

# Revelation 2:19-29 – Intolerance

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     So if you've been with us any length of time, you know that we're studying the book of Revelation verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Chapter. We're in every verse, every chapter of the book.

And we've come to the part in chapter two and three where Jesus is writing letters to the churches in Asia Minor. They are actual real letters to actual real churches.

All right. But they have application for us. OK, so we've come as far as the letter to the church of Thyatira.

So that is verse 19 of 18 of chapter two. So let me just tell you, Thyatira was a nothing town.

Like I have a whole book on my Logos Bible software dedicated to Thyatira being a nothing town. It's 300 pages long.

[ 0 : 5 7 ]     Now, I know that doesn't make sense, right? Why would you write a book on a town that said nothing town? But it's a nothing town. It would be like, you know, one of our towns where, you know, we see them time to time, don't we?

Where it's like a factory in the middle of nowhere and houses around that factory. And everybody who lives in that town works in that factory. Right. You know, they don't really have a shop or a store or restaurants.

Maybe have a pub that opens maybe three hours on a Friday night and that's it. Right. You drive in, drive out. And if you say that you live in that town, no one would know where that is.

Right. It's just nothing. It's nothing town. All right. This town, Thyatira, back in the day was a garrison town. It was a soldier town. If you lived in a town, you were a soldier.

All right. And that's just how it was. When the Seleucids conquered the area of Thyatira, they did actually move craftsmen and women into the town.

[ 1 : 5 9 ]     And gradually the town started to get bigger. But it was known as being nothing. I mean, imagine that. Right. Like, I'm not going to make any comparisons with any town because I know that that's a dangerous town.

But I'm just telling you, like, you wouldn't go there. You wouldn't pass there. There would be no reason to go there. All right. Until quite late on when the Seleucids had come in, developed the town a little bit, and then craftsmen and farmers were sent to the region.

So there's only really one thing that we know about Thyatira that has anything about it. And that was the craftsmen's guilds. So if you were a craftsman, so maybe you were a woodworker or you worked in wool or something like that, we know that from Acts chapter 16, there was a lady called Lydia who was a seller of purple from Thyatira.

Right. So she would have been a member of one of the guilds. Think union. Right. So they were famous for their unions. Okay.

So obviously a northern town. Right. A northern industrial town. So just think, northern industrial town, nothing town, nothing to do with anything, but it's famous for its unions.

[ 3 : 22 ] Right. And so membership of the union was compulsory. They did protect you in terms of work, but also, you know, they controlled what you could sell, when you could sell it, how much you could sell, what you did, those kind of things.

It's really tightly controlled. So what we know, interestingly, is where last week, do you remember the city of Pergamum was really famous for its emperor worship? Thyatira wasn't.

In fact, there was hardly any emperor worship there at all because each of these unions had their own gods. So if you were a metal worker and you belonged to the National Thyatira Metal Workers Union, who previously merged with another union, because that's what they do, then you would have had your own deity.

And you would have worn the deity's image with pride and your subscription every year would have gone to keep the deity alive and well, presumably.

So there was no room for emperor worship. That's what I'm saying. OK, so. It is the smallest city out of the seven that we've been looking at, but it is the longest letter.

[ 4 : 54 ] And remember, like, as we look at verse 18, that at the beginning of each letter, Jesus presents himself as the prescription to the problem that this church is facing.

So this church in Thyatira is facing a problem. But before Jesus gets to the problem, he gets to praise. Right?

Now, I know that that's like just been a thing for me to remember. And I don't know whether you're like that, like me. I get to the problem first. Right? Like, that's just my personality.

I identify problems first. I'm going, that's a problem. We need to work on that problem. And sometimes praise is hard. But Jesus isn't like that. He comes to this church and this church is full of problems.

And he comes, he finds the praise first. So there's three, there are three ways that Jesus comes to them as a prescription to the problem.

[ 5 : 52 ] But then he's going to talk about the praise. So verse 18, he says, these things, says the Son of God. So this is the only time in the book of Revelation that Jesus identifies himself or addresses himself or refers to himself directly as the Son of God.

And we're going to read about a woman in this letter. And part of the church who followed her, who said that she spoke from God. Right?

