

Rev 25-10-22a

Greetings, welcome to Wednesday night Bible study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 22nd of October 2025. We're continuing our study in the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

We are in the center and latter portions of chapter two. We have looked at the churches in Ephesus and Smyrna. We are looking at Pergamos and Thyatira, getting ready to jump into chapter three with the church at Sardis.

We have much to see tonight regarding the doctrine of Balaam, the teachings of Jezebel and what that means to us, how it relates to what is going on in our world today in the Christian faith today and the explicit fulfillments of what Jesus said here and elsewhere. We'll be taking a trip back to the Old Testament. We're going to be looking at 1 John.

The scripture is replete with insight and application for us with regard to what Jesus says here, specifically to these three churches, Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira. So helpful for us in the time in which we live, the issues that we face, the strong winds that are blowing ships about because they are rudderless and have become disconnected from the faith. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study.

We'll begin. Father, we are so grateful that you have given us a solid rock to build our lives on. We have a firm hold on the truth that enables us to weather every storm, whether they come from within or outside.

The church itself, the fellow Christians with whom we have interaction and dialogue, we pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, the very words of the Lord Jesus directed to us, that God the Holy Spirit will enable us to be good hearers and therefore good doers of the word, and that we can enter into that wonderful realm of opportunity of overcoming by our faith, sustaining ourselves in service and function to be ready for the challenges that come our way in this life and the next. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Beginning with a quick read just of this latter portion, looking at the church, it's labeled the compromising church in my New King James, to the angel of the church in Pergamos, the messenger, right? We know these are not winged messengers from heaven. These are earthly sandaled and booted messengers here on the earth. These are the pastors of the churches both then and now to the messenger of the church in Pergamos, right? These things says he who has the sharp two edged sword.

We know what this sword is. We know it from other scriptures. If these people in the Roman province of Asia had somehow not received the letters of Paul, there might be some doubt, but the Lord Jesus knows and his amanuensis, his scribe, his transcriber here knows that these people are well aware.

Jesus knows the content of Paul's writings. John knows the contents. John followed Paul in

Ephesus and elsewhere in this area.

And he knows that they know the Lord Jesus is the source of all apostolic testimony. And the Lord Jesus knows that these people are well familiar, that the word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword, that in the full armor of God that Paul described, the sword of the spirit is the word of God. So this sharp two edged sword emanating from the mouth of the visionary Lord Jesus, and this thing is not a weird blade looking like a long tongue coming forth from his mouth in the vision.

This is hovering, in my view, in front of his mouth. This is not a weird and distorted figure, but his speech directs this sword. This is a voice activated sword, if you will.

His words, they don't stay in his mouth. They're not partially in his mouth like a partially emerging blade. The Lord Jesus speaks and this is a sharp two edged sword.

So if you want to envision this the way John saw it, I would suggest you see a sword that travels through the air and is directed expertly with surgical precision so that these sharp edges do their work. And cleave and open up what might formerly have been mysterious or invisible. So that is the vision.

He who has the two edged sword, I know your works. I know where you dwell, where Satan's seat is, and you hold fast to my name. You did not deny my faith, even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful martyr.

You get the idea that the local government incited by the local population and supported by them made an example of Antipas hoping to cow the rest of this relatively small group into submission and compliance to get them to be quiet and go away. You see similar efforts made today with the ongoing use of cancel culture and threats of violence and using names to identify those who ought to be purged out and utterly rejected and not listened to. Even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful witness, I would scratch out martyr and put witness.

Marturas primary meaning is witness and he was killed. If he was martyred, you don't have to say it twice. He was a witness and he was killed for that witness in your midst where Satan dwells.

This is bracketed by Satan. This was incited by Satan. I think much of what we see in our society, in our culture today is incited by Satan.

And regardless of political affiliation, anyone who engages in personal attack, vilifies, scorns, bitterly associates their opponents with vileness and the worst that history has to offer. Anybody with any point of view that does that has run out of valid philosophical, political or social arguments and has to engage in ad hominem, in personal attack. Uh, you're out of ammo and you're throwing your weapon at your opponent.

When you engage in this kind of cheap shot, drag their name through the mud, try to get them

to be discredited, discredit the person instead of engaging their argument or their point of view. And you can find valid points of view and biblically sound approaches to problems that are not necessarily restricted to one or another side in the political landscape. Uh, we should not decide that our first filter is, well, did this come from this party or that party from this left or this right point of view we should lead with.

What does a biblical worldview say about this idea or this persuasion or this point of view or this course of action? Is this something that is going to stand up if it's acted on by believers? And then we're standing before the judgment seat of Christ. What is the Lord Jesus going to say about these words and these actions and these points of view and these types of effort to influence public discourse and political policies and international policies and so on? What does the Lord think? That's the criteria that counts. The only one that counts for any believer worth his salt.

