the Corinthian men in 1 Cor. 6:9-20 reflect.

⁴²“A close association is assumed by Judaism to exist between idolatry and sexual immorality (Exod 32:15–16; Wis 14:12–31; T. Reub. 4:6; T. Benj. 10:10 [in the phrase διὰ τῆς πορνείας καὶ εἰδωλολατρείας, ‘through immorality and idolatry,’ the nouns are linked with a single article, indicating that they describe aspects of the same thing]; 3 Apoc. Bar. 8:5; Spire Deut. 171; b. Sanh. 82a; b. Šabb. 17b; b. Meg. 25a; b. Ketub. 13b; see Simon, BJRL 52 [1970] 446–47). In the OT, the idolatry of Israel is frequently condemned through the use of the metaphor of prostitution and sexual immorality (Jer 3:2; 13:27; Ezek 16:15–58; 23:1–49; 43:7; Hos 5:4; 6:10). Idolatry is often regarded as the root of all other forms of vice; according to Wis 14:12, ‘the invention of idols is the beginning of fornication,’ and Wis 14:27 says ‘for the worship of the unspeakable idols is the beginning, cause, and end of every evil.’ Sexual immorality (πορνεία) can also be considered ‘the mother of all evil’ (T. Sim. 5:3). The connection between idolatry and sexual misdeeds in Judaism is taken over by Christianity (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; Rom 1:23–25; Gal 5:19f–21; 1 Cor 6:9–11; 1 Thess 1:9 together with 4:3; Rev 22:15).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 188.]

promises.⁴³

Additionally this teaching was floating around at Pergamum also under the banner of the Nicolaitans: οὕτως ἔχεις καὶ σὺ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδασχὴν [τῶν] Νικολαϊτῶν ὁμοίως, *So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans*. The significance of the coordinate adverb οὕτως is to introduce the Nicolaitans as these are the same as the others I mentioned.⁴⁴

⁴³One possible side issue here relates to the Jewish foundation for opposing φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθουτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι. In some ancient Jewish traditions certain laws were considered to have been given prior to Moses and given to Noah so that they apply to all humanity and not just to covenant Israel.

There appears to be a close connection between the two prohibitions mentioned in this verse (and Rev 2:20) and the apostolic decree in Acts 15, for only in Acts 15:20 [here the phrase τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων = εἰδωλόθουτος], 29; 21:25; Rev 2:14, 20 are the notions of πορνεία and εἰδωλόθουτος closely connected (Simon, BJRL 52 [1970] 442, 450). The list of prohibitions promulgated by the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 itself reflects the tradition-cif the Noachide Laws (Bockmuehl, RB 102 [1995] 93–95). The Noachide Laws reflect the early Jewish view that God gave pre-Sinaitic law to all people, Gentiles as well as Jews (Dietrich, ZRGG 1 [1948] 301–15; Callan, CBQ 55 [1993] 284–97; Bockmuehl, RB 102 [1995] 72–101). These Laws, from a Jewish perspective, provided a common ethical and ritual basis for both Jews and Gentiles. This conception was based primarily on Gen 9:3–6, where Noah prohibits the consumption of the blood of slaughtered animals and murder. The earliest extant text in which Gen 9:3–6 is expanded into a body of Noachic law is Jub. 7:20 (tr. Vanderkam, Jubilees 2:46–47):

Noah began to prescribe for his grandsons the ordinances and the commandments—every statute which he knew. He testified to his sons that they should do what is right, cover the shame of their bodies, bless the one who had created them, honor father and mother, love one another, and keep themselves from fornication, uncleanness, and from all injustice.

While there is some ambiguity, it appears that the tradition of the Noachide Laws has influenced Ps.-Phocylides Sent. 3–8 (first century B.C. to first century A.D.); see Wilson, *Mysteries*, 69. In b. Sanh. 56b and t. Abod. Zar. 8.4, the two laws of Gen 9:3–6 are expanded to seven, though other rabbinic sources vary in the number of Noachide Laws (Bockmuehl, RB 102 [1995] 87–91): the prohibition of idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, robbery, and eating meat torn from a living animal and the positive command to have recourse to established courts of justice. In Acts 15 the issue appears to have been the halakhic status of gentile Christians, not simply the issue of table fellowship (Bockmuehl, RB 102 [1995] 93). The list of prohibitions in the apostolic decree in Acts 15:20, 29 includes abstention from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled, and from fornication, all similar to prohibitions associated with the Noachide Laws (Bockmuehl, RB 102 [1995] 94–95).

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 187.]