She's a prophetess, which means that she speaks from God. And so Jesus introduces himself in this way because he is the final authority. Right? There's an authority issue in this church.

And look, if we're honest, we also know there's an authority issue in our own lives. Like, how often do we have to make decisions and we don't like submitting to someone else's authority or God's authority?

We're the authority, right? And so there's an authority issue in this church. So he comes, first thing he comes, he says, I'm the Son of God. Right? If you want a question, if you want to deal with that, how are you going to deal with me?

[ 6 : 56 ] All right? Second thing he says, who has the eyes of flame of fire and feet of fine brass. So what he's saying, it is the prerogative of God to investigate the inner man.

That's what he does. All right? And look, we're going to be investigated this morning. So it is because he is the authority. It's his prerogative to then judge.

It's his prerogative to then investigate. And we'll see in verse 23 that Jesus says that he searches the hearts and minds or the minds and hearts.

That's what he does. And then thirdly, he describes himself coming with feet like burnished bronze. And I think he comes like this because he's going to speak quite a bit about judgment and the need to be refined.

And obviously, you know, the guild workers are going to be thinking, reading this, thinking, oh, that's referencing to what I do or that's referencing to what I do in terms of the bronze work or the metal work or whatever it is.

[ 8 : 01 ] No, it is. But Jesus is coming and saying, look, there is a need to be judged and there is a need to be refined. There is a need to be made morally pure. And so Jesus reminds them that he is the one who is morally pure and he is able to judge because of that.

So then in verse 19, he begins, as he has always, by saying something he knows. And so he says, I know your work. So whether you are in a big town or a small town, well known or hardly known, every church is important to Jesus.

Right. And so Jesus has something to say to them and he has something to say to us. And what Jesus says first is commendation.

And there are some things they are doing really, really well. And we should note this because Thyatira has a bit of a bad reputation amongst Bible teachers and Bible scholars as being just that really bad church.

And it is a really bad church. But Jesus comes and he gives them some pretty sweet praise straight off. He says, I know your works, your love and faith.

[ 9 : 13 ] That was their motive. Love and faith was their motive. They loved God and they loved people and they were sure that God was true and he would be true to what he said.

And they trusted him for that. And Thyatira is distinguished as unique amongst all of those seven churches as being the only one commended for both love and faith.

Like, of course, it matters what comes next, right? Of course, it matters what Jesus is going to say to this church in rebuke. But don't you love what he notices about this church?

That their motive is love and faith. And this love and faith has inspired them, he says, to service and patient endurance. So love and faith has produced in them service and patience.

Unlike the church at Ephesus, their love for Christ has not grown cold. Right? Because he says that your latter works exceed the first.

[ 10 : 20 ] The word works mentioned five times in this letter. It's the Greek word *ergon*, which means business. And in Revelation, it's it's it's we see it often, often comes back work, business, what people are doing, service, that kind of idea.

Four times it's regard regarding their work. And the last time it is regarding the work of Jesus. So in that sense, too, the last is greater than the first because the work of Christ is better than our work.

But what Jesus is saying is that your works are getting greater. You're doing more and more. The things that you were doing back then were brilliant. But now they're even they're great.

They're great. They're better than the things that you used to do. And so what is interesting is that the church at Ephesus at the beginning of the chapter lacked love. And the church here in Thyatira lacked truth.

We're going to see that. And what we need to understand that is a healthy church needs to have a good balance of both. Right. So when you compare the church at Ephesus and you compare the church at Thyatira, you almost want to take them both and match them two together.

[ 11 : 31 ] You almost want to go, guys, can you move? Right. Can you move into this new neighborhood? Right. Because the church at Ephesus lacked love, but the church at Thyatira lacked truth.

And it is a rare thing, isn't it? So I would say it's probably a very rare thing to be a Christian who is both theologically robust and also pastorally sensitive in equal measure.

And that's that's kind of like, you know, the way that the body of Christ is supposed to function in the way that it does. Right. Because you have people who are stronger in one thing and, you know, weaker in another thing and people are stronger in one this area over here and weaker in this area and over here.

Right. And that's the way that the body of Christ is supposed to work, all working together. Now, that doesn't mean if you're theologically robust, you can just be inept at being pastorally loving.

