

The Book of Revelation

The Church that Tolerated Jezebel

Chapter 2:18-29

The Church that Tolerated Jezebel

Revelation 2:18-29

The name Jezebel is infamous and rightly so. She was probably the most wicked queen in Israel's history; we find her treacherous behavior described in 2 Kings 9. She was "the power behind the throne" as the wife of the weak and wimpish King Ahab. She led her husband to worship pagan gods (1 Kgs 16:31), kill God's prophets (1 Kgs 18:13), and murder a righteous and plain man named Naboth for his vineyard (1 Kgs 21).

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She was evil personified, and when God chastised a church for allowing false teaching into His body, He said they were “tolerating the woman Jezebel” (Rev 2:20). It has been well said, “We name our sons David and Paul, and our daughters Mary and Rachel, but we name our dogs Goliath and Nero; and we name our cats Jezebel!” A Jezebel church is not a compliment.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Doctrinal and theological compromise is always a danger to the health, vitality, and survival of the church. It can be like “spiritual kudzu” once it is allowed in. It will spread out of control, sucking the life out of every living organism it touches.

Our Lord knew this, so He has a stern word for His people. Here is “tough love” on full display! It may not be easy to hear, but often it is absolutely necessary and for our good.

The Church that Tolerated Jezebel

Revelation 2:18-29

To resist false teaching....

1. Study the fruit of its followers (18-21)
2. Survey the burdens it places on its followers (22-24)
3. Stay committed to what you have (25-29)

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Revelation 2:18-29

There is a basic and common literary pattern of 5 parts:

- 1) The addressee and a **characterization** of Christ from the vision of chapter 1
- 2) Christ's knowledge of the church's condition and a word of **commendation**;
- 3) A word of reproof or **correction**;
- 4) A word of exhortation or **council**;
- 5) A word of promise which presents a hopeful **challenge**.

The Church that Tolerated Jezebel

Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:18-19 (CSB)

18 “Write to the angel of the church in Thyatira: Thus says the Son of God, the one whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine bronze: 19 I know your works — your love, faithfulness, service, and endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:20-21 (CSB)

20 But I have this against you: You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:22-23 (CSB)

22 Look, I will throw her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction. Unless they repent of her works, 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:24-26 (CSB)

24 I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who haven't known "the so-called secrets of Satan" — as they say — I am not putting any other burden on you. 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come. 26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works to the end: I will give him authority over the nations —

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:27-29 (CSB)

27 and he will rule them with an iron scepter;

he will shatter them like pottery —

28 just as I have received this from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.

29 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

**The Path
Through the 7
Churches
will take
place
Clockwise
from Ephesus**



modern day
TURKEY

Pergamos

Smyrna

Ephesus

Laodicea

Thyatira

Sardis

Philadelphia



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Revelation 2:18-29

To resist false teaching....

1. Study the fruit of its followers (18-21)

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Revelation 2:18 (CSB) “**Write** to the angel of the church in **Thyatira**: Thus says the Son of God, the one whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine bronze:

Write – this is the longest of the 7 letters and yet Thyatira was the least known and the least important of the 7 cities. Chuck Swindoll says Thyatira was to Ephesus what Flat Creek, Tennessee is to Los Angeles, or Cut-‘n-short, Texas is to Chicago!

Thyatira was an expendable military outpost 40 miles southeast of Pergamos. It was only important through its commerce in wool, linen, leatherwork, bronzework and especially purple dye. It had an extensive network of trade guilds or labor unions that dominated daily and civic life. Each union had its own patron deity, feasts, and seasonal celebrations that often included sexual immorality.

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Thyatira Apollos the sun god and Diana the fertility god were the more significant deities. Acts 16:14 teaches us that Lydia, whom Paul led to Christ at Philippi, was from Thyatira and a seller of purple. It is quite possible she was instrumental in evangelizing Thyatira. By all worldly appearances the city was unimportant and the church rather insignificant. This is not the judgment of Jesus. Big or small, well known or hardly known at all, every church is important to Jesus. Whether you have 10,000; 1,000; 100; or 10 members makes no difference to Him. He wants you to be pure where you are planted. He wants you to honor Him wherever your home is.

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Revelation 2:18 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the church in Thyatira: Thus says the **Son of God**, the one whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine bronze:

Son of God – appears only here in Revelation and stands in contrast to the “sun god.” Apollos is a piddley pseudo sun god. Jesus is the eternal and majestic Son of God. Who has eyes like a flame of fire (cf. 1:14; 19:12) – speaks of his penetrating, perceptive, and piercing ability to see all that goes on and to see through the deceptive and seductive teachings of the Jezebel. As eyes of fire there is burning indignation and purifying judgment to all He sees.

