

Revelation 2:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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 th... This verse from Revelation's vision of letters to ephesus, smyrna, pergamum, thyatira - love lost, faithful suffering, compromise employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 2:20 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?
2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?

3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλ'	ἔχω	κατὰ	σοῦ	όλιγα	ὅτι	έἄς
Notwithstanding	I have	against	thee	a few things	because	thou sufferest
G235	G2192	G2596	G4675	G3641	G3754	G1439
τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβηλ,	τὴν λέγουσαν	έαυτὴν προφῆτιν				
which that woman	Jezebel	which calleth	herself	a prophetess		
G3588	G1135	G2403	G3588	G3004	G1438	G4398
διδάσκειν καὶ πλανᾶσθαι ἐμοὺς δούλους πορνεῦσαι						
to teach	and	to seduce	my	servants	to commit fornication	
G1321	G2532	G4105	G1699	G1401		G4203
καὶ εἰδωλόθυτα φαγεῖν						
and things sacrificed unto idols	to eat					
G2532	G1494		G5315			

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 2:14 (Sacrifice): 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 stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

1 Kings 16:31 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

Acts 15:29 (Parallel theme): That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

2 Kings 9:7 (Prophecy): And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.

Acts 15:20 (Parallel theme): But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

Revelation 2:4 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Exodus 34:15 (Sacrifice): Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

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