

Revelation 2

Introduction to Revelation chapters 2 & 3:

The first truth that should be noticed is that every church is introduced with a unique aspect of the Lord of glory, an aspect or attribute that has its source in chapter one.

Note:

Ephesus - 2:1 compare 1:13,16

Smyrna - 2:8 compare 1:17,18

Pergamos - 2:12 compare 1:16

Thyatira - 2:18 compare 1:14,15

Sardis - 3:1 compare 1:4,16

Philadelphia - 3:7 compare 1:18

Laodicia - 3:14 compare 1:5

Individual attributes of Jesus Christ are manifest in vision form to each church, attributes given to remedy each church's unique difficulties. As the rest of Scripture teaches us, the Lord's fullness meets our every need, a truth which is readily seen in the way needs are met for each of the seven churches. Each assembly, prior to the Lord's words to them as a church, is first shown something of the fullness of our Lord in a personal way to let that church understand that Christ meets the needs of their particular trial or situation.

A clear example of this is Smyrna, where Christ is seen as the Resurrected One to a people who may soon suffer death for their faith. In other words, though the saints from Smyrna might die, yet because Christ lives, they shall live.

v1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Here in Ephesus, the problem is their love and the fervency of it (v4). Their remedy is to look to Christ, the one who walks in their midst in loving fellowship with them(cf. John 15:15). He knows them (see John 10:3), their works, and their labor for Him. Therefore He is revealed as

near to them so that their love might grow back into its fervent first love. This is a truth for all churches. Christians are to look to Christ as He is revealed to them for in Jesus, the Great Physician, there are remedies for their problems and healing for their souls.

v2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Although the church at Ephesus had as its great fault a lack of zealous love (v4), we should not forget those aspects of church practice that are commended, and therefore should be part of every thriving church – patience, labor, testing truth, church discipline – all for Christ's name sake as the motive, and all this without fainting (v3)! Further, "fainting" is in the Greek perfect tense, implying in their laboring, holiness, etc., that patience pervaded their work (i.e. patience was always part of every fruit of the Spirit the Ephesian church evidenced). As mentioned above, all Christian churches should have the fruits previously listed as well as the pre-eminent-eminent fruit which the Ephesians were lacking– love.

v3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

See notes on Revelation 2:2

v4 Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

As to what this first love was/is, it seems to be love to Christ, or that which flows from it, love to the brethren, or both. It is that first fervency of affection and thankfulness to our dear Savior. Some examples of first encounter/first love are found in Luke 7:36ff and the woman who anointed Christ's feet and wiped them with her tears; Luke 8:22ff and the Gadarene demoniac who fervently desired to go with Christ (v38); Luke 17:11ff and the Samaritan who was healed and glorified Christ; Luke 18:35ff and the blind man near Jericho who immediately followed Christ. This is first love! Added to this must be the natural fruit that flows from love to Christ which is love to His own children, our fellow Christians (see John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11-12; 2 John 5)**.

** Notice in our Lord's high priestly prayer how much emphasis is place on Christians being "one" (John 17:11,21-23)

Some Greek truths which give life to this verse:

- 1) *Alla*, (English, "but") is a Greek word that strongly contrasts verses two and three. John is writing that there is

much to be said for the saints at Ephesus -BUT- there is a great leaven among the saints - their lack of fervent love.

- 2) The word "love" and the word "first" are modified by definite articles, and "first" modifies "love." Thus we may translate this crucial verse four as follows: "but, in spite of this, you have left off your love, *I mean your first love.*"
- 3) The aorist "left" (v4) may be an ingressive aorist such that John was saying to these Christians "you are beginning to leave your first love," or it may be a summary aorist, which gives this verse the force "the summation of your present state spiritually is a lack of first love."

Anyway we look at the grammar, the lesson is painfully clear - **nothing** can replace or make up for love to Christ and His own children.