Right. Or if you're pastorally loving, it doesn't mean you can just kind of go, I don't have to worry about doctrine. Like they're both important. Right. But the danger is that we look for people.

[ 12 : 35 ] And this is this is I think I think it's true. We look for people who are perfect. When only Jesus is perfect. And, you know, I was just reminded this week of an 18th century preacher called Jonathan Edwards, who once preached a sermon and the sermon title was this.

The admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ Jesus. Now, I think that we did much better sermon titles back then. The admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ Jesus.

But in his sermon, he went on to talk about and describe Jesus as as what the admirable conjunction of divine excellencies. And so he talks about how the son of God, how he was the son of God and the son of man.

He wasn't one or the other. He was the good shepherd and the perfect lamb. They sound like contradictions, don't they? He was the king and the suffering servant, the lion and the lamb, the first and the last, meekness and majesty, absolute sovereignty and perfect submission.

Self-sufficiency and complete trust in God, infinite glory and incredible humility. A voice that calls galaxies into being and calls friends home from beyond the grave.

[ 13 : 56 ] It's a very rare thing to be like that. Like, I can only think of one person ever to exist like that. And that's Jesus.

But Paul says, don't use that as an excuse to give up. Don't don't use that as an excuse to kind of go, well, that's Jesus. Like, that's out of reach.

And should we agree like perfection is out of reach right now? But Paul said in Philippians chapter three, he said, I press to war. I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

I haven't finished moving forward in that direction. As a church and I would say, look, as this church, we need to grow in both and heed this word from Jesus this morning.

We need to be a church that is full of head and full of heart. So that is Jesus's commendation to this church, his praise report for this church.

[ 14 : 55 ] And in terms of love and faith and service and patience, they're getting all nines, all A stars. But there's some other things where, well, they need to do a lot of work, right?

Could try better is probably just not even on the script. This is more than could try better. Here's what he says in verse 20. He says, but I have this against you. And if you're taking notes in your Bible, just circle this word tolerate.

That you tolerate. So after telling the church how great they are doing, he now tells them about the problems that exist. And the problem is that this church was allowing something to take place that shouldn't be taking place.

The pressure is not coming. You know, almost all of the other churches we see in these seven letters, almost all of the pressure that is coming to the church is coming from outside in.

This problem is coming from the inside. It's a problem of the inside of this church. And again, it's wrapped up in this word tolerate.

[ 16 : 10 ] And look, that's a bit of an on-trend word at the moment, isn't it? But I don't know whether you've noticed, we live in one of the most intolerant societies, don't we? Whilst there is the promotion of tolerance, we know that tolerance only goes so far.

But look, actually, it's the same in the church. Let's not kind of, you know, throw stones at greenhouses and go, well, how dare you be so intolerant of intolerance?

The church is too. And actually, this is what Jesus is calling us to do. To be more intolerant. He says that the problem is that you tolerate stuff way too much than you do.

Last time we talked about the need to flex and stretch in the way we act and talk. We as Christians are called to so much more than just tolerating.

Aren't we? Putting up with. Like, think about how Jesus addressed tolerance. He said that we should love our enemies.

[ 17 : 22 ] And we should pray for those who persecute us. Not tolerate, not put up with. That's a different level, isn't it? In many ways, tolerance sets the bar too low.

But there comes a time where tolerance should become intolerance. And too often, what is happening today is that we associate love with unconditional acceptance.

Like, I don't know how many times we've heard it or how many times I've heard it. But I hear this thing like, if I don't accept you and your thing, whatever your thing is, then you don't love me.

Right? Like, if you don't accept me and all of my baggage and all of this and that, as I am, then you don't love me. Which is, of course, not how God sees it.

Because God is intolerant to sin. God is intolerant to sin. To the point that he came not only to speak the truth, but to bring restoration and healing and reconciliation and forgiveness.

[ 18 : 28 ] And this is what Jesus is saying is the problem. There wasn't enough of that kind of intolerance. And, of course, that's the problem with the liberal church as well, isn't it?

I mean, the good thing is that they want to love everyone. They haven't realized that they can't love everyone. They should be commended for that.

