

# LETTERS TO THE CHURCH

## *Thyatira: The Tolerant Church*

### *Revelation: 2:18-29*

#### **Thyatira**



- Thyatira was about 40 southeast of Pergamos and was the smallest and least important of the seven cities mentioned in Revelation
  - Thyatira was on a road in a valley in between Pergamos and Sardis
  - But unlike some of the other cities, Thyatira did not suffer much religious or political persecution
  - Thyatira was a center of business and trade guilds
- Thyatira was known for its fabric dyes, wool, bonze, cloth making, leather tanning, etc.
  - The road that ran through Thyatira brought merchants from all over the world
  - The life of Thyatira was centered around the trade guilds
  - The trade guilds had two main functions, *business* and *social*
  - If you worked in these trades, it made “business sense” to be a member of the various trade guilds
  - The problem with these trade guilds was their “social activities”
  - Each trade guild had their own pagan gods to worship, special feast days that often include sexual immorality
  - This would put a Christian in Thyatira in an awkward and compromising position because of the idolatry and immorality they were expected to partake of as member of the trade guilds
  - The church in Thyatira was in the *smallest city*, but Jesus wrote the *longest letter* to the church in Thyatira

#### **Jesus Introduces Himself to the Church in Thyatira**

**Revelation 2:18 (KJV) 18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;**

- As usual, Jesus writes His letter to the angel, the pastor or spiritual leader of the church in Thyatira
- The pastor is to possess an unwavering conviction to living *and* teaching God’s Word
- Jesus introduces Himself as the ***the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;***

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- Jesus introduces Himself as:
  - The *Son of God* to emphasize His deity, He is God and that He has the *same nature* as God
    - Jesus is saying He has the same divine nature as God
    - Because Jesus is God, He has the right to judge the church
  - As has having *eyes like a flame of fire*
    - Jesus sees with penetrating judgment **Jeremiah 16:17 (KJV) 17** *For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.*
    - There is no where you can go and Jesus does not see you **Proverbs 15:3 (KJV) 3** *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*
  - As having *feet like polished brass* to emphasize His purity
    - Brass is a pure metal that has been refined in the fire
    - Jesus was saying His feet would be strong in executing judgment

#### ***What Jesus Knows About the Church Thyatira***

***19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.***

- As Jesus says to every church, *I know your works*, I know how you're living, I know the works you're doing for Me
- Jesus commended the church in Thyatira for their works of:
  - *Love* – They had love for the Lord and each other
  - *Service* – They were doing the works of ministry by serving in the church and the community
  - *Faith* - They maintained their faith in God in the face of opposition, lack of resources, and other challenges
  - *Patience* – They were willing to endure the struggles, challenges, temptations, and continued to live for God
- Not only did Thyatira have these *works*, but they were *increasing* in love, service, faith and patience
- Thyatira was growing spiritually, they were maturing, they were showing spiritual fruit in their lives

#### ***What Jesus Has Against the Church in Thyatira***

***20 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. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.***

- Jesus tells the church in Thyatira that despite all the good He saw in the church, I have a few things against thee

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- You *tolerate* that woman Jezebel
  - The church in Thyatira *knew* the teachings of Jezebel was wrong but they allowed it to continue
- That woman “called” Jezebel
  - Jezebel was the center of the corruption in the church at Thyatira
  - Jezebel may not have been her literal name, but it speaks of the life and lifestyle of Jezebel in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings
  - Jezebel is a metaphor for a woman that’s evil, idolatrous, scheming, and morally unrestrained
- Jezebel calls herself a “prophetess”
  - Jezebel says she speaks for God
  - But the church in Thyatira received Jezebel as a prophetess, even though she was a false teacher ***Matthew 24:11 (KJV) 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.***
- Jezebel teaches and seduces Jesus’ servants to commit sexual immorality
- Jezebel was allowed to teach believers in Thyatira to abandon their loyalty to Jesus
- Jezebel was allowed to teach:
  - That believers couldn’t live a life separate from the world
  - That believers needed to participate in some of the trade guilds social activities to be “friendly”, to keep their jobs, to get promoted, to help their businesses succeed, to keep from being viewed as a fanatic, and to be able to win the lost
  - That believers could reach the lost world more easily by associating, fellowshipping, and participating in their social activities
  - That Jesus was *not* the only Savior, and that Jesus Christ was *not* the only way to God
- Jezebel teaches Jesus’ servants to eat food sacrificed to idols
- Some of the trade guild social gatherings were held at the temple of one of their gods
- Attendees were to give a thanks offering of meat to the god, then the rest of the meat was served to the guests, which is actually participating in a function that’s giving thanks to false gods
- Idolatry is anything a person puts first in their lives ahead of God
- Jezebel had convinced some in the church in Thyatira to put their jobs and social acceptance before God
- Jesus gave Jezebel space or time to repent, and she refused
- Jezebel refused to repent means she *knew* in her heart what she was teaching was false and contrary to the Word of God

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- Jezebel knew she was perverting the scriptures and refused to change

#### **What Jesus Wants the Church in Thyatira to Do**

**22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.**

- Before Jesus told the church in Thyatira what they *must* do, He first told them what *He* would do
- Jesus would chastise Jezebel by casting her into a sickbed along with all who commit adultery with her
- This could mean some physical illness as a result of her licentious lifestyle
- Adultery here speaks of both sexual adultery (immorality) and spiritual adultery (worship of idols)
- When we worship other gods, we are unfaithful to the Lord who saved us
- What applied to Jezebel would also apply to all that followed and lived by her teaching and refused to repent and separate themselves from the world
- Jesus said He'll kill Jezebel's children with death if they don't repent
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> death means the followers of Jezebel could face eternal judgment if they don't repent
- But even as Jesus is chastising the church in Thyatira, He still shows He loves Jezebel and her followers by offering an opportunity to repent
- Jesus says all the churches will know He is the One who searches the reins and hearts
- Jesus knows our every thought and feeling
- Jesus says I'll give each of you according to your works, if you follow Jezebel, your "works" will determine your *consequences*
- Then Jesus says to the rest of the church in Thyatira that did not participate in Jezebel's false teaching, even though many embraced Jezebel's false teaching, many didn't
- They didn't fall for the lies, they didn't believe the perverting of the scriptures, they refused to live a double life
- There were some believers in the church that have not "explored and known" the depths of Satan and because they didn't follow after the false teachings of Jezebel, life would not get any harder than it already was

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- Jesus told the remnant in Thyatira to hold fast, remain faithful until He comes
- Stand strong *until* Jesus comes

#### ***The Promise for Overcomers***

***26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.***

- Even though Thyatira was under idolatrous and immoral influence of Jezebel, Jesus says they *can* overcome
- Don't be discouraged by the idolatry and immorality around you, even amongst Christians
- God's work will continue *through* the overcomers
- To the overcomers:
  - Jesus gives power over the nations - overcomers will reign with Jesus
  - They will rule with a rod of iron and smash them like clay pots – They that overcome will rule over Christ's enemies and will reign with Jesus as He judges evil
  - They will share in the same authority that Jesus
  - Not only will those that overcome share in Jesus' authority, but they will also be given the *morning star*
  - What is the morning star? ***Revelation 22:16 (KJV) 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.***
  - The morning star is Jesus Himself
- Jesus is not calling us to overcome in our own strength, but to appropriate His strength and power through the knowledge of the Word through faith ***Philippians 4:13 (KJV) 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.***
- The person who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches
- Don't just hear it, *learn* from it!