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Feet are like fine bronze (burnished bronze, NIV) – speaks of strength and splendor. Thyatira was famous for its bronze work but their best pales in comparison to that of the Son of God. He is brilliant in appearance, unrivaled in strength, and utterly glorious as a judge. There is stability and permanence to the judgments He renders.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:19 (CSB) I know your works — your love, faithfulness, service, and endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first.

Jesus praises this church where He can and affirms them in a number of crucial and important areas. He knows both the good and the bad, and appropriately addresses both. All churches would do well to follow the church at Thyatira as she is evaluated in verse 19.



Much of ancient Thyatira is covered by the modern city of Akhisar. Shown here is a small area that has been excavated. It features a fifth- to sixth-century basilica used for civic purposes.







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Google earth

Imagery Date: 5/31/2013 38°55'12.80" N 27°50'11.89" E elev 101 m eye alt 399 m















The church in Thyatira is being misled by a prophetess who encourages the “eating of food sacrificed to idols” (2:20). Shown here is a stone altar found at ancient Thyatira.

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5 aspects of the Church are recognized and praised by the Son of God who sees everything that is happening. He knows your: 1) **Works** (erga) – a general word for the godly activity and efforts of the church. The next 4 words “flesh out” the specifics of these works.

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Revelation 2:19 (CSB) I know your works — **your love, faithfulness**, service, and endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first.

2) & 3) **Love and faithfulness** – this addresses their motives for the works they do. Love (agape) for Christ and others and faithfulness (pistin) in God inspired and moved this church to action. Unlike the church at Ephesus, their love for Christ had not grown cold. Unlike the church at Ephesus, their love for truth had. Ephesians 4:15 teaches us to “speak the truth in love.” 2 and 3 John both emphasize the necessity of both for a balanced Christianity. Ephesus lacked love. Thyatira lacked truth.

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4) &5) The **service** (diakonian, “deacon-acts”) and your **endurance** (upomonen; longsuffering, steadfastness, [NIV] perseverance) – this notes the results which naturally follow from love and faith. A person with a servant’s spirit is one who will give himself deliberately, voluntarily, sacrificially and joyfully to others in order that he may help meet the goals and needs of their lives. He will walk away from his own concerns and private interests, and give himself, his time, his wisdom, his knowledge, his talents and gifts, in order to help the other person succeed. The qualities of the person with a genuine servant’s spirit will exhibit a spirit of humility, willing to stoop to serve another but never ask for recognition. Dependable (trustworthy), loyal, loving, patient. Here then are 5 things every church should do. Oh, but it gets better.

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last works are greater than the first. They had not grown cold or remained stagnant. They were moving on, growing, maturing, progressing in good things for Jesus. This church was not standing still but pressing on. For all of this Jesus applauded and He was pleased. “Do good things and grow in good things” is a wonderful purpose statement for any church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:20 (CSB) 20 But I have this against you: You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

Sin should never be swept under the rug, tucked away in a closet or hidden in a corner. It must be confronted in love and dealt with. “Who says?” you might ask. Jesus says, that’s who. With a directness that almost takes your breath away our Lord hits straight away at the sin of tolerance that had infected this church. 4 issues must be addressed if this church, or any church, has any hope of maintaining a viable witness for Jesus.

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You tolerate the woman Jezebel ... to teach. • Jezebel – wicked Phoenician princess who married wicked King Ahab of Israel who led Israel into idolatrous worship of the Canaanite god Baal (1 Kings 16:29- 33; 2 Kings 9:30 ff.).

• **Jezebel** – probably a descriptive epithet or title, not her literal name. We name our dogs Goliath and Nero and our cats Jezebel!

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- Was she Lydia (no!), the Sibylline priestess Sambathe (no!), the pastor's wife (probably not!!!). She was a literal woman clever in speech and impressive in personality who professed to know and interpret God's will. She claimed a direct pipeline to God. Her revelations, however, came at a cost: the purity and devotion of the church.
- Application – anything that or anyone who gets our eyes off of the Lord Jesus is not of God. The impressiveness of their gifts and abilities make no difference. Indeed the greater the gifts, the greater the danger.

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who calls herself a prophetess and teaches – here was a self-proclaimed leader. Who said she was a prophetess? She did. Not God! She did. That there is a legitimate gift of prophecy that may involve women is clearly taught in Scripture (Anna, Luke 2:36; Philip's daughters, Acts 21:9; cf. also Joel 2:28 ff. – Acts. 2:17; 1 Cor. 11:5).

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Here, however, was an illegitimate usurpation, an inappropriate seizing of raw ambition. Drawing upon parallels to the wicked Jezebel, Chuck Swindoll says this woman was 1) cleverly deceptive, 2) manipulatively dominant, 3) viciously scheming, and 4) influentially wicked. She clearly was a leader because people were following. But leadership can be good or bad, a blessing or a curse. Someone should have stepped up to the plate and faced her. But no one did.

