

Session 6 Encountering Jesus: Overcoming Temptation, Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Well, Revelation 2 is a very practical chapter. At first glance it may seem a little hard to get hold of, but it's so practical. Paragraph A. The Holy Spirit is preparing the Church to operate in great power. That's what He's doing right now. Many of you are in your twenties, and when you're in your forties, the Holy Spirit is working right now in a very specific way preparing the Church across the earth to move in the power of the Spirit far beyond what we're moving in right now.

Now we're not waiting for thirty years; we're believing God to move in power today, but as the days go by and the preparation increases, we'll see the power increase, too. But here's the thing: the Holy Spirit requires that we live a lifestyle of obedience. We must live in obedience to move in greater power. We don't earn the power by obedience; that's not what I'm saying. But a spirit of obedience brings us into unity with His heart.

THE TWO MOST EMPHASIZED SINS IN THE LAST GENERATION

Now notice the two main sins that are highlighted in the book of Revelation. Without looking at the notes, what do you think are the two main sins that the Holy Spirit highlights in the generation the Lord returns? Number one: immorality. Number two might surprise you: idolatry.

You think, "Idolatry? What?"

Well, from a biblical, New Testament point of view, idolatry is more than just worshiping an idol or a statue. It actually is the subject of seeking to have power that's outside the will of God. Idolatry is about gaining power. That's really what it is.

Idolatry is associated with money. Now money isn't evil in itself. The love of money is evil, but not money itself (1 Tim. 6:10). The enemy wants to stir up the people of God to seek for power, and of course he's highlighting the occult realm. We've talked about that already, and all these "innocent" occult shows that are wooing people in to desensitize their spirit to the whole realm of darkness, making it look glorious. But the Holy Spirit is also equipping the Church to overcome immorality. These are the two main strategies of Satan in this hour.

DON'T SETTLE FOR THE MISERY OF LIVING WITH A DEFILED SPIRIT

Paragraph two. Immorality—catch this definition—includes all sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. I'll say that again, because I'm saying this to be helpful. I'm not saying it to be mean. It's not like, "Oh, come on! Give me a break!" I am giving you a break: I'm tipping you off on what keeps your spirit dull. Who wants to have a glorious Savior but in such a way that your spirit is dull and you can't feel the power of that relationship? What a tragic way to live, though many believers live that way for decades. They love Jesus, in that general sense, and they know He's glorious, but they never feel the power of the Word. They don't feel the power of who He is, and their hearts are dull and defiled, and they're wondering why. They think, "Well, maybe the devil is just attacking me."

No, you're opening doors in agreeing with darkness because someone told you out there that in the grace of God you could dabble in immorality and it wouldn't affect you. It really does affect you. Young ladies, I don't

care what that Christian man says, and, young men, I don't care what that Christian woman says: immorality will defile your spirit. It really will. I'm not trying to be mean; I'm trying to help you.

So the couple comes and says, "Well, we're engaged. We'll get married in six months. How far can we go?"

I say, "No sexual activity, none."

"What?!"

I say, "Why would you want to spend the six months leading up to your covenant of marriage with a defiled spirit? Why do you want to start your marriage with a dull spirit? Go the other way." I mean, obey the Lord. Get hold of His grace. On your wedding day have a bright spirit. Put all the things you've done behind you, let the Lord forgive you, but go to your wedding day with the one you plan to marry with a bright spirit, not with six to twelve months of immorality leading up to that day.

"We'll get married anyway." No; it's about the leadership of Jesus in your life. That's the issue. I encourage people: it's your privilege to go to your wedding ceremony with a bright spirit. I mean, if she knows you love Jesus even more than you love pleasure, and you know that about her, and she knows that about you, that knowledge will strengthen your marriage all the days of your life.

LIVING IN THE JOY OF A VIBRANT SPIRIT

If you step across the line, say, "OK, I blew it." That's what the grace of God is for. "I will declare war on it, I will repent of it, and we'll line back up and, Lord, we're going under Your leadership. If we blow it again, we won't make excuses. We'll call it *sin*, and we'll sign back up and repent and receive Your grace and go hard again." So I'm not into condemnation. If you blow it, repent and get confidence before God, but your spirit still gets defiled even though God keeps forgiving you.

I don't want to live with a defiled spirit. I want to live with the joy of a vibrant spirit. I love feeling God's presence. I love enjoying the Bible. I love it. For years—eighteen, nineteen, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three—I loved the Lord intensely from age fifteen on. I mean, I was radical for the Lord from fifteen on, but I didn't like the Bible at all. Ugh, the Bible was so boring! The only thing worse than the Bible was prayer. But I loved Jesus, I loved meetings, and I said, "Lord, if it wasn't for the Bible and prayer, I would be a radical believer."