But they have defined love as accepting all kinds of behaviors that the Bible says are out of bounds for Christians. And so Jesus uses that as an example. As if they didn't know.

Like, because there's going to be some guys in the church who are going to be like, I don't know what you mean. Can you elaborate? And kind of Jesus goes, yeah, okay, I can elaborate. That woman Jezebel, let's talk about her. Right?

Now, look, I don't think this is an actual woman called Jezebel. Because no parent would do that to their kid. Right? Like, no one's. But I've never met. I don't know how many kids I've taught at school.

[ 19 : 26 ] I've never met Jezebel. Right? Where's our teachers? Joe, you met Jezebel? No. Sarah never met Jezebel? No. Hannah? No. Jenny? Jenny's not in here.

Joe? No. Anyone else met Jezebel? No. There probably is. And when you go there, you can let us know.

That would be part of the mission to find this woman Jezebel and go, hey, you're in the Bible. But it's not very complimentary. So, look. The woman Jezebel, obviously, you know, in the last letter, Jesus pulls out this guy, Balaam, and the Nicolaitans.

And he's using an Old Testament example to bring about a spiritual lesson. Here he pulls out Jezebel in the same manner. Jezebel was an actual woman in the Old Testament. Right? She was a...

This is the reason why no one calls their kid Jezebel. Right? So, she was the wife of King Ahab.

[ 20 : 29 ] Right? And the most likely scenario is that this is a woman, a real woman, doing things like Jezebel did. Right?

And she is being tolerated by the church. Okay? So, there is a woman in this town who is like the infamous wife of Ahab. Notice the next thing about her, verse 20.

She calls herself a prophetess. So, the problem was that the problem that Israel faced under the reign of King Ahab is the same thing that these guys are facing. Jezebel was his wife who brought idolatry into Israel.

Right? And she took anything that was originally moral and right in King Ahab and turned his heart to the point where he made wooden images. The king of Israel made wooden images and bowed down and worshipped them.

And as a result, she built temples to Baal in Israel. Had people worshipping Baal. And as, you know, the people did, the king did. And she claimed to speak from God.

[ 21 : 35 ] And in fact, you know, in 1 Kings chapter 21, she then positions herself as king over Israel by deceit.

This is about authority. This is about authority. And so, there is a woman in this town doing the same thing with this church as Jezebel did.

So, what is it exactly that she's doing? We read there in verse 20, she is teaching, seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

So, this is so simple. We almost want to turn around to the church of Thyatira and kind of go, what were you thinking? Right?

Because back in the book of Acts, the apostles had met. And in the book of Acts, you know, the church was still being formed. And they had an authoritative council.

[ 22 : 35 ] Council that met of the apostles. Capital A apostles. The big 12. Right? And they met. And they had a conference. And they decided that one of the things that the church as a whole should focus on was to abstain from the things polluted by idols and from sexual immorality and from what has been strangled and from blood.

Now, there's a whole back story to how the Gentiles were kind of interacting with then the mainly Jewish church and the Jewish church were interacting with Gentiles. There's a whole back story to that.

But it seems that the things that they were told to stay away from in Acts chapter 15 are the very things that the woman is promoting. Doesn't it?

So, she is coming on the scene. She's going, you know what? I know. I know capital A apostles. I know they're a big deal. But they're all the way in Jerusalem. And really, I mean, how many of them even have even visited Thyatira?

How many of you used to say to the capital A apostles, I come from Thyatira? Would they even know where that is? You don't have to listen to it. You can listen to this instead. That's kind of like the deal.

[ 23 : 45 ] It's authority. So, in essence, we have a church listening to something other than God. God's word. Making that authoritative. And so, I know that you kind of feel like that's hard to believe.

Right? Like, who would do that? But listen. The spirit of Jezebel, at least, is actually alive and well in the church today. The issue of authority.

Like, what we listen to and how we listen. And I don't need to give you examples of all the nut job crazy things going on in churches around the world.

Just log on to YouTube. Spend two minutes max. Two minutes. Don't go on there for too long. You'll fry your brain. Right? But you'll find whack job churches.

Right? I don't need to tell you that. I don't need to tell you that as an example of a problem of authority. Because if we are honest enough, we know that there's a problem of authority just in our own lives.