⁴⁴“The οὕτως, ‘so, thus, in this way,’ coordinates the phrase that it introduces with the statement that immediately precedes in v 15, by way of interpretation or explanation. Thus, ‘the teaching of Balaam’ is the same as ‘the teaching of the Nicolaitans’ (against MacKay, *EvQ* 45 [1973] 111–15). The καὶ σὺ, ‘you too,’ refers to the presence of this influence in Ephesus previously mentioned in 2:6; the concluding ὁμοίως, ‘as well, likewise, similarly,’ also

Additionally the *καὶ σὺ*, you also, along with *ὁμοίως*, similarly, links these Nicolaitans with those mention at Ephesus in 2:6.⁴⁵ Both at Ephesus and at Pergamum these people were called ‘followers of Nicolaus.’ This may very well explain in part why John chose to also label them followers of Balaam, with all the negative image that suggested out of the Jewish background. The justification for this is the commonality of teaching between these contemporary teachers at Pergamum and the teachings of Balaam, at least as popularly understood in first century Jewish tradition. So we have one set of teachers at Pergamum with two labels: Nicolaitans and followers of Balaam.

The short *dispositio* in verse sixteen centers on a call to the church to repent of its toleration of these teachers in its midst: *μετανόησον οὖν· εἰ δὲ μή, ἔρχομαί σοι ταχὺ καὶ πολεμήσω μετ’ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου*, Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The conjunction *οὖν* links this admonition closely to what preceded in the complaint as a logical implication of the complaint. If the King of this universe is unhappy with what we are doing, then we had better change what we are doing. Or, else there will be unpleasant consequences. This is the logic being followed here.

The demand *μετανόησον*, repent, is stated intensively as an Aorist tense imperative mood verb expression. The King of this universe means serious business with this demand. The verb coming from *μετανοέω* stresses a complete turn around in our thinking and commitments. It is one of several words in Koine Greek used in the NT to emphasize a drastic change of behavior demanded by God in the way people live.⁴⁶ Thus

compares the situation in Pergamon with that in Ephesus. This close coordination between the Nicolaitans (for more details, see Comment on 2:6) and Balaam may suggest the reason that John has chosen ‘Balaam’ as a symbol.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 188.]

⁴⁵For a detailed treatment of the Nicolaitans, see study 6 on Rev. 2:1-7 in volume 32 of the *Biblical Insights Commentary* series at cranfordville.com.

⁴⁶Note the following:

E Change Behavior (41.50–41.54)

41.50 στρέφομαι^a: to change one’s manner of life, with the implication of turning toward God; **41.51 ἐπιστρέφω**^d; **ἐπιστροφή**^b, **ἦς** f: to change one’s manner of life in a particular direction, with the implication of turning back to God; **41.52 μετανοέω**; **μετάνοια**, **ας** f: to change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness; **41.53 γεννάω ἄνωθεν** (an idiom, literally ‘to be born again’); **παλιγγενεσία**, **ας** f: to experience a complete change in one’s way of life to what it should be, with the implication of return to a former state or relation; **41.54 ἀμετανόητος**, **ον**: pertaining to not being repentant.

the repentance demanded, in that it is directed to the church and not just to these false teachers, is that the church abandon its lax attitude toward these teachers and instead take serious disciplinary action against them if they are unwilling to abandon their false teaching.

The warning that follows levels serious threats against both the church and these false teachers: *εἰ δὲ μή, ἔρχομαί σοι ταχὺ καὶ πολεμήσω μετ’ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου*. Two threats are made: *ἔρχομαί σοι ταχὺ*, I will come to you quickly, and *πολεμήσω μετ’ αὐτῶν*, I will wage war against them.

In the background is the OT experience of Balaam who did not obey God and was killed by the sword at God’s command: Josh 13:22 and Num. 31:8.⁴⁷ In light of the subsequent picture of Christ with the sword coming out of his mouth in 19:21,⁴⁸ the meaning of this threat is clear. The Son of Man will come down upon the church quickly at Pergamum and ‘clean house’ of all the false teachers and their followers.⁴⁹ Physical death

[Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 509-510.]

⁴⁷**Joshua 13:22.** *καὶ τὸν Βαλααμ τὸν τοῦ Βεωρ τὸν μάντιν ἀπέκτειναν ἐν τῇ ῥομφίᾳ.*†

Along with the rest of those they put to death, the Israelites also put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination.

Numbers 31:8. *καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς Μαδιαν ἀπέκτειναν ἅμα τοῖς τραυματίαις αὐτῶν, καὶ τὸν Εὐν καὶ τὸν Σουρ καὶ τὸν Ροκομ καὶ τὸν Οὐρ καὶ τὸν Ροβοκ, πέντε βασιλεῖς Μαδιαν· καὶ τὸν Βαλααμ υἱὸν Βεωρ ἀπέκτειναν ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ σὺν τοῖς τραυματίαις αὐτῶν.*

They killed the kings of Midian: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian, in addition to others who were slain by them; and they also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.