To the shock of my life, some time went by, some of my thinking got clearer, and my spirit began to change, and I began to enjoy the Bible. That was a miracle. I remember when I was twenty-three or twenty-four years old, I would tell people, "Mike Bickle loves the Bible!"

They would say, "So?"

I said, "No, no, no, no, no! You don't know what that means! I love the Bible!"

They said, "Well, cool. You're supposed to!"

I said, “No, no, no. I used to ‘like’ the Bible. I mean, I always quote ‘loved’ it, technically, but I just never read it. When I did, it was like lemons next to me. When I had to take a bite, it was sour. It was boring!”

I said, “God, if You would write better, Your friends would read more.”

And the Holy Spirit says, “Well, if your capacity increases more, you’ll feel more!”

I began to go on this journey to see my capacity increase, to feel God, to understand Him. You know, I’ve been enjoying the Word and prayer now for over thirty years, and oh, I love it! It’s more precious than gold when my spirit feels vibrant, and I can be alone and just open it up and, ah, I feel it. I would rather have that than millions of dollars or a big ministry or everything else. That’s the most precious possession in the world. So I’m talking to you as a shepherd telling you the glory of this. I’m not trying to put rules on you, but a lot of people are preaching the grace of God in a false way: they’re empowering people to live in compromise and to feel good about it, but they never feel God. I want to empower you to not feel good about compromise but to position yourself to start feeling God more. I do you a far greater service by convincing you to do that than making you feel good in your compromise. Jesus knows.

I’m still on paragraph two. In this session we’ll focus on immorality and the revelation of Jesus to overcome it. That’s the real point. Then in the next session we’ll talk about the eternal rewards that Jesus promised to help motivate people to stay free of immorality. Jesus actually linked four specific eternal rewards to overcoming immorality, to help us overcome it. But many young believers don’t know anything about those four rewards. That’s why they don’t motivate them: they don’t even know about those rewards, but you will learn about them today.

IMMORALITY GRANTS LEGAL DOORS OF ACCESS TO SATAN TO OPPRESS YOU

Again, let’s look at paragraph two. Jesus knows that immorality grants legal doors of access to Satan to oppress you. When you commit immorality, you’re giving Satan a key. Satan is breathing down your neck through his cohorts, demons, trying to get you. But there are certain things he can’t touch you with until you hand him the key: “Here!”

When we walk in darkness, we open the door and invite him in. He says, “Thank you, I couldn’t get in until you opened the door.”

Again, some Christian leaders will dress it up and say, “Ah, you know, boys will be boys. That’s not a big deal!”

No, anytime you give access to demons to your life, whether a little or a lot, it dulls your spirit and defiles you. It’s not like when a demon touches you your life is over. They just defile and dull your spirit. It gets worse than that over time, but in the early days they’re just defiling you and making you feel bad.

JESUS IS ANGRY AT THE TEACHERS WHO PROMOTE A FALSE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

Paragraph B. Now we’re going to focus on two churches in Asia Minor in the ancient world, 2,000 years ago. We’re focusing on two churches—Pergamos and Thyatira. Now say those two words: *Pergamos* and *Thyatira*. Those are churches. They’re cities, actually. Good, now you’ve got it. I mean, they’re strange names. They’re in

Asia Minor, which today is the nation of Turkey. There are ancient sites that can tell you where these cities, these churches are, even today.

Well, there were these two churches. Now there were seven to which Jesus spoke, but these are two of the seven. He gave these two churches the same message. So we'll study, really briefly, what He said to those two churches, because they both had the same problem: they both struggled with immorality in a major way, and they both struggled with idolatry, which actually is about power and covetousness, or love of money. Beloved, this is the description of the church in America. It really is.

Now here was the problem: both of these churches had teachers, just like we do in America, who gave a false grace message that told them that immorality and covetousness, or idolatry, was OK. Some of the teachers said, "It's not OK." I'm talking about teachers in the church. I mean, they claim to be born-again, spirit-filled, Bible teachers. They were giving a false message.

Then Jesus appeared to John the apostle in the book of Revelation. He said, "John, go and tell those two churches to stop listening to those false teachers."

Boy, that must have been an intense conversation when John made this known and said, "Hey, in your own leadership team you have some guys teaching things that Jesus doesn't like." Boy, that could have been a heavy meeting.

Let's read these two statements that Jesus gave to John the apostle, and then told John to go tell the leadership team of those two churches. Revelation 2:12. Remember, Pergamos is a city. It's a city in Turkey, or Asia Minor. Some of their teachers held the doctrine of Balaam (v. 14). *Doctrine* is the same as teaching. Well, who was Balaam? Balaam was an Old Testament guy. You can read about him in Numbers 22-25. Balaam was a prophet, and he was teaching immorality. Can you believe that?

