

Study Six – Revelation 2:18-29

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

The imagery used to describe Jesus in Revelation does not promote intimacy! We cannot choose one aspect of God's being at the expense of the others. God is love and full of mercy, but He is also powerful and terrifying! The Israelites wanted to hear God for themselves. After He spoke, they in effect said, "Maybe that wasn't such a good idea! Moses, you talk to God and let us know what He said."

Jesus has eyes like blazing fire. In Study Five, we looked at Hebrews 4:13: **Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."**

Jesus sees it all and can "burn through" any façade, mask or charade. Trying to hide from God is something that our parents, Adam and Eve, tried to do by covering themselves with fig leaves. What a ludicrous picture! Hiding from an all-knowing, all-seeing God using leaves that will wither and crumble!

That leads to the issue of honesty. If we are honest with God about our sin or difficulty, it is not for His benefit, but for ours. God already knows what we are going to tell Him, so why hesitate! Speaking the truth will set you free and God will forgive your sin!

John wrote in his first epistle: **"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives" (1 John 1:6-10 NIV).**

What would the feet of burnished bronze symbolize? I think it is that no place is off limits to Jesus. He can go where He wants to go and that place won't affect Him at all. Burnished bronze is tested by fire and durable. That is how Jesus is! He can go to the tough places with you and walk through unscathed. We have a "tough" God. He's also not afraid of our sin and will walk there to confront us.

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

In **The Faith Files**, my study of faith in the New Testament (available at <http://www.purposequest.com/biblestudies.htm>), we studied how often faith and love are joined together in the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians 13:13, Colossians 1:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:6 and 5-8, 1 Timothy 1:14, 2 Timothy 1:13). Why is this?

Faith without some action or works is dead, as James told us in James 2:17 Talking about faith is not enough. You must do something with your faith. But what you do cannot be simply out of duty; it must be out of love. That means the focus should be on someone else and ultimately on God.

Too often my faith is self-serving instead of God- or others-serving.

Then Jesus knew about their “service and perseverance.” When you serve others, it is a death process. You die to yourself and your own way of doing things and enter into another person’s world. That requires diligence so that you won’t give up when the going gets tough.

I have often said that as we walk on with God, it requires more faith and not less. When your children are young you need diaper faith; when they are older you need university-tuition faith. If faith requires action, then this greater faith requires greater deeds. Jesus told this church they were doing more than at first, and He commended them for it.

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

Well, so much for the good news. Jesus has something against this church as well. They are tolerating some woman called Jezebel who is causing trouble. There are always seducing and beguiling forces that beset the Church. Jesus can identify with the Church’s temptation, but He will not excuse their sin.

When Jesus said that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church, he didn’t say the gates of hell wouldn’t try to prevail! The Church in Revelation was under attack from the Nicolaitans and Jezabel. The Church is still under attack from false doctrines and seducing spirits. Protect us, Lord Jesus! I often pray, “Lord, keep me from weirdness. Protect me from strange doctrines that don’t help people but that appear spiritual.”

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

What do we know about Jezebel?

1. She was a daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. Ahab, king of Israel, married her. As her father's name suggests, she was a worshipper of Baal. Baal literally means "lord" and was the god of the sun. Baal was worshiped for his provision and his destructive powers. Although the Baal cult had many dimensions, there were sexual overtones to much of the worship that took place.
2. When Jezebel became queen, she began killing the Lord's prophets and replacing them with Baal prophets, supported by the royal treasury.
3. During her reign, Elijah the prophet appeared on the scene and had the famous confrontation with the Baal prophets in 1 Kings 18. When Jezebel heard what Elijah had done and how many of her prophets he had killed, she promised to have him killed (see 1 Kings 19:2). Elijah, who had confronted hundreds of false prophets and won, ran for his life. This gives you an idea of how intimidating this woman was. Elijah ran when confronted with the possibility of facing this woman!
4. Later she conspired with the elders of a town to steal the vineyard of a man named Naboth by having the man falsely accused and killed. This is why many say that a spirit of confiscation and theft is connected with the spirit of Jezebel.
5. Ahab, Jezebel's husband, was a wicked man of whom the Bible says: "There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by his wife Jezebel." (1 Kings 21:25).
6. When Jezebel was killed, she was thrown down from her tower and, before they could claim the body, dogs had eaten it! (see 2 Kings 9) This end had been prophesied and predicted, but Jezebel had ignored those predictions and continued her adulterous liaison with the Baal god. In Revelation, God gave this "Jezebel" time to repent as well, but she refused.
7. The word Jezebel is used today to describe a controlling woman given to control through any means of manipulation, which of course is a form of witchcraft.