48 Rev. 19:21. *καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου τῇ ἐξελθούσῃ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄρνεα ἐχορτάσθησαν ἐκ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτῶν.*

And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

⁴⁹The core concept of the verb *πολεμέω*, along with the noun *πόλεμος*, is to wage war. It is a part of a large military oriented vocabulary found inside the NT:

πόλεμος G4483 (polemos), war, battle, fight, strife, conflict, quarrel; *πολεμέω* G4482 (polemeō), make war, fight; *στρατεία* G5127 (strateia), expedition, campaign; *στράτευμα* G5128 (strateuma), army, detachment, troops; *στρατεύω/στρατεύομαι* G5129 (strateuō), serve as a soldier; *στρατηγός* G5130 (stratēgos), general, chief magistrate, praetor; *στρατιά* G5131 (stratia), army; *στρατιώτης* G5132 (stratiōtēs), soldier; *στρατολογέω* G5133 (stratologeō), gather an army, enlist soldiers; *στρατοπέδαρχης* G5134 (stratopedarchēs), military commander, commandant of a camp; *στρατόπεδον* G5136 (stratopedon), camp, body of troops, army; *ἐκατοντάρχης* G1672 (hekatontarchēs), ἐκατόνταρχος (hekatontarchos), κεντυρίων G3035 (kentyriōn), centurion; *μάχιρα* G3479 (machaira), sword; *μάχη* G3480 (machē), battle, fighting, quarrels, strife, disputes; *μάχομαι* G3481 (machomai), fight, quarrel, dispute; *Ἀрмаγεδ* (δ)ών G762 (Harmaged(d)ōn), Armageddon; *Γῶγ* G1223 (Gōg), Gog; *Μαγῶν*

that condemns them to eternal damnation is the threat. How would Christ do that? The easiest option already in place was simply to allow the government authorities to unleash severe persecution on the Christian community in Pergamum. But this would be only one of an infinite variety of options available to the risen Christ in order to punish the Christian community at Pergamum for refusing to carry out His command. The adverb ταχῦ defines this as a soon to take place temporal judgment, rather than an eschatological Day of Judgment moment.⁵⁰

Again the image of the sword here signals the appropriateness of the same image in the Adscriptio (v. 12), which echoes the image in 1:16. The picture is that of unlimited power just in the words spoken by the Son of Man.

The impression created by this graphic and very blunt language used by the risen Christ to the church at Pergamum should give Christians everywhere cause to pay close attention.

C. Admonition and promise, v. 17

Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.

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

To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

Again, as is the case in all seven messages the closing section contains two elements: the command to hear and the promise of victory. These come as the natural closing to the message and, in this sequence of command / promise here especially, reflect a traditional Jewish way of thinking. When God tells us to do something, usually He re-enforces it with a promised

G3408 (Magōg), Magog; ὄπλον G3960 (hoplon), weapon; ὀπλιζῶ G3959 (hoplizō), equip, arm; πανοπλία G4110 (panoplia), full armour, panoply; θώραξ G2606 (thōrax), breastplate; θυρεός G2599 (thyreos), shield; περικεφαλαία G4330 (perikephalaia), helmet; βέλος (belos), arrow, dart; ῥομφαία G4855 (rhomphaia), a large, broad sword; παρεμβολή G4213 (parembolē), fortified camp, barracks or headquarters, army in battle array, battle line; παρεμβάλλω G4212 (paremballō), throw up a palisade.

[C. Brown, J. Watts, C. Brown and C. Brown, “War, Soldier, Weapon” In vol. 3, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 958-59.]

⁵⁰For the use of ταχύς, εἶα, ὕ inside Revelation see 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20. It uniformly specifies an event anticipated in the immediate future. And this is consistent with its meaning elsewhere inside the NT (13x with 5x in Rev).

blessing.

The **command to listen** is stated the exact same way in all seven messages: Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. The background is the OT prophetic “Hear the Word of the Lord.”⁵¹ This particular formulation of it reaches especially back to the teaching ministry of Jesus in the gospels.⁵² Also some similar sayings with the same thrust surface in the gospels in connection to Jesus’ teachings.⁵³ One of the distives to this set of sayings in Revelation is the τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις direct object clause. Although it is the Son of Man speaking (Τάδε λέγει, v. 12b), these words also become at the same time the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking their meaning and application to the churches. Therefore the listeners, i.e., those with an ear, should pay careful attention to these messages for they have vital relevance to all seven churches. And thus ultimately to us today.