You say, "Impossible!"

It's happening all over America. A lot of teachers are condoning immorality. Lots of them are. I'm not just talking about the immorality of the gay agenda. I'm talking about the immorality of the heterosexual agenda in the Church. Someone says, "The homosexual this, the homosexual that."

I say, "I have more problems with the heterosexual sexual sin that's going on in the Body of Christ in America." I'm not picking on one or the other. I want to call everyone who loves Jesus to a vibrant spirit by agreeing with God.

He says, "Tell them they have those who hold the doctrine of Balaam. They teach people about immorality" (Rev. 2:14, paraphrased).

Now look at what He says in verse 16. "Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth" (Rev. 2:16). Now could you imagine having to say that Jesus is going to come to your church and fight you?

"Jesus fight us? I thought He loved us!"

“Well, He’s going to fight you because He loves you.”

What we find out later—and you can read the notes because we won’t go through this in detail—is that He’s going to fight against the sinful agenda in their lives because He loves them as individuals so much.

Now we don’t hear much about the Jesus who fights against the sinful agenda of the people He loves, because our idea is that if He loves us He looks the other way. On the contrary: because He loves us He intervenes with zeal.

Well, let’s go down to the next verse, verse 18. Now He’s talking to the church just down the road, Thyatira. That was a neighboring city. “They have the same problem as you do, Pergamos. Pergamos and Thyatira, you need to go on a church retreat together, all your leadership team, and figure out how to clear this thing up according to the Word of God.” I added that part.

In verse 20, He says, “You have this lady named Jezebel” (Rev. 2:20, paraphrased). Now this isn’t the same Jezebel as the Old Testament Jezebel. And don’t name your daughter Jezebel, OK? I mean, you can name your dog Jezebel. That’s OK, but not your daughter. This isn’t the Jezebel who was mean to Elijah. That was a thousand years earlier; these are two different Jezebels in the Bible. She’s a Bible teacher, and a lot of people are listening to her. Jesus says, “She’s seducing My people, telling them it’s OK to commit immorality” (Rev. 2:20b, paraphrased). He says, “Tell her to stop it. I love her, but tell her to stop it.”

Look at verse 21. “I will give her time to repent” (Rev. 2:21, paraphrased). That’s amazing. He says, “I’m so against what she’s teaching, but I love her so much I’ll give her a chance to change.” Isn’t that remarkable?

“BECAUSE JUDGMENT . . . IS NOT EXECUTED SPEEDILY, THE HEART . . . IS SET ON EVIL”

But here’s a deception. Sometimes when the Lord is giving us time to settle an issue, we think that He’s approving the issue. “Well, I’ve been in this for months. Doesn’t seem like anything is wrong.”

The Lord says, “No, don’t take My patience as My endorsement of what you’re doing. I’m giving you a chance to connect the dots to settle the issue. I don’t want to disturb you, but I love you so much that I will if I have to.”

In verse 21, He says, “I gave her time to repent.” Now here’s Jesus in verse 22. He says, “I will cast her into a sickbed” (Rev. 2:22).

“Wait, that sounds like Jesus is going to cast her into a sickbed!”

That’s because that’s what it says. I hear people say, “Jesus could never do that!”

I say, “Well, if I’m going to believe what Jesus is like, I’ll go by what Jesus said, not by what that preacher down the road said.” Jesus said He would do it. Now it’s rare, but He does do it because He cares so much, not because He’s angry. On the contrary: He does it because He cares and He knows it will destroy them in a very, very devastating way if He doesn’t intervene to stop them. She won’t stop any other way, so He’s going to try to wake her up.

He says, “It will get more intense. Not only am I going to cast her on a sickbed, but I will take her and the people in the church who are involved with her and cast them into great tribulation” (Rev. 2:22b, paraphrased). Now this doesn’t mean the Great Tribulation at the end of the age. That’s not what it means. It means, “I will cause trouble in their life. I will wake them up. I don’t want to do it this way, but they won’t listen to Me. So I will box them in, hem them into a corner, and get their attention because I love them. They have no idea how destructive this is to their lives.”

Now He goes on a little. He takes it up a notch in verse 23. Now you can’t take a razor blade and cut verse 23 out of your Bible. It has to stay in your Bible. It’s in there forever. Some in the American church like to pick and choose the verses we like. You can’t do “cut and paste” with the words of Jesus. We have to take them all or take none of them. We can’t take the ones we want. Jesus isn’t running for office or a popularity contest. He’s King. He’s declaring the truth because of love.

