

Thyatira

1. "You tolerate that woman Jezebel"
 - a. In the last letter and this letter the church is once again associated with Israel's history in Balaam. Now we have reverence to Jezebel. It's pretty easy to assume that the woman being referred to was not literally named Jezebel but rather is being associated with that queen of Israel. See 1 Kings 16:31-33, 18:3-5, 19, 19:1-3, 21:1-16, 23-26, 2 Kings 9:7-10, 22, 30-37. There are few things worse you could call someone besides a "Jezebel"!
 - b. "Calls herself a prophet", in other words she is a "false prophet". She "leads astray" or "deceives" the people. There are numerous verses warning about "false prophets" leading the people astray: 2 Peter 2, Matthew 7:15, 24:9-14, 23-24, Rev 19:20, 20:10. This work of "deceiving" throughout the Bible is spoken of with some of the strongest words of condemnation.
 - c. The language here of fornication is the typical language used in the Old Testament of Israel's offense against God. It need not in this case imply literal sexual sin, but that isn't impossible either. Once again, as in Pergamum the issue seems to be connected with pagan feast participation. In this case the context may well more be the trade guilds rather than the cult of the emperor as in Pergamum.
 - d. It is important to recognize here the judgment against economic activity here. This was also clearly present in the Old Testament condemnations. Again, we shouldn't just focus on the "worshiping the wrong gods" element of this but also where all of this leads. The worshiping other gods was not simply a choice of religious preference, it was also almost always an expression of desire for military (in the OT) and economic supremacy over one's adversaries. The world works on power and economic power is central in one's desire for hegemony. This is what empire is all about. Military power and economic power are intricately linked and don't necessarily care anything for justice or for the poor. A reading of OT highlights that wealth and power are always given by God for service to the community and especially for bringing justice and healing to the poor. The language of "adultery" was used also for this in the OT prophets.
 - e. "I gave her time to repent but she did not wish to repent from her adulteries." Apparently this had been going on for a while.
 - f. "Throwing her on a bed" can mean a judgment by illness. This whole phrase again may very well mean economic rather than literal sexual sin.
 - g. "Jezebel" and those who have committed adultery with her are warned of a "great tribulation" if they don't repent from their works. "Tribulation" has shown up frequently. It is seen as part of John's life 1:9 together with "I John, your brother and co-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance in Jesus". In 2:9,10 it is what the Christians in the church of Smyrna are enduring in persecution. Here "Jezebel" even has a chance of a reprieve if she repents.
 - h. "Striking their children dead" is also common in the OT as a sign of judgment. To be "cut off" was to be without an inheritance. Again, this language has meaning within the whole matrix of value and meaning in the ancient world. Remember in Genesis the issues with "barrenness". These themes ring throughout the Old Testament. For those without the hope of resurrection about the best they can do is a family that preserves them. For the Greeks it was a name or renown. This is not a statement about God killing children, but

rather “Jezebel” and her followers who are trying to establish life on their own find that they have no security and now future. God’s judgment in this situation will be for the benefit of all the churches.

- i. See Jeremiah 17:1-13 as the background both for the children being cut off and the God who searches hearts and minds. “I am, he that searches hearts and minds.” The “I am” connects to the LORD. Again, this “adulteries” of this “Jezebel” are seen in the light of the history of Israel and the prophets.
 - j. “I will give to each of you according to your works” How should we understand this? Once again the question of good works as fruit or qualification.
2. “The rest of you in Thyatira”
 - a. Apparently not all had followed this “Jezebel”, again this also echoes the OT story.
 - b. “‘The deep things of Satan’ as its called”: This may be a twisting of the claim of this teacher, perhaps that what she is instructing them is “the deep things of God”.
 - c. The language here of “I do not lay upon you” echoes directly the warning of verse 11 where the Son of Man lays “Jezebel in the bed”. Not laying on them another burden may refer to Acts 15:18-19. See the word list sheet on “burden”.
 - d. Only “hold fast”. Again, this is a repeated theme in Revelation. See also how it echoes Ephesians 6.
 3. “To the conquerors and those who keep watch over my works until the end”
 - a. “Keeping watch until the end over my works”
 - i. How is “works” used here? We find “works” again and again in the NT in the sense of “results”. This comes through in John’s gospel very clearly where Jesus keeps referring to “the works” of Jesus and of the Father. We also find “the works” of the devil.
 - (1) In John 6:29 “This is the work of God, that you believe in him wh he has sent” can give something of the flavor of this word.
 - (2) John 9:3,4 is interesting in this
 - (3) John 10:25-38.
 - ii. We see churches here again and again measured by their “works”, but we get the sense that these “works” aren’t exactly what we understand them to be in English.
 4. We return now to Psalm 2.
 - a. John clearly wants to see the people find their situation in the context of John 2. In the Psalm it is one small nation struggling survival. Notice how the frame is changed now that it is a struggling church in the midst of “the nations”.
 - b. “Received authority from my father” consider in the light of Matthew 28:18
 - c. The reference to the star also speaks of resurrection and shining like the stars.
 - d. On the morning star see Number 24:17 and Rev 22:16