

Revelation 1:6 Revelation 2:18-29
Thyatira, the Corrupted Church
Introduction

Thyatira is the smallest church mentioned, with the longest message from the Lord. Thyatira has been called the corrupted or apostate or false church. Here we see Jesus still has a lot to say to a church gone bad. Thyatira may have been founded on the testimony of a woman. We learn in the book of Acts that Lydia was from Thyatira. It was also evident that the testimony of a woman also caused the church to fracture from within.

Ephesus has been called the church at the end of the apostolic age (2:1-7). Smyrna the church under persecution (2:8-11); Pergamos: the church settled in the world (2:12-17) and now Thyatira: the church in idolatry--corrupted from within. Some Bible teachers would place this church in the age after Constantine to the time of the Reformation.

The message Jesus brings to this church is the danger of apostasy.

Commission (v.18)

1. Thyatira was small, even by old world standards. This was a farming community (rural-agriculture) some 40 miles southwest of Pergamum. Recently Denver celebrated the anniversary of Wild Bill Cody. He is buried on LookOut Mountain. He is Denver's most famous citizen (now its Makmoud Abdul Rauf-of the Denver Nuggets). Thyatira's claim to fame was purple dye, used to make the designer clothes of the ancient world.

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Character (v.18)

1. Here Jesus describes Himself for the first time as the "Son of God" in the book of Revelation. Earlier John had described Jesus "like the son of man" a phrase borrowed from the book of Daniel. The authority being highlighted is Christ's deity. The message of Jesus is one of judgment, so he is reminding them of his authority to Judge. Sometimes we forget that. Jesus has the right to judge us. To chasten us, to discipline us. I don't ask my children permission to deal with them. I just deal with them.

2."eyes like a flame of fire and feet like brass". This speaks of Jesus' penetrating gaze, his ability to see and sift everything in your heart. He is able to look in any situation and

detect impurity in our heart and lives. His feet like brass emphasize his relationship. The word "bronze" is only used here in Revelation 1&2. Scholars believe this alloy was made of gold and bronze (copper). The metal appeared like brilliant bronze, so much so that it looked like glowing hot metal fresh out of a furnace. This is a symbol of his divine judgment. "His eyes blazing like fire, penetrates the church, discerns the evil within the church, and threatens to bring judgment if there is not repentance.

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Commendation (v.19)

1. Things can look pretty good on the outside, but that doesn't mean everything's OK on the inside. On the outside this church was happening, there was a vital demonstration of the love of Jesus, ministry to the poor etc. They did many works. In 3rd world countries they don't have a social welfare system. In some countries it is not unusual to see beggars, orphans and widows, lined up to beg for just the basic needs of life. Troops in Haiti often come away with a profound sense of gratitude for all we have here. In India they have neighborhoods of naked and hungry children. When Jesus becomes real in your life, compassion grips your heart. It is not easy to watch pain and suffering and not want to do something. It was the church that began hospitals, orphanages and services to the poor. The church at Thyatira was concerned about the needs of the poor. They did good works.

2. Jesus says "I know your love (agape). In the OKJV the word is often translated charity because that means sacrificial giving to meet needs. They were giving and they did it in love. They were seeking to meet needs and establish loving relationships. I want you to note something--this is the first church that Jesus gives this kind of glowing report card. He says "I know your faith" this is real faith, a trusting commitment to Jesus. Jesus is impressed with their service. Works here is "diakonia" or service. It means to wait tables. This was the word used to describe people who met the practical needs of the church. It was used as an office in the church (Acts 6) and the two important qualities were (1) full of the Holy Spirit and (2) full of wisdom.

Works are important, but worship is more important. Worship always precedes works, and Jesus always says "come" before he says "go". The illustration most popular is Mary and Martha. The Lord had to say to Martha, upset with being left with all the work while Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet.

Luke 10:41-42

41And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.

42"But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

(NKJ)

Jesus longs for worship from his people. Jesus made the amazing statement to a Samaritan Woman that God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth. Jesus adds the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God wants worship.

3. **I also know your patient endurance.**

Condemnation (v.20-23)

1. The problem at Thyatira was spiritual wickedness within the church. A woman who Jesus refers to as "Jezebel" (probably not her real name) who calls herself a prophetess. To be called Jezebel for a woman is as bad as being called Judas. Note, that is what she calls herself, not what Jesus calls her. A real prophet speaks forth the word of God. Some translations read "thy woman" instead of "that woman". It may be that Jezebel was "the pastor's wife".

2. The same two problems we see, surface again, sexual immorality and sacrifices to idols. These are great tools at Satan's disposal. In his arsenal he often uses sexual immorality (eros) and mammon (materialism). We often think of Satanic activity as being supernatural and occultic, and that is true. But satanic activity can happen in the regular garden variety temptations we face every day.