Now look at what He says. Don’t cut and paste this. He says, “I will kill her children” (Rev. 2:23). This isn’t spiritual; it’s physical! “I will kill them: tell her that.” He says, “Go tell the church I will kill the disciples of Jezebel, the people in the church who buy into her false doctrine.”

“Why would Jesus kill them? I thought He loved them!”

He’s going to kill them *because* He loves them; because if they continue on, some of them will end up denying their faith. I tell you, eternity is a lot longer than their short life now, and Jesus would say, “Trust Me, you want Me to intervene drastically and cause your eternity to be very different. You really do want Me to intervene, because I love you.”

Now again, this is Jesus preaching Jesus. I’m just reading what He said. I look at Him and I say, “You know what, You’re the Big Guy, I’m the little guy; I salute what You say whether it’s popular or not. I go with You.” That’s where I stand. That’s how we need to take our posture.

Paragraph C. Now this is a controversial, biblical truth, but it’s still a biblical truth. That’s the point. It’s not a popular truth, but it’s a biblical truth, and we’re going with it. I want to embolden you to stand strong where God’s Word stands.

SOMETIMES BELIEVERS DIE UNDER THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD

Here it is. Paragraph C. It’s not very common, but sometimes believers sicken and die prematurely before God wanted them to die. They die out of the will of God earlier than God had desired for them and planned for them. They die under God’s discipline.

Let’s read the verse. It’s a much-ignored passage. You won’t hear this very often on Sunday morning. I’ve preached it a few times over the years, and the church gets really quiet. It says, “My goodness, that wasn’t very positive.”

I say, “Actually, it is.” It’s all about waking up so something *really* bad doesn’t happen, something worse than physical death.

“I HAVE HANDED HIM OVER TO SATAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH”

Here’s what Paul said. Could you imagine this statement on a Sunday morning? You know, I’ve done it a few times. It was a little intense. 1 Corinthians 5:1. He says, “There is sexual immorality among you: a man has his father’s wife” (1 Cor. 5:1, paraphrased).

The idea is, there’s a man who marries a younger woman, and his son, who’s maybe closer to her age, says, “Hey Dad, the wife is really cute.” The son and the new wife are having a sexual relationship, and it gets exposed, but they won’t repent. They said, “Well, God will forgive us! We’ll stay in it.”

Paul said, “Unbelievable.”

The elders were saying, “Umm, what do we do? We like them and they’re cool people, but…” I’m throwing that part in. “They won’t quit, and they say they love Jesus. They’re just going to go to the church down the road anyway. Why should we deal with it? They’re just going to go join the other church.” That’s what I hear all the time.

Paul said, “Well, let’s do it this way.” Verse 4. “In the name of the Lord Jesus, when you gather on Sunday morning, stand up and deliver this man over to Satan” (1 Cor. 5:4-5, paraphrased). Ahhh! “Let Satan destroy his flesh; make him sick,” is the idea. In other words, pray and release the protection of God so that Satan strikes him, makes him sick, and he says, “Ahh, I hate this! I repent!”

And Paul said, “You need to do that so that his spirit will be saved” (1 Cor. 5:5b, paraphrased). “He won’t end up denying his faith as this sin increases over the years.” Now that’s a pretty bold action. I’ve preached this a few times. You know, I’ve even tried to do it. I’ve chickened out, but still, it’s an intense thing to do! Do you know, though? This is going to be restored in the Church before the Lord returns.

I look at that, and I say, “Lord, that’s intense.”

But the Lord’s answer, and Paul’s, is this: “I don’t want the man to continue walking in darkness. One day he might end up fully denying his faith.”

“BECAUSE INIQUITY SHALL ABOUND, THE LOVE OF MANY SHALL WAX COLD”

Paragraph D. Here’s the premise: immorality is dangerous. Now most people don’t think it is, in their own life. They think, “I can dabble with a little immorality. I can control it. On a scale of one to ten, hypothetically, I can do a one and a two because I can get out of it any time I want. I’ll never go to three and four or five and six, hypothetically greater levels of sexual sin. I can do one and two. I can do a little Internet stuff, can mess around a little on the side, do a little of this and that. If it does get up there, you know what? I love God; I’ll bail out and get straight.”

It doesn’t work that way, because what happens is that when we dabble with immorality, our heart gets cold. We don’t expect that. Our mind gets darker. Our conscience feels defiled, and demons have more access to trouble us. We’re not in a state where we’re willing and able to say no; so one and two leads to three and four, and it keeps going. Paul said, “This is dangerous stuff. Don’t dabble with this.”