One of the great temptations is to replace love with truth. We think if we are accurate and true to God's word, love to those of the people of God can take a back seat. It is sobering to notice in the Ephesian church how much correct doctrine was understood, yet notwithstanding the Lord gives a mighty rebuke to these saints who understand much in the head (and practice it!), but have left off cultivating the heart. The worst of tragedies is that the Ephesians thought they no doubt pleased Christ by following the Spirit of Truth when in reality He (the Holy Spirit) was drawing nigh to leaving them in their cold orthodoxy**.

** Sobering is the fact that in the list of "fruits of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22-23, understanding of truth is not even listed. Yet in the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:18-21, a "party spirit" (RSV) is listed, and ***such do not inherit the kingdom of God!***

- v5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

There are three imperatives (Divine commands) to the Ephesians in this verse to reverse their problem:

- 1) **Remember**, present imperative (continual command)
- 2) **Repent**, aorist imperative (immediate command)
- 3) **Do****, aorist imperative (immediate command)

At Ephesus, they were commanded to continually ponder what had happened in their lives and ponder from where they had fallen; that is, how far removed from their original "first love." The practical implication of their meditation was to immediately: 1) Repent of their cold hearts toward the Lord and each other, and 2) Do those things that

reflect a love for God and the saints. The fruit of disobedience, or not remembering/repenting/doing would be radical for the Ephesian saints. The Holy Spirit who dwells in the midst of the Ephesian saints would be grieved, and Christ would "come quickly" and remove the Spirit's blessed ministry from among their midst (v5 cf.. 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30 etc.)***. In that the Spirit communicates all blessings we have in Christ, this **is** the greatest loss a Christian can experience (see John 16:13-15).

** Historically, starting in America in the 19th century, there came to the forefront of evangelical Christianity a view of sanctification and growth that is still popular today. It is the view of growth and holiness that says the ultimate in true piety is to "let God work in you," or "Let go and let God." This view takes the historical Puritan view of depravity in Christians and says, "Since we can do nothing, the *highest* form of holiness – and the sure way to victory – is surrendering to the Spirit and letting Him work." We, as it were, are to get out of the Lord's way so He can use us and make us truly holy.

This runs counter to Revelation 2:5 where **we** are commanded to remember, repent, and do! The Lord is **not** going to mortify sin for us or be holy for us. The above view is as old as the gnostic heresies John deals with in his epistles. Biblical mortification of sin has given way in the church to mystical guesswork and feeling in our dealings with sin. We wait for an impulse or some feeling (which is suppose to be "of the Spirit") to lead us and guide us in our walk when we should be **obeying**. This view has destroyed our understanding of the fight of faith. We do not take up the weapons of warfare as we ought, for we believe that we are unable to fight. Yet this is no more true than to say that because God has ordained all that will ever come to pass (cf. Ephesians 1:11), we need not pray or work or preach the gospel. The Bible teaches that we work based on God's work (Philippians 2:12-13).

*** This is the symbolism of the candlestick/flame. It represents the light and warmth that God grants His children by His Spirit (see Psalm 51:11-13, where there is a direct relationship between the Spirit's work and the joy of our salvation).

v6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Whatever the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was historically, an interesting Bible truth in this verse is a Christian's holy hatred for ungodly acts or doctrines, a type of godly wrath that is to exist, yet never such an anger or wrath that contradicts James' exhortation in James 1:19-20 and the truth that anger does not work the righteousness of God (a difficult task!).

v7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

[Greek, *nikeo*, English, "conquer/overcome"] – Its use in Revelation:

Each church is told and exhorted to be an *overcoming* church. This word is found pertaining to all the seven churches (Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). There seems to be a relationship between the word "overcome" and special martyrdom for the faith in the book of Revelation (Revelation 11:7;13:7). This is over and against denying the faith, that is, apostasy (note God's attitude toward the Christian apostate in Hebrews 10:26-31,38).

This issue of overcoming seems to be important, not only in light of the tribulation theme of Revelation, but of such confirming statements as Revelation 2:13 and Antipas. It is a theme Christians are to understand and prepare for (again in light of such truths as Revelation 12:10-12). This was going to be an intense time of tribulation, and many would suffer at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem and by the Roman empire generally. Those who were faithful unto death would receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). Please note that *those who overcome* partake of the tree of life (Revelation 22:1-5).