The **victory formula** comes next as an incentive to hear and obey the message of the Son of Man. Although formulated with slightly differing grammar structure, the central meaning of all seven of these is the same: the promise of eternal life. This variation is due to the customization of each victory formula to the individual church.

Here is a twofold promise to give that is highly symbolic and appropriate to the history of the city of Pergamum.

The promise is made Τῷ νικῶντι, to the one over-

⁵¹“Proclamation formulas often introduce OT prophetic oracles, such as ‘Hear the word of Yahweh’ (1 Kgs 22:19; 1 Chr 18:18; Amos 7:16; Jer 29:20; 42:15), often with the name of the recipient in the vocative (Jer 2:4; 7:2; 19:3; 22:11; Ezek 6:3; 13:2; 21:3). The proclamation formula, probably derived from usage in public assemblies and in courts of law (see Mic 6:2; Jer 2:4), was used to introduce instruction in the law (Prov 4:1; Job 13:6; 33:1, 31; 34:2, 16; Isa 49:1; 51:4) and instruction in wisdom (Deut 32:1; Prov 7:24; Ps 49:1; Isa 28:23).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 150.]

⁵²“The formula ‘Let the person with an ear hear’ (and variants), an aphorism rooted in the Jesus tradition (see *Excursus 3A: The Sayings of Jesus in Revelation*), is found in six independent variant versions (Crossan, *Fragments*, 68–73). It occurs seven times in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 4:9, 23; Matt 11:15; 13:9, 43; Luke 8:8; 14:35) and six additional times as variant readings (Mark 7:16; Matt 25:29; Luke 8:15; 12:21; 13:9; 21:4).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 150.]

⁵³“Closely related formulas include Matt 19:12, ὁ χωρῶν χωρεῖτω, ‘let the one who understands understand’; Rev 13:18, ὁ ἔχων νοῦν ψηφισάτω, ‘let the one who has understanding reckon’; and Ignatius, Smyrn. 6:1, ὁ χωπῶν χωπεῖτω, ‘let the one who understands understand’ (perhaps an allusion to Matt 19:12; Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers 2/2*, 304).” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 150.]

coming. The idea in the verb νικάω is literally prevailing in battle, a most appropriate image given the military language in this message: cf., τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὄξειαν and πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν. But its figurative meaning is the point in these victory formulas. And that meaning is to remain faithful to the end, to persevere in commitment without failing. Again, this underscores the concept of salvation emphasized by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:21): Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι· κύριε κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, **Not everyone saying to me "Lord, Lord," will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; instead, the one doing the will of My Father in Heaven.**

How is eternal life described here? First, the Son of Man promises, δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου, **I will give to him of the hidden manna.** The OT background of the manna eaten by the Israelites during the exodus lies behind this image.⁵⁴ For John's

⁵⁴“The term ‘manna’ (from the Hebrew term מַן *mān hū*, ‘what is it?’ in Exod 16:15; see Jos. *Ant.* 3.32: τί τοῦτ' ἔστιν, ‘what is it?’) refers to the miraculous feeding narrated in Exod 16:4–36 (retellings of the story are found in Jos. *Ant.* 3.26–32; Ps.-Philo *Bib. Ant.* 10:7). Manna is often called ‘bread from heaven’ (Neh 9:15; Ps 105:40; John 6:31–33, 50–51; Apost. Const. 8.12.26), the ‘food of angels’ (LXX Ps 77:25[MT 78:25]; Wis 16:20; b. Yoma 75b; 4 Ezra 1:19; Adam and Eve 4:2; see Jos. *As.* 16:14), and occasionally ‘bread of life’ (Jos. *As.* 8:5; John 6:35, 48). According to one tradition, manna is produced in the third heaven (b. Hag. 12b). One of the eschatological expectations of early Judaism was that the future time of salvation would correspond to the period of wilderness wandering in which God would again supply manna miraculously (Volz, *Eschatologie*, 388). According to 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 29:8 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP 1:631), ‘And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who have arrived at the consummation of time’ (see also Sib. Or. 7.149; Hist. Rech. 13:2; Num. Rab. 11.2 on Num 6:22; Qoh. Rab. 1:9). Manna is called **לחם של עולם הבא** *lḥmw šl .wlm hb.*, ‘the bread of the age to come’ (Gen. Rab. 82.8 on Gen 35:17). According to Jos. *As.* 16:14 (tr. Burchard in Charlesworth, OTP 2:229), ‘And all the angels of God eat of it [i.e., ‘honeycomb’ in the context, but note the proverbial sweetness of manna] and all the chosen of God and all the sons of the Most High, because this is a comb of life, and everyone who eats of it will not die for ever (and) ever.’