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She taught and seduced (deceived) my servants (duolos). Her doctrine was attractive and seductive. At first blush it seemed insightful, deep, perceptive. Why, she had a way of opening the Scriptures that were new and exciting. Her teachings promised freedom but delivered bondage. They promised life but produced death. They promised to exalt Jesus but in actuality they dethroned Jesus.

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Like the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Christ legalists, the charismatic enthusiasts and the liberal modernists, God's standard was perverted and God's Son removed from His preeminence (Col. 1:18). Theology matters. Truth matters. We must continually be on guard.

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commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols
- Participation in the trade guilds or unions was a necessity if you were going to make it in Thyatira. It was essential for building community relationships and success in business. Being active and a full participant in the trade union invited participation in pagan feasts and festivals

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commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols
- Sexual liberation and banquets in honor of ones guild deity were the norm. Jezebel said we are free in Christ. Jesus knows your heart and the devotion of your soul. It's not a big deal to God and it should not be a big deal to you. BUT, she was wrong. Sexual immorality and acts of idolatry are a big deal to God. God calls us to holiness not harlotry. God calls us to purity not perversion. God calls us to spiritual fidelity not spiritual adultery. God calls us to follow Him not follow the world (cf. 1 John 2:15-17).

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commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols -

*When the church looks like the world you have a sick church.

*When the church acts like the world you have an impotent church.

*When the church plays with the world you have a pathetic church.

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Revelation 2:21-22 (CSB) I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Look, I will throw her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction. Unless they repent of her works,

God is a good heavenly Father who will not let His children just go their own way. With loving but firm discipline He will get involved, up close and personal, if necessary.

The Discipline of God

Hebrews 12:5-13

Hebrews 12:5-7 (CSB) 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: My son, do not take the Lord's discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reproved by him, 6 for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. 7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?

The Discipline of God

Hebrews 12:5-13

Hebrews 12:8-10 (CSB) 8 But if you are without discipline — which all receive — then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn't we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness.

The Discipline of God

Hebrews 12:5-13

Hebrews 12:11-13 (CSB) 11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore, strengthen your tired hands and weakened knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed instead.

The Church that Tolerated Jezebel

Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:21-22 (CSB) I gave her **time** to repent, but she does not want to **repent** of her sexual immorality. 22 Look, I will throw her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction. Unless they **repent** of her works,

Time – judgment was not immediate. God’s discipline is always wrapped in mercy and grace.

Repent (2x in this verse) – God gave time for her to change her mind and to change her ways. God gave her time, she said “no,” and now judgment falls.

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Revelation 2:22 (CSB) Look, I will throw her into a **sickbed** and those who **commit adultery** with her into great affliction. Unless they repent of her works,

Sickbed - She made her bed, she can now lie in it. A sickbed is a bed of sickness or pain, it denotes severe and debilitating punishment.

Commit adultery – marital infidelity! We are the bride of Christ married to Him. He alone is to be our Lord and lover.

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Revelation 2:22 (CSB) Look, I will throw her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction. **Unless they repent of her works,**

Unless they repent of her works – Her time to repent has past. Her heart is so turned away from God that further delay has no benefit. Her followers' situation is not as dire, yet! • They still have time, but the clock is ticking. • She receives a bed of sickness. They will receive intense suffering unless they turn from their sin.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:23 (CSB) **I will strike her children dead.** Then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

I will strike her children dead – (lit. “I will kill with death her children.) Her children is representative of her spiritual followers. God will remove those who are beyond repentance and restoration.

- There is sin unto physical death for a Christian.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:23 (CSB) I will strike her children dead. Then **all the churches will know** that I am the one who examines **minds** and **hearts**, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

All the churches will know - I am (ego eimi) searches the **minds** (lit. “kidneys”) and hearts. **and I will give** ...

Jeremiah 17:10 – “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.”

Matthew 16:27 – “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.”

Romans 2:6 – “Who will render to every man according to his deeds:”

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Revelation 2:23 (CSB) I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

- What you do He sees.
- What you think He knows.
- What you work for you will receive.

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2. Survey the burdens it places on its followers (22-24)

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Revelation 2:24-25 (CSB) I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who haven't known "the so-called **secrets of Satan**" — as they say — I am not putting any other burden on you. 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come.

Secrets of Satan – Two possible interpretations - 1) sarcastic caricature or 2) libertarians actual claim. Mounce says, "the deep things of Satan may be a reference to the view that in order to appreciate fully the grace of God one must first plumb the depths of evil. Later gnosticism [view that matter is evil and spirit is good] boasted that it was precisely by entering into the stronghold of Satan that believers could learn the limits of his power and emerge victorious"

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Jezebel claimed she could lead the church into the "deeper life" of God, into greater depths of spiritual understanding and experience. She offered a "Jesus plus theology." However, what she actually gave them was the deeper lie of Satan, spiritual ignorance and a "no Jesus theology."