[ 24 : 54 ] And if you get enough people with problems of authority together, all of a sudden you've got problem churches. Like, I don't have to show you a church doing crazy things.

I struggle with that in my own heart. Right? Obeying what I want to do as opposed to what God's word tells me to do. That's an issue of authority. So if I'm struggling with that in my own life, like I'm hoping, at least, kind of, encouragingly, someone else is struggling with that too.

I don't need to give you an example of another church. Right? Do you get me? The problem with this church in Thyatira is not that they struggled. And please don't think that I'm suggesting that because you struggle, you're a problem.

We all struggle. The issue was not that they struggled. But the issue was that they struggled and they tolerated.

They let it go, if you like. They tolerated something that they should not be tolerating. They struggled to the point where they gave up struggling.

[ 26 : 08 ] They weren't happy to kind of live in that tension of struggling. They kind of went, actually, it's going to be easier if I just give in to that, to whatever that is.

And then I don't have to struggle with that anymore. Right? When you read the letters of John, same guy who's writing this book of Revelation, you discover that he's probably writing about this woman or the group that she represents.

Right? And certainly 1 John was written about the same time. And he writes to a separatist group that based its teaching on prophetic inspiration.

So, something other than authoritative word of God. This is what he said in 1 John chapter 2. He said that this group, this separatist group, they went out from us, but they were not of us.

For if they'd been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that it might become plain that they were not of us. Now, it's like, what?

[ 27 : 10 ] Right? But listen, what he's saying is that there's a group. There was a group of people who were Christians in this church with us. And they went out. Separatist group.

That's all he's established so far. Then he says in 1 John chapter 4 verse 1, he says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit. Like, I'm making the connection between there's a separatist group and this woman who is speaking prophecy as authoritative above the word of God and above what the apostle said there in the first century.

And John's exhortation to not believe everything. Don't be so gullible. Believe, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

For many false prophets have gone into the world. It's not just Jezebel. But by this, you know the spirit of God, that every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus, Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. And that's a study for another day.

[ 28 : 29 ] But it could be that this woman has something to do with this group that separated themselves from off from this church. And they were influencing, infiltrating this church in some way.

Simple. Jesus says, astonishingly, I gave her time. Verse 21. I gave her time to repent.

Isn't that astonishing? Because I'd be like, you know, I don't know. I'd probably be a little bit more judgmental than that. And Jesus, at some point in the past, had said, it's time to repent.

It's time to turn back. It's time to go the other way. It's time to change your mind. Please do that. Jesus, I gave her time to repent, but she refused to repent of her sexual immorality.

So this isn't the first time Jesus has addressed this. Verse 22. Behold, I will throw her into a sick bed. Interestingly, just for you Greek geeks, there is a play on words going on here.

[ 29 : 30 ] In verse 21, Jesus says, I gave her time to repent, but she refused to repent of her sexual immorality. And what he is saying is that the church had got into bed with other gods, which is spiritual adultery.

And in verse 22, Jesus says that he is going to turn that same bed into a sick bed. Right? Make sense? And those who commit adultery with her, I will throw into great tribulation unless they repent of her works.

Unless they repent of her works. Interestingly, not repent of their works, but repent of her works. So obviously they're doing what she is doing. And I will strike her children dead.

So just like Jesus did in the last letter by mentioning Antipas. Do you remember that? Here he steps out of the context and starts applying the ideas to the church universal. So the woman is specific to Thyatira.

Those who commit adultery with her and those who follow those practices are church universal. Right? Because the pattern of the spirit of Jezebel, if you like, is alive 2,000 years later.

[ 30 : 34 ] So note that the punishment for the woman is different from the punishment of her followers. Do you notice that too? Right? So she will be thrown into a sick bed, which probably refers to a long and painful death.

And her followers will be thrown into great tribulation unless they repent. Now look, this is a good time, I think, to stop and ask what this great tribulation refers to.

Because it's more than just a statement about suffering. So we'll come back to this in chapter 3 in the church of Laodicea.

I think. Someone will correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's church of Laodicea. But it's kind of a good time just to kind of stop and go, what is this great tribulation that Jesus is talking about?

So the Greek word for tribulation is thilipsis. You're welcome. It means trouble, distress, or affliction.