“The adjectival participle τοῦ κεκρυμμένου, ‘hidden,’ is problematic and has three possible explanations. (1) Manna is ‘hidden’ in the sense that it is reserved only for those who enter into the age to come (Malina, *Manna Tradition*, 101; Bietenhard, *Der Tosefta-Traktat Sota*, 73–74 n. 42). (2) Manna is ‘hidden’ because it was placed in ajar that was set before the Lord (Exod 16:32–36) and will one day again be made available to the righteous by the Messiah (a view also found in Samaritan eschatology). There was a legend in Judaism that Jeremiah hid the ark to keep it from being carried off to Babylon (2 Macc 2:4–6; Eupolemus frag. 4 [Eusebius *Praep. evang.* 9.39.5; Holladay, *FHJA* 1:134]; Alexander Polyhistor [FrGrHist, 723, F 5]; Ginzberg, *Legends* 6:19 nn. 111–12), and the manna was hidden along with it. (3) The heavenly manna referred to in the OT will be restored in heaven through eternal

readers with a Jewish background or awareness, this manna is the nourishment provided by God Himself that sustains His people throughout eternity.

Second, the Son of Man promises, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκήν, **and I will give him a white rock.** This came out of the Greco-Roman background for the city.⁵⁵ The white stone, actually a beryl stone, came to mean a ‘vote’ in the Greco-Roman world. This because citizens were give such stones for voting on acquittal in court settings; the black stone meant guilty. In other instances, it was the ‘entrance ticket’ into the theater for important civic meetings. Particularly in Pergamum, it often was required for entrance into the temple of Asklepios in order to receive healing. Against this backdrop of multiple positive meanings of a white stone in Pergamum, Christ says in effect “You belong; God gives you a ‘thumbs up’ for all eternity.”

The further qualification of the white stone adds to its value as a symbol of eternal life: ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων, **and on the white stone is written a new name**

life. The meaning of this metaphor, however, is clear; victorious Christians will be rewarded with eternal life in which intimate fellowship with God will be enjoyed.”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 189.]

⁵⁵“Beryl is called ‘a well-known white stone, very valuable’ in Cyranides 1.2.6; on beryl in Revelation, see Comment on 21:20. ψῆφος means ‘pebble,’ ‘stone,’ and so ‘gem’ (Philostratus *Vita Apoll.* 3.27; Artemidorus *Oneir.* 2.5: ‘the stone in a ring we call a ψῆφος’); it can even be used in the more specific sense of ‘magical gem’ or ‘magical amulet’ (PGM XII.209, 280; cf. IV.937, 1048, 1057). Most frequently, however, since ψῆφοι were used for voting, ψῆφος came to mean ‘vote.’ The adjective λευκοί, ‘white,’ is used of favorable votes (SEG 26:1817.80; see Horsley, *New Docs* 1:39; Horsley, *New Docs* 4:209). The precise meaning of this ‘white stone’ remains uncertain; the most likely explanation is that it represents an amulet (see Comment on v 17d). The most extensive survey of proposed solutions to the problem is found in Hemer, *Letters*, 96–104: (1) a ‘jewel’ in Israelite-Jewish tradition; (2) white stones indicating a vote of acquittal, black a vote of condemnation (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15.41–42; Plutarch *Alc.* 202D; Mor. 186F; Aelian *De nat. anim.* 13.38; Lucian *Dial. meretr.* 9; the ψῆφος is found in association with νικάω, i.e., ‘victory’ in the sense of ‘acquittal’ [Theophrastus *Characters* 17.8; Aeschylus *Eum.* 741], and the ‘prevailing vote’ can be called a νικητήριος ψῆφος [Heliodorus *Aethiopia* 3.3]. This is close to the view of Andreas [Comm. in *Apoc.* ad loc.], who interprets the phrase ‘they shall receive a white stone’ with **τοῦτέστι νικῶσαν**, ‘that is, they will be victorious’); (3) a token of membership or recognition; (4) an amulet on which a divine name is inscribed (Artemidorus *Oneirocritica* 5.26); (5) a token of gladiatorial discharge; (6) an allusion to initiation into the cult of Asklepios; and (7) a writing material with a significant form or color. In *Hermas Sim.* 9.4.6, the stones (= Christians) used in building the tower (= the church) all turned white when they became part of the building.”

