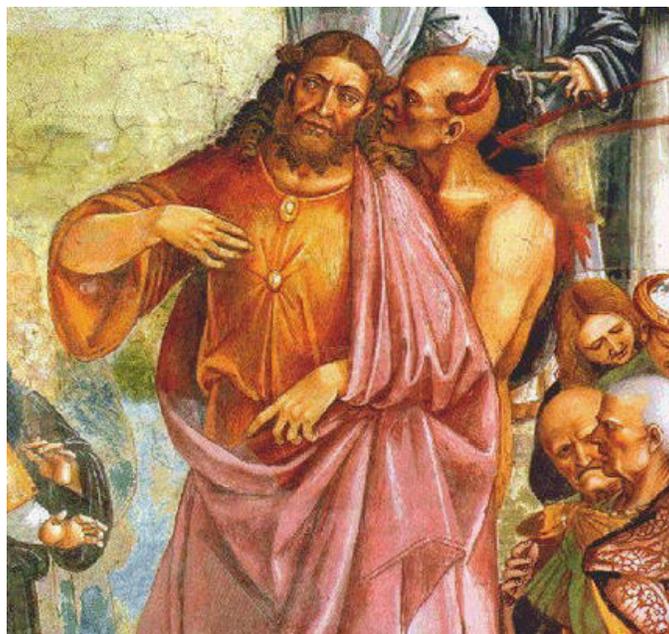


THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Christ's Imperial-Prophetic Address to the Church in Thyatira (2.18-29)



Luca Signorelli, detail from *Sermons and Deeds of the Antichrist*

I. Review From Last Week

1. The teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality)

Numbers 25.1-3 (NET): When Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to commit sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab. ² These women invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods; then the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ When Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, the anger of the LORD flared up against Israel. (*note: Ba'al means "husband"*)

1 Corinthians 10.14-22: Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸ Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹ What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²² Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

2. hidden manna, the white stone, and the name

II. Christ's Imperial-Prophetic Address to the Church in Thyatira (2.18-29)

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: "The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. ¹⁹ I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. ²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. ²⁴ But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come. ²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

1. Thyatira in the First Century
 - a. least important city of the seven (little historical or archaeological evidence), yet they will share in Christ's reign (cf. Rev 2.26-28)
 - b. trading centre; trade guilds (wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-traders, and bronze-smiths) – cf. Acts 16.14-15 (the conversion of Lydia)
2. **Christ's Self-identification:** "The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze." (2.18)
 - a. "Son of God" (Apollo; Psalm 2)

Psalm 2: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." ⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." ¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

- b. "eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze" (omniscience; strength; stability; cf. Daniel 2.33)

3. **Commendation:** “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.” (2.19)
 - a. Works are motivated by love and faith, manifest in service and patient endurance.

4. **Rebuke/Accusation:** “But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.” (2.20-21)
 - a. Israel’s “adultery” during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 16.29-22.40; 2 Kings 9.30-37)

1 Kings 16.29-33: In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. ³⁰ And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. ³¹ And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. ³² He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. ³³ And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (cf. John 4)

Exodus 32.1-7: When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” ² So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” ³ So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” ⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.” ⁶ And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. ⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.”

- b. Jezebel “cut off the prophets of the LORD” (1 Kings 18.3) and installed prophets of Baal and Asherah

1 Kings 18.17-19: When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?” ¹⁸ And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father’s house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. ¹⁹ Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

Kings 18.36-40: And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. ³⁷ Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and

the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.” ⁴⁰ And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.” And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.

- c. 1 Kings 21: Naboth’s Vineyard
 - d. “seduces” – leads astray/deceive (cf. Rev 12.9; 20.3, 10 [re: the Devil]; Rev 18.23 [re: the harlot]; Rev 13.14 [re: the second beast]; Rev 19.20 [re: the false prophet])
 - e. Cf. the faithfulness of the widow of Zarephath [Sidon]: God provides for her and Elijah raises her son from the dead (1 Kings 17.8-24)
5. **Exhortation and Call to Repentance:** “Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. ²⁴ But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come.” (2.22-25)
- a. “I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead.”

1 Corinthians 11.27-31: Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

b. Repentance

- i. turning; change of mind (away from sin and towards Christ)
- ii. mortification and vivification: “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6.11)
- iii. Martin Luther’s 95 theses: (1) “When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said ‘Repent’, He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”
- iv. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (cheap grace vs. costly grace)¹

Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of the church. Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: Macmillan, 1963), 45-48.

taught as the Christian “conception” of God. In Churches that preach such grace, the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, and Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: “you were bought at a price,” and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

- c. “And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.”

Jeremiah 17.10: “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”

John 15.1-8, 16: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples ... ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.

Ephesians 2.10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Revelation 19.6-8: Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Luke 13:6 And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ ⁸ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

- d. “hold fast” – cf. the faithfulness of the widow of Zarephath [Sidon]: God provides for her and Elijah raises her son from the dead (1 Kings 17.8-24)
6. **Promise:** “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (2.26-28)
- a. “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end”
- b. “to him I will give authority over the nations”

Revelation 5.9-10: And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Psalms 2.8-9: Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Psalms 8: *To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.* O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ² Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. ³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. ⁹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (cf. Hebrews 2.1-9)

Genesis 1.26-28: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Matthew 28.18-20: And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”