SEXUALITY IS A GLORIOUS GIFT IN THE COVENANT OF MARRIAGE

Beloved, God is raising up a generation of young people who are so connected to Jesus Christ and the grace of God that they know it's their destiny to live with a vibrant spirit, to live faithful to Him, in the context of the gift, yes, the glorious gift of sexuality, because sexuality is a glorious gift in the covenant of marriage.

Look at 1 Peter 4:17. "The time has come for discipline, redemptive discipline—judgment in the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17, paraphrased). I hear teachers all the time say, "There is no judgment in the New Testament!" Beloved, that's just a theory born in man's imagination. I'm hearing that more and more. That's not in the Bible. There is judgment in the Church in the New Testament.

As a matter of fact, the closer we get to the coming of the Lord as the decades unfold, the judgments of God will increase as evil increases. I believe there will be more and more preachers against the judgment of God to try to counter the truth of this doctrine. The time has come for judgment to begin in the house of God, then to the world. Yet the preachers say, "There is no judgment after Jesus."

I say, "What Bible are you reading? Or are you cutting and pasting?" It's not safe to do that. We want the whole Jesus, not the American Jesus. We want the whole Jesus.

"FOR THIS REASON MANY ARE WEAK AND SICK . . . AND MANY SLEEP"

Top of page 46. Well, in paragraph E, Paul continues to the same church of Corinthians, the one we just talked about: "Turn that man over to Satan!" Here they are a few chapters later. Paul is writing to the same group of elders. Here in verse 30 he's talking about the communion table. They're breaking bread and having a meal together and sharing the communion elements.

Beloved, really pay attention to verse 30. "For this reason many. . ." (1 Cor. 11:30). *Many*.

I say, "Paul, are you sure?"

The word is *many*.

"Shouldn't you say *some*?" I tried to change that word to *some*, but I got too afraid, and I went back to the Bible.

"For this reason *many* are weak. They're sick and asleep" (1 Cor. 11:30, paraphrased). *Asleep* doesn't mean they took a nap in the afternoon; it means they're dead.

He says, "Many believers are sick and dead because they take communion and they disobey the Lord persistently and intentionally." Because when we take communion, we're really saying to the Lord that we recommit ourselves to the covenant.

I'm not talking about struggling believers who hate their sin and repent of it. You have confidence in the grace of God. I'm talking about believers who intentionally, persistently, say, "No, I'm doing this immorality because I want to. I understand the grace of God, Jesus, and You can't talk me out of it."

“IF WE WOULD JUDGE OURSELVES, WE WOULD NOT BE JUDGED”

Paul says this in verse 31: “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). That means repentance. If you’ll judge yourself, you won’t be judged by God. If you would just do it yourself and declare war on the sin, you might not get free for a while, but you’re warring against it and that’s a place of safety.

I’m not saying that if you’re struggling with immorality you will get struck dead tonight. That’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying that as long as you’re warring against it with sincerity, it may take you some time before you break free of all of its tentacles, but war against it; don’t just give up and give in and settle in with a lifestyle of immorality.

Let’s read that verse again. “If you would judge yourself”—in other words, if you would call it *sin*, and not make up some crazy, biblical definition that it’s OK, but call it what it is, and judge yourself, and be honest; if you do that, Paul is saying, you won’t be judged by God. God would much prefer that you judge yourself by saying, “I’m wrong and I’m warring against it,” than making God wake you up to convince you you’re wrong.

Beloved, know this; you already know it. There are a thousand Bible teachers in the land that will prove to you from the Bible that you’re OK in your sin. Don’t believe it, because it will injure your soul, and they’re not going to be around to say, “Sorry, I guess it didn’t work for you, did it?” That’s disaster to me.

WE CAN REVERSE THE JUDGMENT OF GOD BY REPENTANCE

When we’re judged, Paul goes on to say, it’s not just the devil. Sometimes the Lord lifts His hand and the devil comes in. He says, “No, it’s the discipline of God” (1 Cor. 11:32, paraphrased).

Some people say, “It’s not God; He doesn’t do that.”

Paul said, “It’s the discipline of God so we don’t end up with His eternal judgment at the end of our lives.”

The point is this: we can reverse the judgment of God by repentance.

OK, one more passage, and I’ve taken most of my time in the introduction. That’s what notes are for. You can read the notes on your own. One more passage. Paul makes it abundantly clear how the Jesus of the New Testament relates to persistent immorality. Because of love, He commits Himself to judge those believers to wake them up so they don’t lose more than they’ve lost already.

Look at this: 1 Thessalonians 4. This is an intense one. Well, the other ones are pretty intense, too. He says, “Each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thes. 4:4). “His vessel” means your physical body. Now all of us are different. You have different emotions; you have different pressures and life circumstances. You have certain dispositions. No one is exactly the same.