[ 31 : 39 ] Trouble, distress, or affliction. And to understand how Jesus is using this phrase, we have to know four ways in which this word, thilipsis, is used in the Bible.

The first is of a general state of suffering that happens to all people. So tribulation happens to all people through all time.



Tribulation. Romans chapter 2 verse 9. There will be tribulation and distress. For who? For every human being who does evil. Simple. Alright.

So the consequence of the fall, Genesis chapter 3, the consequence of the fall is being separated from God, who is the source of all good things. The consequence is that we are now subject to tribulation.

Right? The reason you and I struggle or have distress on a daily basis, and our neighbours and our colleagues and people, you know, we work with and we know and whoever, they suffer the same things, is why?

[ 32 : 39 ] Genesis chapter 3. Right? Tribulation. All people, all of the time. No escape. The second way the word is used is in relation to general suffering that happens to all believers because they follow Jesus.

It's different. That's a different usage. Would you agree? It's a different way. Right? So to all Christians through all time. Can I just, can I just say, if you're a Christian, you can't escape tribulation.

Right? I know that's not great news, but it's just true. You can't escape it. Jesus said, described in Matthew 13, this is what he described when he was given the parable of the soils. He says, As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

Yet he has no root of himself, but endures for a little while. And when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

Jesus promised this kind of tribulation. John chapter 16, 33. In the world, you will have tribulation. Right? You're going to have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world.

[ 33 : 55 ] You only have to think of Christians being thrown to the lions in the Roman arenas, or Christians being torn on the racks of the Spanish Inquisition, or in more recent news, Christians today being tortured and put into death camps in China, and different places around the world.

This is tribulation to all Christians through all time. The third way the word is used is in relation to specific suffering that happens to all believers as part of God's sanctification process.

Right? None of us like this either. Right? It's like, Oh, sign me up. Sign me up. I'll be in front of the queue. I'll give me some tribulation. Right? But this is just simply like to all Christians for specific times.

Right? You ever gone through some struggle and come through the other side of it? Tribulation. It is, there are times in our lives where God allows to struggle, and he allows suffering, because through it, we grow into holiness and Christlikeness.

But listen, it's just for a period. It's just for a season. It's just for a time. You kind of walk into it, and someone goes, it's just for a season. And you don't believe them, do you? Like, you may be coming to me, and you go, Simon, I'm having such a hard time.

[ 35 : 16 ] It feels like I'm having tribulation. And I'm like, dude, it's just for a season. And you're like, you're lying. But it's just for a season. God is doing something with that.

We read in Acts, when Paul went to various towns, in Acts 14, he went to various towns, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in faith, and saying that, through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.

Notice the term many. We don't like that either, do we? Like one? All right. A short one? Okay, fine. But not many. Right? So many, and look how it relates to entering the kingdom of God.

There are times in our lives where God uses a period of specific tribulation to help us enter the kingdom. Right? They are sometimes short.

They are sometimes long. But they are a specific time allowed for by God to help us. And then at some other point, another point along the way, God uses another thing for tribulation again to do his refining work.

[ 36 : 38 ] This is what Paul had to write to the church in Rome. And this is why he had to write to the church in Rome and encourage them to rejoice in hope, to be patient in tribulation.

Be patient. You can only be patient if you know that something is coming to an end. Be patient. So, what do we have? We have, thanks John, to all people through all time, to all Christians through all time, to all Christians for a specific time.

And the fourth way the Bible uses the term tribulation is a specific time that comes to all non-believers. A specific time that comes to all non-believers.

So, all non-Christians for a specific time. So, in contrast to the general period of specific suffering because we follow Jesus, this one speaks about a specific time of suffering that comes upon the whole world that they will encounter because they don't follow Jesus.

Okay? Which is why it's often referred to simply as a time of God's wrath. So, Jesus says about this time in Matthew 24 that there, for then, there will be great tribulation.

[ 37 : 54 ] It's our word, the ellipsis. And look, look how unique this time is. It is not for all time for all people. It is not for all time for Christians.

And it is not for all Christians for a specific time. And it is not many times. Right? He says, such has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

It's a unique period of time. Matthew chapter 13 talks about the same period of time. But in those days, after that tribulation, so at the end of that tribulation, this is not good news.

