

**Christ, the Omniscient Purifier**  
REVELATION 2:18–29

INTRODUCTION

Weddings are such wonderful occasions. If you are married think back to the days leading up to you and your spouse's big day. You have spent time planning and preparing whether it be choosing colors for the groomsman and bridesmaids, or deciding on a venue, or choosing to have a unity smoothie instead of a unity candle (yes, I know of a couple who has done that!). Weddings bring a sense of "feel-good" vibes, most certainly. However, one of the most precious things about a wedding is the symbolism sprinkled throughout it. Most notably the bride's dress is typically pure white, a symbol of her fidelity and purity to her new husband. The rings are a token of the covenant which the man and woman make to each other, a covenant of faithfulness through the good and bad times of marriage. Imagine, then, how devastating it would be to learn that your spouse has broken that covenant of faithfulness at any point in the relationship (whether before or after marriage).

Sadly, such has been the actions of Christ's own bride, the church. So many within the church at large seem to disregard the priority of our Groom to have a bride that is *pure*.

**Ephesians 5:25–28** Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

The spirit of the age today is that of *tolerance*. Love and accept everyone for who they are—be who you want to be, believe what you want to believe. This post-modern relativism has touched Christ's bride to the point that those who claim to be Christians will tolerate false teachings and unholy actions.

To Christ, purity of His bride is important. So what will Jesus do when his church adopts the practices and teachings of the pagan world around them? What will He do to preserve His bride?

**TRUTH: Christ will purify His tolerant church.**

**Revelation 2:18–29** And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels

of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.<sup>1</sup>

Christ introduces Himself as the one whose eyes are like a flame of fire. This picture conveys the clarity with which He sees through the evil ways of all people. He intimately knows us even when we think we are hiding from His gaze. His feet are like burnished bronze indicating his powerful, swift judgment. He is the omniscient purifier.

*How will Christ purify His tolerant church? What will He do? The text before suggests two general actions Christ will take in purifying His church.*

## I. CHRIST WILL JUDGE THE WICKED

Christ will not tolerate the the tolerant. Though some might suggest that Jesus identifies the exact name of a woman within their midst it is more likely that he assigns to this woman a symbolic name, *Jezebel*. Jewish people with any ounce of knowledge knew the significance of the name *Jezebel* as it relates to Israel's history. Jezebel was the wicked wife of King Ahab. Her wicked influence on Ahab and Israel at large had a devastating impact on the nation of Israel. Her end was as dramatic as her life: she was through from a window to the pavement below and killed. Wilds dogs licked up the blood from where her demise took place. To name a daughter Jezebel would be as much a taboo as naming a son *Judas* or *Hitler* would be today. Yet whatever the exact identity of this woman may have been, the designation which Christ applies suggests the extent of the wicked influence this woman had within the church in Thyatira.

Christ condemns this woman for two things: (1) false teaching, and (2) evil influence. First, the false teachings of this woman (who gave herself the appellation "prophetess") seemed to be a direct contradiction to the teachings of sound doctrine in the body of Holy Scripture. This woman taught and even encouraged the people in the church in Thyatira to commit fornication (v. 20). Why would anyone attempt to teach something to plainly contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture? The answer is simple: *her teachings were precisely what some in the congregation wanted to hear*. Second, the woman taught and encouraged the people in the congregation to eat things sacrificed to idols. Now Jesus is not contradicting the words which Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 8–10. The distinct implication here seems to be that she was encouraging people to worship not the one true God but the pagan gods of people around them. In other words, she encouraged these Christians to eat things offered to idols *as an act of worship to those false deities*.

The Old Testament Law in no uncertain terms condemns sexual immorality. For example:

**Exodus 20:14** Thou shalt not commit adultery. [see also Deut. 5:18]

The Old Testament is not the only Scriptural comment concerning sexual purity. On the contrary, Christians are called by the Apostle Paul to a life of holiness with regards to sexual purity.

**1 Thessalonians 4:3–7** For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Furthermore, the Law also stipulates exclusive worship of the Lord—no exceptions.

**Exodus 20:3–6** Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath,

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations taken from the King James Version.

or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

The Old Testament Law combined with the New Testament reiterations serve as a one-two gut punch of condemnation for those who violate these principles. And such is Christ's response to the prophetess and her "children" (i.e., those who adhere to and propagate her teachings). The Risen Lord gave her time to repent—an act of mercy no sinners deserve. But she refused to repent, so Christ assured the church in Thyatira that He will throw her into a sickbed and destroy those who follow her wicked words and ways. Such is the result of tolerating and embracing false teaching, most of which are from "the deep things of Satan."

Fidelity to the purity of orthodox teaching (i.e., teaching that is biblically sound) is a pearl of priceless treasure in the American culture today. So many people who sit in the pews of churches are by their lifestyles tolerating the teachings of our modern day *Jezebel*. How many of us must admit to a tolerance of evil within the church at large? Of course we have a responsibility to be a salt and light in the culture which we live. However, much of the average Christian's everyday life seems to be a modern acceptance, *tolerance*, of evil teachings and practice. Whether in our entertainment choices, our personal conversation at the workplace or school, or our minds during times of relaxation, we have (perhaps without realizing it) tolerated the spirit of Jezebel in our own day. Do not think that the flaming eyes of the omniscient Christ do not see our infidelity to Him. He desires for His bride to be chaste and will purify her at all costs. His feet of bronze will swiftly bring judgment unless we repent. If you have succumbed to the spirit of Jezebel in our day, learn from Jezebel's hard heart and repent while there still is time! The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope for those who are in the grasp of such evil.

*While Christ will judge the wicked for their toleration of evil heresies and practices, there is a commendation for the ones who will hold fast to orthodox teaching and holy practice —*

## II. CHRIST WILL REWARD THE FAITHFUL

The Lord did not say that the entire church in Thyatira tolerating these teachings of Jezebel. There were some whose garments remained unstained. What did Christ promise these people? "I place no other burden on you" (v. 24, NASB). What sweet words these are to the sin-weary soul. While we live in this life we are pilgrims in a foreign and perverse land. We walk through the sludge of sin. Always the Lord has had His remnant of faithful. The remnant in Thyatira received a promise from Christ which is reminiscent of a previous comment He made while on earth:

**Matthew 11:28–30** Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Of course the faithful few in Thyatira had burdens but Christ assured them that He placed no other burdens than those that were necessary to purify His bride. All who long to live holy lives to Christ will find such a sweet solace in this phrase.

Those who were faithful also heard a command from Christ: "What you have, hold fast until I come" (v. 25, NASB). It is this exhortation which the church in every age must heed. Hold fast to the faithful teachings of Scripture which you hear proclaimed. What will our reward be? The One Who comes—Jesus Christ Himself! Christ will be our reward. Many scholars believe that the reference to "morning star" is a reference to Jesus Christ Himself since He describes Himself as such later in this revelation:

**Revelation 22:16** I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Our reward for faithfulness to Jesus Christ will be none other than our Lord Himself. What a sweet promise to the faithful in a church and age of tolerance!

#### CONCLUSIONS

What will Christ do to preserve His bride? He will purify His tolerant church. Therefore, we must hold fast to the faithful teachings of the Word and look for the day when we will receive our blessed reward, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.