As in overcoming, the phrase "he that an ear to hear" is an exhortation to the people of the seven churches, used to divide the true saint from the impostor (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13, 22 cf... Matthew 7:24-27).

v8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

See Revelation 1:17,18

The trials for Smyrna included tribulation and trials even unto death (vv 8-10). Therefore the Lord reveals Himself as the One who is victorious over death as an encouragement and example for these saints who shall also pass through those same fires. They must know that though they die, like the Lord Himself as well as His promise, they shall live (John 11:25). Again remember that the way the Lord reveals Himself to each of the churches is to show them that **HE** is their guide and stay, and they must rest in Him (Isaiah 26:3). This means in every trial they are confronted with, they must put the Lord before them and then they shall not be moved (Psalm 16:8).

v9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and [I know] the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but [are] the synagogue of Satan.

"those who claim to be Jews and are not." The truth of the New Covenant people *replacing* the Old Covenant people is seen in the following verses:

- 1) Matthew 21:43 - "therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you (Jews) and given to a nation (Christians) bearing the fruits of it"
- 2) 1 Peter 2:9 - "but you (Christians) are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. His own special people" (Note this is a letter to Christian Jews!)
- 3) Galatians 4:24ff - "for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem *WHICH NOW IS*, and *IS IN BONDAGE* with her children - but the Jerusalem above (Church) is free"
- 4) Galatians 6:16 - "and as many walk according to this rule (canon), peace and mercy upon them, and (even) upon the Israel of God"
- 5) Philippians 3:3 - "we (Christians) are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit"
- 6) Colossians 3:12 - "therefore as the *elect* of God, holy and beloved"

The conclusion is clear from the above references. The people of God are ones born not of blood, nor of flesh, but born of God (John 1:12-13).

Negatively, the Jews are seen as a "synagogue of Satan." Further, the Jews are seen as the great persecutors of the church who would receive their just recompense for standing against the people of God (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). Moreover, our Lord said that neither in Jerusalem or in any Samaritan mountain would true worship be found, but rather where two or three gather in Spirit and truth in Christ (John 4:20-24; Matthew 18:20).

Whether these are actually Jews according to the flesh attempting to damage the work at Smyrna, or church attenders with false professions is not of great consequence. The true Jew is the Christian (Romans 2:28-29), the only covenant the New or everlasting covenant (Hebrews 8:8-13; 13:20-21).

v10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The Greek word *thlypsis*, English, "tribulation," is used five times in the book of Revelation. All but one (7:14) are found in the first three chapters which gives us real grounds to conclude that the tribulation had a very real application to these seven churches. Three of the five uses of tribulation have the definite article "the," and once (7:14) tribulation is modified by "great." That such tribulation was near for these saints, and of such great proportions as to possibly cost them their lives is clear from the text "faithful unto death." Moreover, the Greek here is '*mello*,' which implies "things which you *are about* to suffer." The tribulation was upon these saints at Smyrna.

v11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

"The second death" is found here and in 20:6, 14; 21:8. It is not found in any other place in Scripture. The meaning seems to be death beyond that which is physical, and the Bible knows nothing beyond physical death except that eternal casting away from God where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:41; Luke 13:28).

The great proof of this second death is, of course, the cross. Was Jesus forsaken of God and in darkness while alive or in the grave? We are told expressly of His ominous cry of dereliction in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 (which Christ experienced *BEFORE* He laid down His life), and Luke tells us that before He breathed His last breath He committed His spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46). All this Bible truth points to suffering a conscious, perceived forsakeness by the light and life of the Creator. There seems to be a real death that is consciously experienced after the grave based on the penalty of our sins in transgressing God's law. This was most certainly the basis for Christ's suffering, for Scripture tells us that God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all" and therefore "put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:6, 10). This is the second death, and it is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23).

v12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

The attribute of a sharp two edged sword relates to the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 19:6ff).