Paul says, “Learn how to possess” —or to carry—“your bodily desires in a way that’s in accord with sanctification,” or with holiness.

Don’t get tired, go drink some alcohol, go watch a movie, get with some loose people—even though they say they’re Christians, you know their morals are loose—and then just act silly. Then the next day say, “Oops, I

stepped over the line.” Of course you stepped over the line! Learn how to possess your own body in such a way that you don’t do that. Everyone’s path is a little different.

Then, in verse 6, Paul gets more specific. His general rule is, “Learn where you should go, what you should do, what you should and shouldn’t eat and drink, how you shouldn’t touch someone, what you shouldn’t be talking about, where you shouldn’t be alone. Learn all of that stuff so you can possess your body in honor.” Again, everyone’s path is a bit different.

“NO ONE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AND DEFRAUD HIS BROTHER”

Then he says, “Now let me get really specific.” He says, “No one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this manner” (1 Thes. 4:6).

He’s talking about something more serious than just general immorality. There are two couples in the fellowship, in the church. One brother innocently trusts the other brother. He says, “Hey, other brother, you love Jesus, I love Jesus, we’re in the church.”

So the innocent brother isn’t watching carefully how the other brother is relating to his wife, because he says, “I’m not worried about you. You love Jesus; we’re in the church. You’re fine.” So the innocent brother isn’t paying attention.

Paul said to the guilty brother, “You’re making moves on that man’s wife. You’re taking advantage of the fact that he trusts you because of Jesus. You’re defrauding him; you’re tricking him. You’re lying to him every time you do this, and he doesn’t even know what you’re doing with his wife.” He says, “This is unthinkable in the covenant community, the Church!” He says, “Immorality is bad even out there, don’t do it, but inside the Church, this is unthinkable.” What a betrayal! It’s a double betrayal, if there is such a thing.

He goes on at the end of verse 6: “The Lord is the avenger” (1 Thes. 4:6b), or the One who judges this. The Lord really gets stirred up when a brother tricks a brother and moves in on his wife. He really doesn’t like this. He judges, or avenges.

Some of the people were saying, “Paul, Jesus doesn’t judge like that in the New Testament. The cross took care of it. Everything is fine. If we dabble a little with our brother’s wife in immorality, hey, boys will be boys. What about the grace of God?”

Paul said, “I thought some of you thought that way.” In verse 8, he says, “Anyone who rejects this teaching, he’s not rejecting me; he’s rejecting God who gives the Holy Spirit” (1 Thes. 4:8, paraphrased). Paul said, “Anyone preaching a doctrine that God won’t avenge this isn’t rejecting me; they’re rejecting God Himself, no matter what they say.” So settle the issue.

Roman numeral II. Now I’m just going to give some broad strokes, and we’re only going to read a few more pages here, but I want the broad strokes to advertise these pages, so that in a few weeks or a month when you return home and settle down, you can go back and study them. And on the internet I took this session and gave a lot more detail to it, for the sake of our students at IHOP–KC. So I’ve developed this teaching quite a bit more on the Internet, and again, it’s always free.

So if you want to develop this more, you can. You think, “I’m a little interested,” but it’s our fourth full day of meeting eighteen hours a day and you’re feeling a bit overloaded. So just make a note to yourself: “Read this one later,” because this is a very important passage of Scripture.

THIRTY ENDLESS DESCRIPTIONS ABOUT THE ONE WE LOVE

Paragraph A. Revelation 1-3. This is so glorious. I mean, I just want to stop and say, “Oooh, I love these three chapters.”

John the apostle is reporting a vision about Jesus. Jesus stands in front of John. For three chapters Jesus is talking to John. How would you like to get a three-chapter interview with the resurrected Christ? Well, before you say yes, remember John fell like a dead man when he saw Him. He was so terrified! So say, “Well, yes, but, Lord, You know, help me. If You’re going to visit me at that level, at least help me.”

Now here’s what happens in these three chapters. Here’s the glorious point that we won’t break down much today. Jesus highlighted thirty descriptions about His majesty. Now He only gave brief statements, but every one of these thirty descriptions we could spend our life on. They’re so full of meaning. Now we only have a little phrase. “I’m the first and the last; I’m the beginning and the end; I’m the one with eyes like fire; I have the face like the sun,” etc., etc. Here’s the point. If we study the rest of the Bible, for each one of these phrases we get the big picture of what Jesus was revealing about Himself in these thirty descriptions.