[David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 189–90.]

that no one knows except the one who receives it. Clearly the value of this stone rests largely on the secret name written on it. What is not spelled out is whether that name is a 'divine name' or the name of the overcoming believer. If the rather obvious parallel in 3:12 influences the understanding, then this 'new name' is a divine name.⁵⁶ But here the name is a ὄνομα καινόν, ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων, *new name, which no one knows except the one receiving it*. In 3:12, the written names are of God, the city of God, and Christ's own new name. Nothing particularly secretive about these! Very likely in the background stands the Greco-Roman pagan traditions about secret names for some of their gods, coupled with magical practices geared toward knowing these secret names in order to gain supernatural power.⁵⁷ Against this backdrop, the words of the risen Christ

⁵⁶**Rev. 3:12.** *If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.*

Ὁ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στῦλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἐτι *καὶ γράψω ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου*, τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἢ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου, *καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν*.

⁵⁷“The white stone mentioned in v 17c must be interpreted in connection with the inscription of a secret name. A major problem is that of determining whether a divine name (i.e., the name of God and/or Jesus) is written on the stone, or the name of the conquering Christian who receives the stone. Hemer argues that the ‘new name’ refers to a name given the conquering Christian (Letters, 102–3). The phrase ‘new name’ occurs in Isa 62:2, while the related term ‘different name’ is found only in Isa 65:15. In Tg. Isa. 65:15b this notion of a ‘different name’ is connected with another concept found in Revelation, the second death: ‘and the Lord YHWH will slay you with the second death [cf. Rev 2:11], but his servants, the righteous, he will call by a different name [מִשְׁמַח אֲחֵרָהּ שְׂמַח שְׁמַח שְׁמַח שְׁמַח].’ There is an obvious parallel with Rev 3:12, where the exalted Christ says that the name of God, the name of the city of God, and ‘my own new name [τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν]’ will be written on the conquering Christian (see 19:12, where the exalted Christ appears under the imagery of a conquering warrior who ‘has a name inscribed which no one knows but he himself’). The likelihood that this passage refers to the secret name (s) of God and/or Jesus together with the fact that this ‘new name’ is inscribed on a white stone inevitably suggests that the imagery of the magical amulet is in view (W. Heitmüller, “Im Namen Jesu “: *Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903] 174–75; 234–35; Bousset [1906] 215; Beckwith, 461–63; Clemen, *Erklärung*, 373–74; Charles, 1:66–67; Lohmeyer, 27; Lohse, 29; Metzger, *Code*, 36). According to ancient Egyptian tradition, the sun god Re had a true name that remained a secret until revealed to Isis (Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 21). Magical amulets normally have an image on the obverse and a magical text on the reverse; when worn, the image would be easily seen while the text (often containing secret magical names) would be concealed.

“While the precise function of the amulet is left unspecified,

affirm to the overcoming one that the power of God will carry him into the next world safely and for eternity. For the Gentile believers in the church, who came out of a deeply superstitious religious heritage, such words carried a powerful affirmation of the ultimate superiority of Christ over all the gods of the Romans and Greeks, whose massive temples they would frequently pass by as they moved about the city.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

Again, as one reads this message to the church at Pergamum, the spiritual reality and superiority of the

it appears that it is a reward for perseverance and that it therefore guarantees the permanent protection of the possessor (see T. Job 46:7–47:11). A close parallel to Rev 2:17 is found in a magical procedure in PDM xii.6–20 (Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, 152): ‘You bring a ring of iron and you bring a white stone which is in the shape of a grape ... Write this name on it [etc.]’ Magical procedures that give instruction for making amulets (and other materia magica) occasionally mention the importance of inscribing secret names on amulets (PGM I.146: ὑπὸ δὲ τὸ ἔδραμος τοῦ λίθου τὸ ὄνομα τοῦτο (κρύβε), ‘below the design on the stone is this name (conceal it!).’ Names that cannot be spoken are occasionally mentioned in the magical papyri (PGM XIII.763–64, 845). If the inscribed white stone is an amulet, the ‘new name’ is perhaps that of God or (more probably) Christ (see Phil 2:9, where God bestows on the exalted Jesus ‘the name which is above every name,’ i.e., *kyrios*; see v 11). The new name is probably in contrast to the great variety of old pagan names for various supernatural beings found on amulets and magical gems. Origen argued for the magical efficacy of such Hebrew names for God as ‘Sabaoth’ and ‘Adonai’ (*Contra Celsum* 1.24). The magical use of the formula ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ is particularly powerful (*Contra Celsum* 4.33; 5.45; cf. Justin Dial. 85, 135), as are the names ‘the God of Israel,’ ‘the God of the Hebrews,’ and ‘the God who drowned the king of Egypt and the Egyptians in the Red Sea’ (*Contra Celsum* 4.34). Jewish exorcists reportedly had many ισχυρὰ ὀνόματα, ‘powerful names,’ at their disposal (see Matt 12:27 = Luke 11:19; Acts 19:11–20; Jos. *Ant.* 8.45–49; Justin Dial. 85; Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 2.6.2). Christians, too, used the name Jesus Christ to perform healings and exorcisms (Acts 3:6; 4:10; 9:34; 16:18; Justin 2 *Apol* 6.6; Dial. 30.3; 76.6; 85.2; Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 2.32.4; 2.49.3; Epideixis 97; Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.6, 25, 67; 3.24; *Acts of John* 41; Eusebius *Demonstr. evang.* 3.6; Arnobius *Adv. nat.* 1.46; Lactantius *Div. inst.* 2.16; 4.27). Mark 9:38–41 (= Luke 9:49–50) is an anecdote about the disciples forbidding an unauthorized person from casting out demons in the name of Jesus; this pericope reflects the fact that, in early Christian tradition, the purely magical effect of the name of Jesus was accepted (Eitrem, *Demonology*, 31). A surprisingly large number of early Christian magical amulets have been recovered, though none dates as early as the second century A.D.: H. Leclercq, “Amulettes,” *DACL* 1:1795–1822; Bonner, *Magical Amulets*, 208–28; F. Eckstein and J. H. Waszink, “Amulett,” *RAC* 1 (1950) 407–10; Daniel-Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum* 1, nos. 20–36; Delatte-Derchain, *Les intailles magiques*, 283–87. On the magical use of the name of Jesus in early Christianity, see D. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW* II, 23/2:1545–49; id., “Jesus II (im Zauber),” *RAC* 17:821–37.” [David E. Aune, vol. 52A, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 190-91.]