It's like, what's at the end of that tribulation? Well, more tribulation. That's what it seems like. The sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light. The stars will be falling from heaven. The powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then, after that time, they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great glory and power.

Jesus is talking about a unique period of time. It can't be tribulation to all people all time. Why? Because Jesus hasn't come back yet. Revelation 7, John describes those that get saved by God during this time when he is told that these are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

[ 39 : 04 ] They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And so the question is, which one is Jesus referring to? Right? Which one is Jesus referring to? And I think clearly, given the context, Jesus is talking about the last one.

He's talking about a period of tribulation for all non-Christians for a specific time. And the reason that I think this is because he attaches the great get-out clause.

Did you notice? Look in your text. He says, if you repent. Now look, he can't be talking about the first three uses of the ellipsis if he is saying you can get out of it.

Right? Because we've established that tribulation comes to all people. I mean, it's the first one. We're done. Like, as a by-product of the fall, tribulation comes.

You can't go, oh, if I repent. Because like, if you're a Christian this morning, you have repented and are repenting. Can I ask you a question? Does tribulation still come? Yes, it does.

[ 40 : 14 ] Right? So, he gives us this great get-out clause. If you repent, you would be unique in all of human history if you didn't suffer like other humans or if you didn't suffer for being a Christian or you didn't suffer to make you a better Christian.

This would be the most unique get-out-of-jail card ever drawn. But also, check out the encouragement to them in verse 25.

He says, only hold fast on what you have until I come. The encouragement is about the second coming of Jesus. This is, as theologians would call this, eschatological.

Right? This is about the second coming of Jesus. This is not about tribulation that we all go through, standard, bulk standard, off-the-shelf tribulation. This is about unique tribulation related to the second coming of Jesus.

Then you also read the promise in verse 26 which is a quote from Psalm 2. If you read Psalm 2, it's all about the end times. It's all about the second coming of Jesus. So the context is super strong in supporting the idea that Jesus is saying to those in this church who are following the ideas of Jezebel, church universal, not just the church here, you're going to find that you experience the wrath of God in the great tribulation if you don't repent.

[ 41 : 46 ] And then he says, and all the churches, literally all the called out ones will know that I am he who searches minds and hearts and I will give to each of you according to your works.

So this is something that Jesus has actually said earlier and he said it to Jeremiah. So he said to Jeremiah, I am the Lord or 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.

And that should be conviction, right? That God knows our hearts. He knows our thoughts before we think them. He knows what we're thinking now. He knows you're thinking that Simon's going too long and you're probably true.

It's probably right. But he knows, he knows what we're thinking. But to the rest of you in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching, verse 24, 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.

So the deep things refer to probably the prophecies that were being given and listened to. We know there were certain cults that are around at this time were actually known as mystery cults.

[ 42 : 56 ] And one of the common feature of a mystery cult was that the indoctrination or the induction process was that you would gain deep secrets. Right? So deep secrets or special wisdom.

But in contrast, Jesus says, to those who have rejected that, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast to what you have until I come.

So you already have what you need. Don't try to make things complicated. Don't try to make things too complex. Like you have what you need.

Just hold fast to what you have. The one who conquers and who keeps my word until the end.

What is, what is, what is the work of God? What are my works? Because like, it's easy to come away from, especially a letter like this and go, well, I've got to do something. I've got to, I've got to do something for Jesus to make him accept me so then I get to see the kingdom of God.

[ 43 : 57 ] Right? So what is that work that Jesus is talking about here? Well, it's the same work that he talked about in John chapter 6 where he said, this is the work of God that you believe in him who has sent me.

Right? And it's not just believing with head knowledge. It is, we talked about this word before, it is pledging your allegiance to Jesus. To say, I'm following Jesus. Through trial and tribulation, I'm following Jesus.

Through the good times and the bad times, I'm following Jesus. Because I believe what he has said about himself is true. And so, that is the work of God.

So he says there in verse 26, the one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, and I think that is, that's the same thing, like the one who conquers is the one who keeps my works until the end.

To him, I will give authority over the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron as when earth and pots are broken in pieces, even as myself have received authority from my father. Interestingly, the promises that he has given to the other churches have to do with eternal life.