So Satan dwells, Satan is behind these attacks. It's, there's no greater personal attack than to kill or try to kill somebody. Uh, that's as bad as it gets.

Uh, and you have to look at who is the perpetrator. To what extent are they representative of the group they claim membership in? How approved are they? Uh, this guy that shot the insurance CEO has tens of thousands of supporters and followers who donate money to go fund me and, uh, interact with his online AI avatar and celebrate his action in murdering this husband and father in cold blood because of the man's association with something they disagree with high healthcare costs or something. And it's one thing for a wacko to do something violent, but when people approve and applaud and support and donate to such a person and celebrate them in, in the public fora, that is not just guilt by association.

That is virtually an accessory after the fact. This is what Satan does. Jesus says, you have held fast to my name.

You have not denied the faith. That's a good thing, but I have a few things against you. You have there, those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things, sacrifice to idols and to commit sexual immorality.

Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. And we looked at this in detail last time, and I want you to circle in verse 14, those who hold the doctrine of Balaam or just underline the words, those who, and in verse 15, those who hold the doctrine. Repent or else I will come to you quickly in verse 16 and we'll fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Notice if we had any doubt that there is a direct and intentional association between the way Jesus introduces himself at the letter, which elements of the chapter one vision, he aims directly at these groups. He who has the sharp two edged sword, you're supposed to bring that into the body of the letter, which Jesus himself does here. I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Now, notice you think, well, a sword, this is violence. It's sword swinging and we'll help Jesus. We're his body.

We'll hold a sword and start, you know, stoning these people and doing like Calvin and executing people that have doctrinal differences. What is the sword of Jesus mouth? It is the truth, the weapon to engage with and refute, repudiate, rebut. These who are teaching false doctrine is the truth.

You hit them with the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. It's a spiritual sword. It is not a literal sword.

There is no call under any circumstances for Christians to act like the Catholics did centuries ago in physically persecuting, torturing, and killing those who don't agree with their doctrine. This is heinous. We are going to see more about this as we move through the book.

And you will be shocked at what we are going to see a bit later. It suffices here because this is as much as Jesus has said. So many people want to go import Babylon and the woman riding the beast that has not been covered yet.

We are endeavoring to move through the way Jesus intended this vision to unfold. And in the same way, when you're sitting on the couch with a bowl of popcorn, watching a movie, you don't want somebody saying, guess what this guy's going to do, you know, in an hour from now. You know, he's really trusted here, but he's the bad guy.

You don't want somebody spoiling the ending. Let the story unfold the way the teller has chosen to tell it. And so we are free to look at previous writing.

We can anticipate because we are familiar, we have seen and read this book through in the past. And because it is written, Jesus told John to write these things. Blessed is he that reads, blessed is he who hears.

It is to be taken in an entirety. It is designed to be looked at more than once. So we're on solid ground recognizing that some of these things will be covered later in the book.

But for interpretive purposes, if the latter chapters fell off and you only had Revelation one, two, and three, we should be able to understand this without resort to chapter 17 and so on. So fight with them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches, to him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.

Now we are going to look at these things together with what Jesus says to the next church, because they are of a piece. We can save time looking at them together. So let's put the hidden manna on hold for now and the white stone and the new name, which no one knows except him who receives it.

That leads us to the next church in verse 18, the church in Thyatira. What do you know about

our chiastic structure here? We've documented that in detail. Thyatira is the center of the chiasm.

It is number four out of seven, three preceded, three follow it. It is the longest letter. And in some ways it is the most telling, the most significant for us.

So to the messenger of the church in Thyatira, right? These things says the son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and his feet like fine brass. You remember, and I haven't reviewed this during the course of this study, but what were the accouterments that were used by the Levitical priests to operate the brazen altar and the rest of the sacrificial system at the tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament? What were they made of? Were they made of gold? Were they made of silver? They were made of brass. The altar is made of brass.

The great sea where they wash is made of brass. Why? Brass is fire resistant. It doesn't melt.

You can take a brass bowl and you can melt gold or you can melt silver in it. But brass, because of its components, nickel and copper and so on, they have much higher melting points. And this is why it took a while to arrive in the bronze age or the brass age.

And the iron age, iron itself requires even hotter temperatures. And this was all about the technology to make things hot. And if you've ever seen the old steel industry videos from decades gone by back when Pittsburgh and other places were iron and steel works.

And you remember these great big vats and how hot it was with all of this molten metal. Brass in the ancient day was used when you had to deal with fire because it doesn't melt. Instead, it reflects the heat.

It reflects the light and is therefore associated with fire as a symbol of judgment. So when you see eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass, these are the two components. You've got the fire and you've got the brass, which when it's shiny, it reflects this incredibly bright fire and it isn't going to melt in the presence of the fire.