LEARN WHAT HE GAVE US TO MOTIVATE US AND BE MOTIVATED BY IT

But He did not end there. He also gave eighteen eternal rewards to motivate the Church to obey Him. Now my burden is this: many believers don’t know these thirty descriptions about the One they love. They know a few of them, and they know hardly any of the eighteen eternal rewards. Well, Jesus revealed these descriptions, and He revealed these eternal rewards in order to motivate us to obey Him. If we don’t know them, then we won’t be motivated by them. The church is so weak and just tripping around in so many places. Not the whole Church; I’m talking about the church in the west, but so much of it is so steeped in compromise. Let’s learn what Jesus gave us to motivate us and let’s be motivated by it. But we have to learn it first.

FOUR ETERNAL REWARDS AND FOUR MOTIVATING DESCRIPTIONS

Paragraph B. We’re nearly done with this session, and then we’ll look at this more after the break, in the session to come. We’re examining the subject of immorality in the context of these two churches, Pergamos and Thyatira. He highlighted four aspects about Himself. Here’s what He was saying: “If you want to get free from immorality, know these four things about Me.” Then He added, “I will give you four eternal rewards to motivate you to say no to immorality.”

Now these rewards are glorious. They’re so powerful; when rightly understood, they’ll motivate you to say no to everything, everything outside of the will of God that tempts you with sinful pleasures. I’ve thrown myself into those four eternal rewards and those four descriptions. Well, I want to study all eighteen eternal rewards, which I have, but I want to really know them way better. But these four—man, I pray them. I tell Jesus, “I want to know these in my relationship with You.”

I’m just introducing that idea to you because we’re in a generation where immorality is exploding. The only confidence I have is an army of young people who love Jesus who find out the truth of these four aspects of His

majesty. These four eternal rewards they assimilate into their lives, and they preach them boldly to everyone they know.

So my prayer is that you'll sign up today and say, "I don't know about those four rewards and four descriptions, but I'm in. Sight unseen, I'm in. I'm not even going to read to the next page. I commit. I'm in. If those are the four Jesus gave, that's good enough for me."

JESUS IS THE ONE WITH THE SHARP, TWO-EDGED SWORD

Paragraph C. let's look at the four descriptions. Here in verse 12, He's talking about Himself. He stood before John and said, "Tell them this: I have a sharp, two-edged sword" (Rev. 2:12, paraphrased). He's talking about Himself. Wow!

Well, it's more than that. "Tell them I'll fight against them with My sword because I love them" (Rev. 2:12b, paraphrased). OK. Description one: we have to know the Jesus who has a sword. Lots of Christians don't know that Jesus, but Jesus said to the immoral churches, "If they know this, this is going to help them. This is going to wake them up if they know this."

JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO IMMORALITY IN EVERY RESPECT

Number two: "Tell them I'm the Son of God" (Rev. 2:18, paraphrased).

Now you say, "We already know that part."

No, no; this is way more than, "Jesus is the Savior; He's the Son of God; move on to the next point." There's a lot related to this. "Tell them I'm superior in My power, My rewards, My mercy, My pleasure. I'm superior to immorality in everything. Convince them of that." That's the message.

HE HAS EYES LIKE A FLAME OF FIRE

Number three: "Tell them I have eyes like fire" (Rev. 2:18c, paraphrased). "Tell them I have burning desire in My heart for them, and that when I confront them it's only because I love them. When I rescue them, I'm not angry at them. I love them. When they know how I feel about them with My burning desire, it will give them courage to run to Me and to see who they are to Me. They're not worthless; they're not helpless. They're not filled with shame. They're the delight of My heart. Tell them My eyes burn with fire because My heart burns with fire."

Now many believers know God loves them in the technical sense, but they don't have a revelation of the Bridegroom God who burns with desire for them. Beloved, this is critical to overcoming immorality.

HIS FEET ARE LIKE FINE BRASS

Then, number four: "Tell them My feet are like brass" (Rev. 2:18d, paraphrased). "I'll step in and step on circumstances to wake them up if they won't wake themselves up by hearing the Word. I'll box them into a corner. I'll change their circumstances. I'll make it difficult for them to keep in that immorality. I'll give them time, but tell them this: I'm not just the God who forgives; I have feet like brass. I will step in, step on their circumstances, wake them up, and make it really uncomfortable and difficult to stay in their sin."

They'll cry, "OK, OK, OK," but they may lose two or three years in the process.

Now here's the problem with a lot of people in the Church that the Lord loves so much: they don't believe Jesus can step in like that. They imagine Jesus wandering around with a lantern late at night, knocking on the door—blonde-haired, Scandinavian, half-girl, half-boy. He comes in with glowing blue eyes: "Please give Me one more chance, please!"