[ 45 : 03 ] And here, for Thyatira, this is the promise of what they're going to be doing as they enjoy eternal life. And then, in verse 27, you'll notice that he quotes from Psalm 2.

And Psalm 2, it is all about Jesus ruling the nations. Why do the nations rage and plot a vain thing? Right?

And he talks about, there's God. He looks at the nations and he mocks them because they think they're all that and they're not all that. And it's Jesus who's going to take the throne.

And so, this is a reference to that. Psalm 2 is all about Jesus' rights and return to rule and reign during a period what we call the millennial kingdom. So, the promises here are that the believers will serve under Christ.

Matthew chapter 19, verse 28, Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

[ 46 : 15 ] Revelation 20, verse 4, John says, Then I saw thrones and seated on them were those who, to whom the authority to judge was committed. So, again, we get this idea of authority.

Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, tribulation, and for the word of God because they saw the authority as being the authority.

And those who had not worshipped the beast or its image, they had repented. And had not received its mark on their foreheads or on their hands. They came to life.

Do you love that? They came to life. Like, even, even Jesus has authority over death. That's what we were singing about this morning, wasn't it? They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

So, then verse 28, he says, and we're rushing through this, I know, I apologize, but verse 28, I will give him the morning star, he who has an ear, which is asked, that's you, that's me, letting me hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[ 47 : 24 ] So, a further reward of the overcoming is to receive the morning star. Jesus has promised something like this before. I even used the same words, Matthew chapter 13, verse 43. Then the writers will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

He who has ears, let him hear. And so, this letter is about authority. Whose authority do we obey?

And we have the word of God, we have the Bible come from God, spoken to people via the Holy Spirit. We believe this is the authoritative word of God.

Right? And here, the context of this church in Thyatira is that, that was being challenged. And again, we all know that challenge.

We all experience that challenge each and every day. Am I going to follow this way or am I going to follow this way? Am I going to heed this voice or am I going to heed this voice? Am I going to listen to this or am I going to listen to what the Spirit says?

[ 48 : 33 ] And for us, look, let us with every bit of strength that God provides, being tolerant of people and things we should not, we should be more tolerant of that we might learn to flex and stretch, that we might show the love of Christ, but that we might make a stand and say, look, there is an authority that is higher than any authority on earth.

And it's the authority of God. And so, we learn to be tolerant of people and we learn to flex and stretch, but at the same time, we learn to be intolerant of the things that God is also intolerant of.

It comes down to authority. It comes down to who we are going to submit to. God says to the children of Israel, choose today whom you're going to serve, who your authority is, who you're listening to.

May God help us to do that. Let's pray. Father, we come to you this morning, we thank you that we have the Bible. Lord, we thank you that we have access to your word.

We know that there are hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world that don't have your word. But Lord, we do thank you that we do have your word. And so therefore us, really there isn't an excuse.

[ 50 : 00 ] Lord, we want to just confess, Lord, that our hearts sometimes pull us in directions that we don't want to go. We get tempted to listen to one voice over another voice and quite frankly, Lord, we are bombarded these days with different narratives, different voices, different stories.

And sometimes it's hard to discern how we respond, how we respond in a measured, loving, yet intolerant way. Lord, help us to be more like you.

Lord, who was perfectly displaying those admirable excellencies. Lord, we want to love people like you love people.

Lord, but we also want to speak truth like you speak truth. Help us in that. That's just a minefield. But also in our own lives, Lord, we recognize, Lord, that there are too often compromises that we're happy to live with, sins that we're happy to just let go.

Lord, may we be a church, may we be a people where sin troubles us, our own sin, the sins of those around us, the sins of this nation.

[ 51 : 25 ] And Lord, may they trouble us to the point where we are pointing in the right direction in repentance towards you. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that we have a God who forgives, who offers repentance.

Thank you that we have a God who offers forgiveness and grace. And so, Lord, may we walk in that grace today, not accepting our sin, Lord, but knowing that by your Holy Spirit, as we submit to your word each and every day, your Holy Spirit is doing a work in us and through us to make us more like you.

So again, Lord, we submit ourselves to that work and ask you to continue in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.