And it's a different metaphor when you talk about gold, silver, and precious stones that survive, that's not quite as hot a fire. And I find it suggestive that this is just a suggestion that when Paul is talking about the wood, hay, and stubble and the gold, silver, and precious stones that come through the fire, that fire of judgment for believers, the judgment seat of Christ is evidently not as hot as the judgment that is coming on the world because the gold and silver don't melt in the judgment seat of Christ fire. This fire that is coming on the unbelieving world is going to incinerate everything and seems to be much hotter.

You've got to have brass in use to manage this fire and so on. Just a thought. Feet like fine brass.

I know your works, your love, your service, your patience. As for your works, the last are more than the first. So Thyatira compared to Ephesus, they're not just continuing their works, they

have increased their works and they are commended for their love and their faith.

Nevertheless, few things against you because you allow, you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. Now, this is what we're going to look at because idolatry in the first century of this era form doesn't really exist today. You don't have temples to Ashtar and Jove and Jupiter and Zeus and these other entities, the Greek and Roman pantheon are not worshipped in any serious way today.

And yet these are used in scripture because they are metaphors. Eating what is sacrificed to idols and this fornication, if the food offered to idols is metaphorical, so is the fornication. Not to say that the literal performance of these wouldn't fall under the same condemnation, but when it says, teaches my servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols, we are looking at spiritual truths.

They may be literally expressed, but it's not limited to that. It is primarily the spiritual truth that is in view here. Verse 21, I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality and she did not repent.

Indeed, I will cast her into a sick bed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds. Now, this covered last time a little bit of a special on the partial rapture idea. I am not saying I subscribe to that.

I'm saying it is a sobering idea. Uh, that's a fancy way of saying, I don't yet know fully what I think about this. I'm in the process of digesting it.

I don't like to depart from solid, uh, traditional understandings that are well reinforced and based on doctrine have been reviewed and understood by conservative scholarship for a long time. But there is a warning note here. I want you to notice in verse 20, my servants, Jezebel is teaching my servants.

We talked about my servants at length when we did chapter one, the first few verses, God gives this revelation to his son, the Lord Jesus Christ to show his servants what is coming up. My servants, not just any old body, my servants, you get the idea in Thyatira. These who are notable for their works, their love, their faith, their service, and their patience.

These are Christ's servants. Their latter works are greater than the beginning. They're, they're maturing.

They're getting on with it. They're bearing more fruit. God prunes them and they bear more fruit to, to use the vine and branches example that Jesus gives in the gospel of John.

But remember up above, we circled those who hold the doctrine of Balaam and those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. And here you allow that woman Jezebel to teach and seduce. You allow her to teach and seduce.

Now stop and think about this. I suggested this last time, but this is really important because this is the third time that this has been emphasized. It's actually the fourth time.

If you count the works of the Nicolaitans back up in Ephesus, you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which things I also hate. But if you go to most commentaries and I've visited scads of them over the course of recent weeks, looking to see how do people deal with the text of these letters? It is almost universally missed. People don't pay enough attention to the great hermeneutical principle that you can observe a lot by watching.

Pay close attention to what Jesus says. Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and the Lord Jesus is God. More on that in a bit.

He doesn't say, I have this against you. You are practicing the doctrine of Balaam. You are committing fornication.

You are eating meat offered to idols. What is the condemnation of the church? It isn't you all have compromised with the world. You're going along to getting along.

That's not the condemnation. Jesus goes to the root cause. You have there those who teach these things.

The teaching is the problem. Look again at verse 14. You have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak, taught Balak.

You have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. The doctrine leads to the deeds that you see in Ephesus. Nicolaitanism is a view.

It's a set of beliefs. It's persuasions. It is teachings.

It's doctrines. Remember the condemnation Jesus said about the Pharisees and the other spiritual leaders in Israel? You teach as doctrines the traditions of men. It isn't the word of God that you're making into doctrines.

You're making traditions into doctrines. And doctrines result in practice. And so when you get to Thyatira, you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach.

You let her teach. You let her seduce My servants. You've got a group of My servants, and unlike those in Ephesus, you haven't identified her as a false prophet or prophetess and ejected her and gotten her out.

Ephesus has got that right, but they lost their central focus on love. And they've got to recover that love and do their works the way they did them, out of love. Jesus does not condemn the Thyatiran church for engaging in fornication and eating meat offered to idols.

He castigates them for allowing Jezebel to teach those things. That's the root of the problem. I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not.

I will cast her into a sickbed, the teacher. Remember when we went through the Pauline passage in Corinthians about those who teach are the ones whose works are going to be tested by fire. Unless they repent, I will cast her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her.