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- Jesus says stay with me and I will put (cast) on you no other burden.
- Jesus says stay with me. Don't follow the seduction of Satan, the doctrine of demons.
- Jesus says "hold fast" (imperative) what you have 'til I come.

WHAT YOU HAVE IS JESUS AND JESUS IS ALL YOU NEED
(NOW AND FOREVER)!

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Revelation 2:25-26 (CSB) Only hold on to what you have until I come. 26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works to the end: I will give him authority over the nations —

We need to hold on to who Jesus is and what Jesus says. In the present He is all we need and in the future He will provide all we will want.

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My works to the end. To keep Christ's works is to keep His word, His will. To do so until the end is to "hold fast to what we have." Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, "he who stands firm to the end will be saved." Vance Havner said, "faith that fizzles before the finish was faulty from the first."

Perseverance is a proof of our profession and an evidence of our possession.

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My works to the end. Leon Morris reminds us, “the Christian life is not a battle but a campaign.” Christ honors the dedicated disciple by allowing him to co-reign with Him in the fulfillment of Psalm 2:8 – 9 (v.27). This is a reference to his millennial kingdom, Christ’s 1000 year reign on the earth (cf. Rev. 20:1-6).

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Revelation 2:18-29

Revelation 2:27-28 (CSB) and he will **rule** them with an iron scepter; he will shatter them like pottery —28 just as I have received this from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.

Rule is literally “shepherd.” Believers will serve under Christ, sitting on thrones (Matt 19:28; Rev. 20:4), exercising gracious, but firm and effective authority over the nations.

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Morning star – 1) Lucifer (cf. Is. 14:12); 2) immortality (Dan. 12:3); 3) dawn of eternal life; 4) literal reference to planet Venus; 5) Holy Spirit. No, let the text itself inform us in Rev. 22:16: IT IS JESUS!! When the end comes (v. 26) we get Jesus!

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Morning star – Follow the deep things of Satan and you get a fallen star. Follow the dear Lord Jesus and you get the morning star.

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Revelation 2:18-29

Southern Baptists gathered in Salt Lake City, Utah in June, 1998. As is our custom, we preceded the meeting with an evangelistic effort called Crossover Salt Lake City.

One student had lunch with a Mormon and his question to the Mormon: “If you had to trust Jesus or Joseph Smith to get you to heaven who would you trust?” His answer after some consideration: Joseph Smith.

- When it comes to Jezebel, Joseph Smith or any other besides Jesus, go with and stay with Jesus. I promise you, he will not disappoint you.

Old Testament Connections

Revelation 2:18 - “Write to the angel of the church in Thyatira: Thus says the Son of God, the **one whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine bronze**:

Daniel 10:6 - His body was like beryl, his face like the brilliance of lightning, **his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze**, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

Old Testament Connections

Revelation 2:20 - But I have this against you: You tolerate the woman **Jezebel**, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and **deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols.**

1 Kings 16:31 - Then, as if following the sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat were not enough, he married **Jezebel**, the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and then proceeded to serve Baal and bow in worship to him.

2 Kings 9:22 - When Joram saw Jehu he asked, “Do you come in peace, Jehu?” He answered, “What peace can there be as long as there is **so much prostitution and sorcery from your mother Jezebel?**”

Numbers 25:1–2 - While Israel was staying in the Acacia Grove, **the people began to prostitute themselves with the women of Moab. 2The women invited them to the sacrifices for their gods, and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods.**

Old Testament Connections

Revelation 2:23 - I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

Psalm 62:12 - and faithful love belongs to you, Lord. For **you repay each according to his works.**

Psalm 7:9 - Let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous. **The one who examines the thoughts and emotions is a righteous God.**

Proverbs 24:12 - If you say, "But we didn't know about this," won't **he who weighs hearts consider it? Won't he who protects your life know? Won't he repay a person according to his work?**

Jeremiah 11:20 - But, Lord of Armies, who judges righteously, **who tests heart and mind**, let me see your vengeance on them, for I have presented my case to you.

Jeremiah 17:10 - I, the Lord, examine the mind, **I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve.**

Old Testament Connections

Revelation 2:26–27 - The one who conquers and who keeps my works to the end: **I will give him authority over the nations—** 27 and **he will rule them with an iron scepter; he will shatter them like pottery**

Psalms 2:8–9 - Ask of me, **and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You will break them with an iron scepter; you will shatter them like pottery.”**

The Book of Revelation

The Church that Tolerated Jezebel

Chapter 2:18-29