Gospel message over against the teaching of pagan religions jumps out dramatically.

Unlike the believers at Smyrna, some 68 miles to the south, their challenges were not so much centered on facing hostility from the Jewish segment of the city. Instead, they lived where paganism and governmental opposition thrived in intense hostility to the Gospel message. At least one of their number, Antipas, had already paid with his life for his Christian commitment. Generally speaking the believers had withstood these pressures very successfully. And Christ compliments them for this (v. 13).

I wonder how successfully our church would stand up should we face a barrage of hostility from non-Christian religions and governmental authorities. To stare death in the face with the option of surviving if we recanted our Christian faith would be a hard test. Christians in the modern western world have very little direct experience with the kind of hostility the believers at Pergamum faced. But unfortunately, Christians in other parts of our modern world know exactly what these ancient believers were facing. Our constant prayer for them should be, "May God help them to remain faithful unto death!" And we should use every available, legitimate means possible to help them in such hostile environments.

What we in modern western Christianity do face every day is what began making inroads into the church at Pergamum: compromising the Gospel in our behavior and practices.

Surrounded by a deep structure of polytheism and a daily living where the role of the pagan gods and goddesses touched virtually every aspect of life, the pressure on believers to accommodate themselves to that world was enormous. The Jewish community felt similar pressures but over time by hook and crook they had gained for themselves special exemptions from many of these pressures via Roman imperial legal decrees. The believing community at Pergamum, made up of Jews and mostly non-Jews, had no such exemptions. The role of religion -- pagan Greco-Roman religion -- was unusually significant at Pergamum; it was where Satan lived and ruled (vv. 13-14). When one went to the market place to buy food, especially meat, the likelihood was this what was for sale there were the left-overs from food consumed in the temples to these deities, and thus had been dedicated to them in official liturgy at the temples. When one participated in a collegia, a social or work group necessary to gaining and keeping jobs in the city, each collegium had its patron deity and the required meetings always began with dedicating the meal to this patron deity. Could a Christian participate? Plus, most all the time, these meetings took place in the temple of the patron dei-

ty. Social gatherings with non-Christian friends nearly always included a meal. And the likelihood is that this food, especially the meat, had been previously dedicated to the patron deity or deities of the family. Everywhere around you were these not too subtle influences pushing the believer to ignore his Christian teaching and join in with the group.

Add to that the indescribably immoral atmosphere of the city when it came to sexual activity. Immoral heterosexual activity outside marriage was the norm; homosexual activity was present in almost every family with a Greek background especially, and massively present with other ethnic groups in the city. Even the Jews often preached one thing in their synagogues but practiced the opposite in daily life.

Not surprisingly then was the surfacing of teachers inside the Christian community who found various ways to twisting scripture or claiming special 'revelations' arguing that adapting to the surrounding world at these points was okay with God, and perhaps a necessary action for witnessing purposes. The Ephesian church had strongly rejected such teachings (2:6), but the churches at Pergamum (2:14) and Thyatira (2:20) had not taken disciplinary action against these corrupters of the Gospel inside their churches. The risen Christ warned them in the bluntest of terms to clean house or else He would in a devastating manner.