The vision relates to the problem of doctrine, false doctrine in the church which was being tolerated. The saints from Pergamos must understand that truth is what the church stands on (1 Timothy 3:15). It is interesting to note how often the Holy Spirit is spoken of as the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). He is the one that reveals

the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10ff). Indeed, He is the essence of what makes the church holy/set apart in His work of our sanctification and Christian growth in grace (1 Corinthians 3:16f; 6:11; Ephesians 5:18, cf.. 2 Peter 3:18).

The primary means the Holy Spirit uses of enabling saints to grow is the Word (2 Thessalonians 2:13; John 17:17; Colossians 3:16). Observe the close relationship between the Spirit and the Word of God: in Ephesians 5:18 "be *filled with the Spirit*, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns;" and Colossians 3:16, "let the Word of Christ *dwell in you richly* in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns!"

v13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, [even] where Satan's seat [is]: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas [was] my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

This issue of "Satan's seat" and "where Satan dwelleth" is a curious one. Could there have been unusual occult or Jewish false doctrine rampant here? Scripture mentions Pergamos only in Revelation and only twice, and in neither case are we given any insight into our question. What we do know is that Satan and sin go hand in hand.

Now the main sin issue in the Scriptures is doctrinal sin or practical/volitional sin. Satan is the author of lies (John 8:44) and pride (1 Chronicles 21:1), or more generally any work against God and His glory. It would seem by what we are told of Pergamos (which also saw the martyring of a faithful Christian witness named Antipas), that the "seat" or "dwelling" of Satan related to men's work - stirred up by Satan - against the glorious witness of Christ's atonement. The "seat" was the place of Jews and Judaism, the primary persecutors of early Christianity with Revelation describing its capital city as "spiritually Sodom and Egypt - Revelation 11:8."

v14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

The story of Balaam as it is used in relation to the problems of Pergamos implies that false doctrine was in the church and leading Christians astray (compare 2 Peter 2:1ff). Although the sins mentioned here of eating things offered to idols and fornication are possibly sins the church had become involved in, it seems more likely that these statements point to sins of false doctrine and false teaching since in the New Testament eating meats offered to idols was not necessarily sinful (Romans 14:14,17) and fornication is used figuratively elsewhere in Revelation to speak of sin (Revelation 2:22).

v15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

The Greek word *outos* means "in the same way/in the same manner." In a fashion similar to the sinful toleration of the doctrine of Balaam in the Old Testament, Pergamos is tolerating the doctrine of the Nicolaitians.

The Greek *su*, English "you," is emphatic in this verse and gives the sentence the force of, "you Christians, you are holding/clinging to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans!" *su*, an emphatic personal pronoun, is used only four times in Revelation, always bring great emphasis and/or contrast to the statement in which it is found.

v16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

It is interesting that this verse has been understood as something along the lines of: "Repent, or else I will come to you and fight against them," "them" being the enemies of the church. This understanding is only consistent with the other "repent" statements of Revelation chapters two and three if our Lord is saying, "Repent and deal with the sin of those in Pergamos perpetuating falsehood or I will come and both deal with those false teachers and remove My blessing *from you*, My Spirit *from you* (something similar is found in Paul's words regarding the sins that arose in Corinth during the Lord's Supper - 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

v17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth [it].

For the word translated "stone" here, see an interesting use of this word in Acts 26:10 where the word is used in the sentence "I gave my voice *against* them." Revelation 2:17 and Acts 26:10 are the only places where we have this Greek word for "stone". Normally, the New Testament uses *lithos* for "stone" (upwards of eighty times for both the noun and verb), and in Revelation we find *lithos* nine times.