Now, it sounds like they are adulterating with Jezebel. No, she is committing adultery, verse 21. She needs to repent of her own spiritual immorality.

It started with her. She adulterated herself, and now she is teaching others and they are adulterating themselves. Not with each other.

They are committing adultery. When it says with her, it's along with her. She's committing adultery.

She has taught them. They are committing the same kind of adultery she is. It's not between them, if you get my drift.

And I gave her time to repent. She did not repent. I'm going to cast her into a sickbed and others who commit that same kind of adultery.

I will toss them into a sickbed unless they repent. I gave her time and she did not. The teacher is a lost cause.

Those she has taught, I'm telling them they are going to be cast into a sickbed. Once again, the sickbed is metaphorical. Unless they repent of their deeds, she had a period of time.

The door of the ark is open. You can change your mind. You can come in and repent.

She's a lost cause. I gave her time to repent and she did not. The idea is that time is up and she is going to be cast into a sickbed.

Those that she has taught, the door of repentance is still open. They need to repent or I'm going to throw them into the same sickbed that she is going to be thrown into for sure. And all of this bed imagery we'll talk about after the break.

I will kill her children with death and all the churches shall know that I am he who searches the minds and hearts. Notice, this is a mind and heart issue. And these physical expressions are metaphorical.

They are spiritual in their import. I will give each one of you according to your works, each one of you, not just those that have been seduced by Jezebel. So time for us to take our break.

But here's the point. In Smyrna, and you notice I've been sort of emphasizing Ephesus and then Pergamos and then Thyatira. And we sort of skipped over Smyrna because Smyrna does not have this problem.

They are under persecution and their entire focus is be faithful unto death and keep your eyes on that crown of life. I put on you no other burden. Just stay faithful.

Your issue is incredible hardship. People look at you and say, poor, fill in your name here. Literally, you are poor.

Jesus says you're actually rich. And because you are rich, you are qualified for the kind of testing that the church in Laodicea is completely unqualified for. They think they're rich and they're poor, miserable, blind and naked.

You look poor, but you are actually rich. And because you have spiritual resources, because you have content in your soul and you have secure treasure in heaven, now the durability of your faith, the quality of your faith is going to be on display. I'm going to let Satan lock you up for 10 days.

Limited time. Trust me, it won't last longer than 10 days. Be faithful, even unto death, like Antipas.

You're going to get the crown of life. Momentary light affliction, eternal weight of glory. That's Smyrna.

But Ephesus and Pergamos and Thyatira are being attacked from within. Smyrna's attack seems to be from outside. Their faith is secure.

How durable is that faith under external pressure? Ephesus, Nicolaitans, Pergamos, Nicolaitans, Doctrine of Balaam, Thyatira, Doctrine of Jezebel, Teaching of Jezebel, Seduction of Jezebel. These are things from within. Jesus warns them.

Jesus evaluates them. Jesus encourages them with the truth of the Word, with describing the outcomes of allowing this internal attack to continue. They have not identified those who hold and kicked them out, purged them out, pushed them out, repudiated and refuted them.

Jesus is going to deal with them with the sword of his mouth. But they cannot tolerate this kind of teaching. It is the teaching that is the problem.

Tolerating the presence and the talk, the seductive, persuasive, false doctrine teaching. Same thing Paul warned Timothy and Titus about is going on in these churches. So what is the application for us? We have to be extremely careful that we listen to God when he speaks in his Word.

And like a counterfeit money agent, the treasury agents, they don't teach, they don't show them every different kind of counterfeit. They show them all of the characteristics of an actual genuine piece of U.S. currency. And when they look at any false bill, any counterfeit, they can spot it because it doesn't have the characteristics of the real thing.

And by immersing ourselves, praying back God's truth to him in our prayer that is with the

frequency of a hacking cough, we pray without ceasing. We commit every new question, every challenge, every circumstance, every opportunity to the Lord and we think our way through based on truth. Our familiarity with the truth will enable us not only to identify false teaching, but to reject it, to purge it, to push it hence.

And we do not maintain fellowship with those who hold perverse views. These are theological views. They are tolerated in the church, whether it is compromise with the world, whether it is to go along to get along, whether it is to be accepting and tolerant of those who worship idols and commit fornication.

This isn't shame on you for doing these things. Jesus says, shame on you for tolerating those who promote these things. Get back to the source that says it's okay.

The doctrine is the problem. Obviously the deeds are wrong, but you're not getting rid of those who espouse it, who hold it, who preach it and endeavor to teach others that it's okay. Well, this is the hazard.

And in our Christian community, because it is now online and you can touch souls with almost any Christian on the planet via technology, we have to be forewarned and don't truck with those who embrace these ideas. We are going to see specifically how this works when we come back from the break.