Here is the ongoing challenge to churches today. How soft are we on sin? Christ is hard on sin. We dare not be anything less! Every possible effort must be made to keep the teaching and behaving of the church dead center on the principles of scripture laid down by this Christ. God help us solve our problems before Christ does!



THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Bible Study 09

Text: Rev. 2:18-29

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QUICK LINKS

1. What the text meant.
Historical Aspects:
 External History
 Internal History
Literary Aspects:
 Genre
 Literary Setting
 Literary Structure

Exegesis of the Text:
 A. Command to write, v. 18a
 B. Situation of the church, vv. 18b-25
 C. Admonition and promise, vv. 26-29

2. What the text means.

Message to Thyatira

Greek NT	Gute Nachricht Bibel	NRSV	NLT
<p>18 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας γράψων·</p> <p>Τάδε λέγει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρρῶς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ·</p> <p>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 προφητιν 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,</p>	<p>18 Schreibe an den Engel der Gemeinde in Thyatira:</p> <p>So spricht der Sohn Gottes, dessen Augen wie Feuer glühen und dessen FüÙe glänzen wie gleißendes Gold:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>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:</p> <p>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;</p>	<p>18 Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira.</p> <p>This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are bright like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze:</p> <p>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</p>

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

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 σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, 28 ὡς κἀγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ 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.

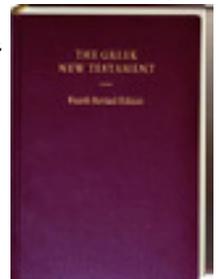
Historical Aspects:

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 191



The reading then becomes “your wife Jezebel.” This assumes that the τῷ ἀγγέλω 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}, sig¹ 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.]

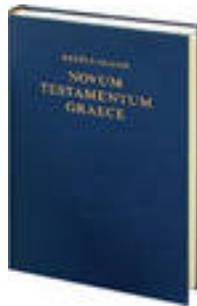
⁶{A} ἔργων αὐτῆς ⊕ C 1006 1611 1841 2050 2053 2351 Byz [P 046] it^{sig} vg^{ww, st} sy^h eth Tertullian Tyconius Beatus // ἔργων αὐτῶν A 205 209 1854 2329 2344 it^{ar, t} vg^{cl} syr^{ph} cop^{sa, bo} arm Andrew; Cyprian Ambrosiaster Apringius Primasius // omit ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς cop^{bo, mss}

[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 sy^h 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 ἀφηκάς)

* 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

* βαλω 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 ἦζω is replaced with ἀνοίξω)

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

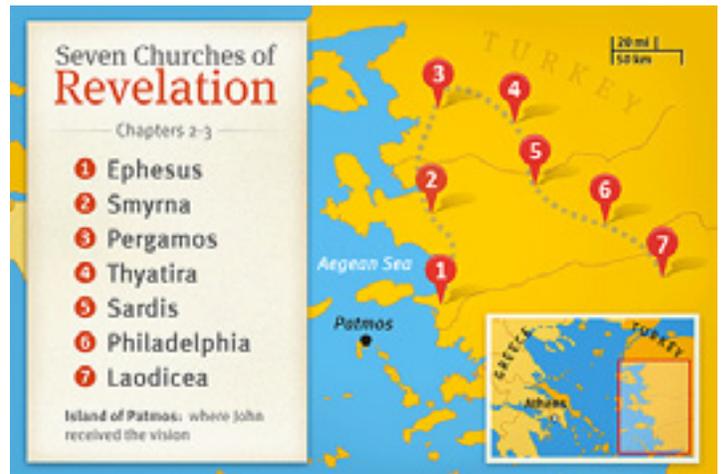
established church by Ignatius' time, was also located on the circular route which the Apocalypse presumes (situated between Laodicea and Ephesus). There is surely something significant in Revelation's addressing not simply the 'high fliers' among Asian cities, but also those which, from the empire's 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 ἑκάστῳ 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 δαιμονίοις*), *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 [*σχήμα 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 ἔμοῦς 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 PseudoPhocylides* (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 χρυσαῖα καὶ τὰ ἀργυρᾶ καὶ τὰ χαλκᾶ 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 בהדירה] *yippól bammitá bahādīrā*] 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 ἐκάστω 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 רֵזִי wyd. rzy nš.], and 'he will know the secrets of all living things [אֵי כֹל חַיִּים וְיָדַע רֵזִי כָל חַיִּים 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 ἐκάστω 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 ἐκάστω 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 ἐκάστω 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 ἑαυτοὺς 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
with an iron rod
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 πατρός 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.