There's the sovereign unbeliever, all-powerful and mighty. "No, Jesus, I gave you a chance. You didn't give me the money I wanted. You didn't treat me right. Get out of here forever!"

"Oh, please, please, give Me one more chance."

That's not the Jesus in the Bible. He isn't begging. He's sovereign. He's powerful. He has feet like brass. He has a mouth like a sword, eyes like fire, face like the sun. He's superior to everything, and He's totally committed to you, and He's coming after you on His terms. That's the Jesus we need to know, not this little, flimsy, American-culture effeminate Jesus with blonde hair and blue eyes. (I like blonde hair and blue eyes. My wife has blonde hair and blue eyes.) But He's different than this. We want the real Jesus, not the Jesus of American culture that's growing big mega-ministries, who promises everyone an easier life, more money, happiness, comfort in their sin, where they can live lives of spiritual dullness, feeling spiritually bored and powerless. We have mega-ministries and all the little ministries are imitating them because they're so desperate to get big because they have no sense of identity, and they don't even know who they are.

THE BEAUTY OF EXPLORING THE REALM OF WHO HE IS AND THE REWARDS HE BRINGS

Paragraph E. These eight truths, the four descriptions of who He is—Son of God, mouth like a sword, eyes like fire, feet like brass—and the four rewards, which we'll look at in the next session—hidden manna, white stone, power over the nations, and the morning star—what do those mean? Beloved, we must know what these mean, at least a little. I don't think we'll know fully what they mean until the age to come. These are the four rewards of which Jesus said, "If you get these, you won't want to continue in immorality."

Most believers I know, know hardly anything about these eight truths. So they stand before immorality and they break under the shame and the power, and say, "Oh, I'm so weak. This is too late. I'm just destined to live that way."

No, you're not. You're not destined to live that way. I've seen people live for years in immorality: eighteen, twenty-five, thirty-five, or whatever the age. Suddenly they begin to encounter truth, and for the next ten or twenty or thirty years, they live with a vibrant spirit thinking, "What kind of delusion was I in those ten years?" And they were Christians the whole time.

Top of page 47. We'll end with paragraph B and maybe C. Then you just have to read the rest on your own. Again, you've been drinking from a fire hydrant for four days. You can't remember this, so I'm really just telling you what's in the notes so you can read them in January, February, or March on your own time with a nice cup of coffee and a friend or two, and journal and cry and pray and say, "Lord, show me more!"

HIS REWARDS ARE SUPERIOR TO THE PLEASURES OF IMMORALITY

Paragraph B. These four descriptions. He's the Son of God. He's saying, "I'm superior in every way to immorality. If you sin, My love is superior; I'll forgive you. If you're in bondage, My power is superior; I can

free you. Oh, I have the pleasure. My rewards are superior to the rewards of immorality. You'll see. It will be far more satisfying."

Then, secondly, He says, "I have eyes like fire. I want you to know how I feel about you while I'm rescuing you, while I'm confronting you, while I'm rebuking you, while I'm helping you." Whatever different facets of His relationship to us, at whatever stage we're in, in resisting immorality or adultery or any other sin like that, Jesus says, "I feel so deeply. If you have confidence about how I feel about you, you'll run to Me instead of run from Me when you see your sin."

THE JESUS WITH FEET OF BRASS WILL STEP IN SOONER OR LATER

See, a lot of people say, "OK, I hate my sin," but they don't know the Jesus with eyes of fire. The fire speaks of His love, not His judgment. The sword and the brass feet speak of judgment. The eyes of fire speak of desire for you.

They say, "If I knew He liked me, I would run to Him, not from Him, but I think He's like really mad at me like my dad is. No way! If He finds out..."

Beloved, He already found out.

"Well, I mean, if He *really* finds out..."

He really found out already. His feet are like brass. He will hinder. He'll give you time, but I promise you this, and if you believe this promise, not only will the fear of God grow in you, it will shake you up. I want to promise you something. The Jesus with feet like brass will step in sooner or later and stop what you're doing. He's going to let you do it first. He says, "You judge yourself first. You repent. I'll give you some time."

So the man says, "How much time? How much time?"

I don't know. One guy gets a few weeks, a few months. Another guy gets a few years. No one knows how much time. He says, "I love you. I know your frame. I'll stop you eventually."

If the Church believed that, if they knew it was only a matter of time, they would have a whole different spirit of the fear of God in their relationship with God.

Now the sword has several different facets. There's the sword of the Word of God. The sword can liberate or trouble us. I won't go into that; I'm out of time. So you can look at that more in the notes, and again check it out on the website at IHOP.org or MikeBickle.org, which is part of IHOP-KC. It's an IHOP-KC ministry. I break these things down in greater detail.

Amen. Let's stand.

