

Thyatira: Maintaining Moral Purity



*“²⁰ But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit **sexual sin** and to **eat food offered to idols**.”* Revelation 2:20 NLT

Who comes to mind when you hear the expression “bad girls”? Several women in the Bible qualify as the “bad girls of the Bible.” But the “baddest” girl was a woman named Jezebel. Her story is in 1 Kings 16:31-21:28.

Jezebel was a princess but her life was not a fairy tale. She married King Ahab, the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Ahab was wicked and together they brought evil and corruption to Israel. Jezebel singlehandedly killed every prophet of God except Elijah. Furthermore, she supported 450 false prophets of the heathen god, Baal (bah-'al), along with 400 false prophets of Asherah (ash-ay-raw'). She introduced Israel to the worship of these false gods that included the immorality of orgies, homosexuality, and prostitution.

What is the connection between Jezebel, the baddest girl of the Bible, with the Church of Thyatira? The answer is, that Thyatira had a female teacher with a charismatic personality who was guilty of many of the same corruptions as Jezebel of the Old Testament. Jesus was using Jezebel symbolically to confront the church for their similar sinfulness. Jesus wanted this church, and Christ-followers of all time, to know that he expects his people to be morally pure when he returns.

The primary purpose for the messages to the 7 churches of Revelation 2-3 is explained in Ephesians 5:25-27. Jesus wants to purify and mature His bride, the universal Church, for the time she will be **united to Him**—whether walking through the door of death OR by means of the rapture (Greek ἀρπάξω—snatch away).

Central Lesson A maturing Christian maintains moral purity

1. **Church:** The Church in **THYATIRA** (2:18).
¹⁸ “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira...”
2. **Christ:** He is the Son of God with eyes like flames of fire & feet are like polished bronze (2:18).
¹⁸ “...This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze.”
Christ is portrayed as having eyes like flames of fire & feet are like polished bronze reflects back to the vision of Christ in Revelation 1:12-20. **Eyes like flames of fire** represent Christ's ability to see all things; to see through all pretense and attempts to hide the truth; to see the true motives and thoughts of everyone's heart & the judge of all evil. **Feet like polished bronze** - represent an exalted person with great power; purity; all-powerful, able to stomp out any opposition to his rule.
3. **Compliment:** Christ **KNOWS** all the things they did, their love, faith, service, patient endurance & constant improvement (2:19).

¹⁹ “I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.”

Christ is watching his people. He sees and knows everything they do and think. He knows their struggles, worries, temptations, everything! He sees their attempts to improve their spiritual life as well as their neglect to do so. He knows it all.

4. **Criticism:** Permit (tolerate) sexual sin & eat food offered to idols (2:20-23).
*²⁰ “But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who **calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray**. She teaches them to commit **sexual sin** [Gk. *porneuo*] and to **eat food offered to idols**.²¹ I gave her **time to repent**, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality.²² “Therefore, I will throw her on a **bed of suffering**, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds.²³ I will **strike her children dead**. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.*

Calls herself a prophet - leaders of most cults declare themselves prophets or some special spiritual leader. **Sexual sin** - The Greek *porneuo* from which we get the English “porno” or “pornography.” It is a general word that encompasses all types of sexual immorality. Orgies, homosexuality, and prostitution were a regular part of ancient pagan idol worship. **Eat food offered to idols** - a practice believed to enable the worshipper to commune with the false deity. **Time to repent** - God wants sinners to repent. He gives everyone opportunity to repent (2 Peter 3:9). But if they refuse, they will face the consequences of God's judgment. **Strike her children dead** - The Greek translated “children” is used of adults 9 times in the Greek N.T. It can carry a metaphoric meaning. It can mean her “students” or children in the sense of her followers or disciples. John MacArthur writes, “**Jezebel's children were not her biological but her spiritual children. The church is about forty years old when John wrote, so that her false teaching had been around long enough for a second generation of errorists to have arisen.**” (Revelation 1-11, p. 102).

5. **Correction:** **REPENT & HOLD** tightly to what they have until Christ comes (2:21, 24-25).
*²⁴ “But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching (‘deeper truths,’ as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask **nothing more of you** ²⁵ except that you **hold tightly to what you have until I come.**”*

6. **Consequence:** Given **AUTHORITY** over the nations (Millennium), the same authority as Christ received from the Father, & give them the morning star (May refer to “**new life**” just as a morning star is the beginning of a new day) (2:26-28).
*²⁶ “To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, to them I will give **authority over all the nations**.²⁷ They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.²⁸ They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!”*

Conclusion A maturing Christian maintains moral purity

Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.