The reason for this unusual word here might be that this stone was used to make judicial decisions by a jury, black for condemned, white for acquittal (this would certainly tie to Acts 26:10). It was more of a pebble than a stone and these stones were counted in the process of rendering decisions. Thus the verbal use of this word in Luke 14:28 and Revelation 13:18 means to calculate or count in a careful manner. In these words to Pergamos, to give this white stone to those who overcome might imply the Lord's careful counting of their faithfulness, their guiltlessness, holiness, and righteousness, or some such positive statement (e.g. 2 Thessalonians 1:5).

v18 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;

"feet as fine brass," see Daniel 10:6; Revelation 1:14

"eyes/flame of fire," see Revelation 1:14; 19:12; Ezekiel 1:27; Daniel 10:6ff

It is curious that the title "Son of God" is only used here in the book of Revelation whereas in John's gospel "Son of God" is found ten times. This must be very special to Thyatira. Possibly the title "Son of God" adds glory to the words that come forth to this church which is slow in its reaction to a false prophetess and the seducing of His people. As the book of Hebrews reminds us, there were many prophets who spoke many times in many ways, but in these last days God has spoken fully and finally *by His Son* (Hebrews 1:1-2), Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Son's words must be headed, for they *are* the Words of God (John 12:49).

v19 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.

On a practical note, the saints at Thyatira had plenty of godliness. There is a definite article before each fruit specified by the Lord (i.e. "the" love, "the" faith of you, etc.) as if Christ would point out something special ("I know that special love of yours, that special faith of yours"). What is of equal importance is *growth* in the various fruits of the Spirit. ("the last is more than the first," cf.. 2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:13-16).

v20 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.

The emphatic "MY servants" is only found in this accusative masc/neut plural form three times in the New Testament. The other two, Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26, deal with "my words." This prophetess, under the figure of the infamous Jezebel, was causing the Lord's people, *his* servants, to sin (again under the figures fornicate, eat unclean foods), and by her teaching she was leading them astray. Thus our Lord demands immediate action by the Thyatiran saints to preserve holiness in the assembly (cf.. 1 Corinthians 5:1ff). These saints are *His* servants, and they are priests unto God with "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" upon their foreheads (Exodus 28:36; 39:30).

It should be noted that there is no condemnation for the act of prophesying by this women. Her wickedness is condemned, not the fact that she spoke (see examples of women speaking in 1 Corinthians 11:5; Acts 2:16ff; 21:9; Judges 4:5; Judges chapter 5; Exodus 15:20ff:

2 Kings 22:14). Congregational teaching/leadership is denied to women as seen in 1 Timothy 2:9ff; but it is clear from 1 Corinthians 12-14 that prophesying is a gift of exhortation that does not involve any leadership or guidance born of maturity.

NOTE: It has always interested this writer that nobody seems to have noticed that *almost anyone* could have the gift of tongues or prophecy and exercise those gifts with (it seems) very little maturity, and there was no distinction made between male and female, "**every one of you** hath a psalm, hath a doctrine" (1 Corinthians 14:26). But *teaching* and *guiding* the flock of God demanded rigorous examination (1 Timothy 3:1ff; Titus 1:6ff). Teaching was (and is) a far greater gift than prophesying.

If it be objected that the Scripture enjoined women to be silent (1 Corinthians 14:34), we must remind ourselves that the issue of gifts and their orderly use at Corinth was Paul's subject (1 Corinthians 14:27-30 etc.). The problem at Corinth was one of disorderly questioning of exhortations by women, as Paul's remedy to the problem clearly indicates; "if they [women] will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home" - v35. Women had no education and were impeding the flow of blessing and edification with their disruptive questioning and they were therefore commanded to "keep silent" (the Greek is very strong, *SILENCE!*). But this is far from denying women their place in the church's overall edifying process as well as their priesthood which is granted to all God's children.

Further, if we trace out the line of thought in Revelation 2:20-21, her repentance does not at all include silence or cessation from prophesying.

v21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

A Greek paraphrase of this might be "I have given her time to turn/repent of her wickedness (probably both doctrinal and practical), but she is committed to unrepentance!"

v22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Those at Thyatira involved in this prophetic deception who do not repent were in grave danger of going through that great tribulation which the obedient Philadelphians were to be kept from (i.e. the hour that will try the whole world, Revelation 3:10). Here we run into the phrase "great tribulation," cf.. Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14. What must be kept in mind is that Matthew 24:21 has its parallel in both Mark 13:19, "for in those days shall be affliction," and Luke 21:22, "for these be the days of vengeance." This makes it clear in Scripture that the term "great tribulation" has many synonyms, which in turn will

help us understand the scope of this terrible period. We must not be bound by the phrase **great tribulation** or we will miss much of what Scripture says to help us comprehend a subject which makes up so much of Revelation as well as other places of Holy Writ.

v23 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.