When the Holy Spirit wanted to use a graphic metaphor for the religious idolatry in the church at Thyatira, He used the name Jezebel. That said it all.

What does this mean for the church today?

1. There are false prophets in the world and the church must distinguish between the true and the false. False prophets are known by their fruit. They use illegitimate sources of divine revelation and issue prophecies that don't come true. False prophets do not speak for God, although some sound like they do.
2. All prophecy must be judged not only for what is said but according to who says it. In Acts, there was a slave girl who had a spirit of divination (see Acts 16:16-19). What she said was true, but Paul still cast the spirit out of the girl. It wasn't enough that she spoke the truth; Paul discerned of what spirit she spoke. The church needs to do the same.
3. Prophecy needs to be judged, not received as the infallible voice of God. Paul wrote: "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything, {carefully} hold fast to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil"(1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 NAS). Why include a command **not** to despise prophecy unless there would be the tendency to do so?
4. The modern Church either despises or is enamored by prophecy. The Biblical position is to be neither. A prophet can stir things up and that is not always bad. Historically that is what they have done. And the prophet is one of the five-fold ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. But a prophet can speak out of his or her own understanding and that is always limited. That is why all prophecy needs to be judged.
5. There are some prophets more accurate than others.
6. Just because God tolerates something doesn't mean He approves of it. He is slow to anger so that all may have a chance to repent.

22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.

There is suffering for good and suffering for evil. The followers of Jezebel will suffer for their evil.

Those who join with anyone or anything other than God are considered adulterers, becoming intimate with one other than their avowed partner.

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

That is about as strong a statement as you will find in the Bible! God will strike someone dead for not heeding His warning and leading His people astray.

He will do this to judge those so given and to warn those who have a tendency to stray. God is always teaching in what He does.

God repays good with good, and evil with judgment.

24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):

Those who did not hold to her teaching were exempt from the Lord's judgment. This is reminiscent of Moses coming down from the mountain.

Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt." As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions. They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!" And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense (Numbers 16:28-35 NIV).

Our God is an awesome God, in love and mercy, and in power and judgment.

25 Only hold on to what you have until I come.

The gospel of Jesus is not complicated, but it is impossible for sinful man to obey with human effort or understanding. You can only obtain spirituality through spiritual means, not natural or carnal means.

"Lord Jesus, we need your help to stay obedient and free from distractions and deception. Teach us how to follow you in the power of the Spirit and not our own strength. We want to hold on to what you have given us until You come. Amen."

The early church believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime. Much of today's church believes the Lord will return in this lifetime. The early church was wrong. We will see if the modern church is wrong. Someone once said, "We must act like the Lord will return tomorrow, but work like He will return in the next generation."

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

This promise is from Psalm 2, which reads in its entirety:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him (NIV).

The Church and followers of God will rule the earth, if not in this life, then the next. The Revelation Church was encouraged with the promise that this present life was "training for reigning" and "schooling for ruling."

I personally do not believe that the Church will reign in this age, but in the one to come.

- 28 I will also give him the morning star.**

The morning star shines brightly before the sun appears. It is a sign in the heavens that darkness may reign but light is coming. Jesus was a bright star in the midst of great darkness. That is also the legacy of the Church. We will not extinguish the darkness completely, but we are a sign that something better is coming.

For those who overcome, God will give them encouragement that better days are ahead.

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

Are you listening to what the Spirit is saying? That doesn't mean you become strange or irrelevant, but that you are listening and sensitive to the Spirit. How is your journal coming along?