"all the churches shall know that **I AM HE.**" How often we are told the Lord works such that we may know it could *only* be the Lord working and not man (for example, John chapter 21, after the Lord caused the miracle of fish, we find Peter shouting, "It is the Lord!"). Note this truth just in the book of Ezekiel - 13:9; 23:49; 24:24; 28:24; 29:16!

The Lord is the searcher of the hearts and minds of men (Psalm 139:1-5; Hebrews 4:12). This truth is also a marvelous display of the glory and deity of the Lord Jesus (see Matthew 9:4). This is why He is to be the judge of all men, seeing He knows all things (John 21:16 cf... Acts 17:30-31).

At the end of verse twenty-three, our Lord speaks of "giving every man according to his works." This writer finds it amazing how often the Christian church has avoided this subject of judgment according to our works. Any quick review of the Bible will show that the subject of believers works being judged is common (see Psalm 62:12; Matthew 16:27; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 20:12). Although admittedly the subject is difficult, one must not be afraid of the truth of being saved by grace and at the same time having our works judged. To the same Corinthian saints, Paul says all things are of God as well as warning them that judgment day is coming (1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 4:7; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The same Bible that says apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5) tells us that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

v24 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.

All burdens pass through the Lord's hands before they ever come to us. With the tribulation upon (or almost upon) the people of God, it was then and is now essential that we know that nothing comes to a saint but by our gracious Lord (cf.. the book of Job). It is also imperative that we learn from Job not only that the sovereign hand of the Lord controls all things, but that there will be times when we will not always understand all that surrounds a given trial or difficulty, and that the mystery of some pathway we are traveling may remain inscrutable for a long time. But how often have we pondered the fact that,

like the saints of Thyatira, there were numerous times that the Lord "put no other burden upon us!"

v25 But that which ye have [already] hold fast till I come.

To "hold fast" is a common exhortation in the New Testament (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 3:6; 4:14; 10:23). That which remained in the Thyatira church of stability and truth the saints were to take steps to secure so as to make it immovable and established (see 2 Peter 1:5-10, esp. v10).

v26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

The idea of saints ruling is found in such Bible passages as Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29; Revelation 3:21; 20:4; 22:4. Indeed, it is amazing to compare Psalm 2:5ff and the Lord's promised rule with the saints and the description of their rule here (vv26,27). But the most important passages that parallel this theme and parallel the themes of Revelation are found in Daniel 7 verses 18,22,27. These privileges are only obtained by the grace of God through the means of our endurance (cf.. Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 3:6,14).

v27 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.

See Psalm 149:7-9 compare Psalm 2:1ff.

Such comparisons between the honors bestowed upon our Lord Jesus and the honors bestowed upon the saints are incredibly commonplace in the Word. Note: enthronement - Revelation 3:21; gospel commission - John 20:21; glory - 1 John 3:1-3. Yet this is in reality no surprise since from the foundation of the world we were "in Christ," (Ephesians 1:3,4,10,12).

v28 And I will give him the morning star.

The idea in this verse may be along the lines of Luke 1:77-79. Therein we find knowledge, remission of sins, tender mercy, springs of living water refreshing us, light and life. Our Lord may be saying to those who endure and overcome not only is there a throne but also grace, mercy, light, and life abundant (cf.. John 10:11), a true well of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). These are the glorious promises to the saints of God and the disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

v29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The "ears to hear" are not just our responsibility, but a gift of God (see Lydia in Acts 16:14). It is the Son that makes the glorious truths of God known by the Spirit (Matthew 11:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11). Eight times in the gospels we read "he who has ears to hear, let him hear," but we know that gospel truths are revealed and understood because of the Lord's gracious work cf. Matthew 16:17 (the Father), 2 Timothy 2:7 (the Son), and 1 Corinthians 2:10 (the Holy Spirit).