3. **Most of you** are familiar with Jezebel. I Kings. One of the worst kings ever was wicked Ahab. He introduced Israel to the Worship of Baal. Ahab worshiped Baal perhaps as a result of his marriage to Jezebel. Jezebel seduced Ahab into worshipping foreign gods. She was a symbol to the Jew of spiritual corruption through the use of immorality and idolatry. Jesus is calling this woman "names".

4. "The church at Thyatira might have been tolerating a teaching which Christ viewed as spiritual adultery. Perhaps the teaching involved something like this: "Jezebel" was receiving prophecies. The "*prophecies*" that she was receiving and teaching could have been something to the effect that God's grace would allow the believer to say, "Caesar is Lord" and to burn that pinch of incense. If you are saved by grace, what difference does it make? Go ahead and join the trade guilds; it is irrelevant because you are saved by grace. Go ahead and eat meat sacrificed to idols and take part in pagan practices. Through such teaching, which is a distorted form of grace, the believers were led to both immorality and idolatry... "To say that since you are saved by grace **it is permissible to do these things is to distort grace and involve the church in spiritual infidelity.**"

"I have this against you, you allow that woman to teach and seduce". Perhaps in a spirit of toleration the Pastor allowed this woman to give a so called prophecy.

Toleration should not allow for false messages, the spirits must be exposed. We are living in the most tolerant time ever known. In an atmosphere where anything goes, anything will go. If a Bible teacher makes the statement that something is wrong or heretical the Bible teacher is branded as intolerant. We can tolerate anything, except intolerance. There is no room in the Bible for bigotry racism and prejudice, but all cannot be done in the name of Christian charity. The strongest language in the Bible is reserved for those who depart from revealed truth, a strong warning for people who come up with new revelation.

5. There are several things wrong here. Spiritual leadership and headship was given over to this false prophetess. This is a difficult subject but one that must be addressed.

(1) Principle #1: Paul wrote "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression (I Tim. 12-14). The principle has its roots in creation. and is mandatory for the church.

(2) Principle #2 The woman led people astray. Many cults have been founded by women;
Mary Baker Glover Eddy (Christian Science), Spiritism Blavetsky; Theosophy Anne Besante, Unity, Myrtle Filmore; yes men have spawned false cults also; yet women are given certain restrictions.

(3) Practice#3 they commit adultery and sacrifice to idols. They were guilty of the worst kinds of sin before man and God. Harsh offences bring harsh penalties.

6. What Jesus is saying in effect, if you sleep in the bed that Jezebel makes, I will cast you into a bed of affliction. The world offers some pretty seducing attractions, but if you take fire into your bosom, you will be burned.

Her children are those who accept her teaching and conform to it. Jesus says he will judge their actions severely.

7. (v.21) I gave her space to repent and she did not" People misunderstand the patience and grace and longsuffering of God. God did not strike them down the moment they began, he gave them space to repent. Men deceive themselves into thinking, because God hasn't judged this evil, he never will. Not so! This woman saw God's goodness as an excuse to continue her deception.

8. 22-23: Three "I wills" God would rather pardon than punish. 23a: Judgment is for discipline and for example. When God judges Russia when she invades Israel, when God judges America, for its sin, when God judges those who have persecuted Israel and the church of Jesus Christ; Ezek 28:33 "Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord." There are lessons to be learned, and we should watch carefully.

"and I will give unto everyone according to their works" wait I thought we were saved by grace through faith" we are. Salvation is according to faith; judgment is according to works. classic passage Romans 2:1-16.

Correction (v.24)

1. The correction or the exhortation are to those who have not submitted to the teaching. "to the rest of you" "depths of Satan" or the so called deep secrets of Satan. It would appear that this prophetic was saying--" up until now you have received milk, but now I have revelation knowledge, knowledge so deep it is now being revealed for the first time. What I am sharing with you is the deep secrets of God. Jesus says, no those are really the deep secrets of Satan.

Within the apostate church there is a faithful remnant. Those who are faithful, steer clear of the cult. Jezebel was deep in the church, determined to have her way and too dynamic to simply ignore. Yet some held out. Like righteous Lot in Sodom, they had not participated in the deep secrets of Satan.

2.v.25. Hold on to what you have. We sometimes think that if we had just a little more than we would be happy. Topic: Worldliness

Subtopic:

Index: 3914-3917

Date: 7/1986.8

Title: Perfectly Contented

Many people mistakenly think they can find contentment in the things of the world. A wealthy employer once overheard one of his workers exclaim, "Oh if I only had a hundred dollars, I would be perfectly content." Knowing that his own money had not given him inner peace, he told her, "Since I would like to see someone who is perfectly contented, I'm going to grant your desire." He gave her the money and left, but before he was out of earshot, he heard her remark almost bitterly, "Why on earth didn't I say 200?" The boss smiled, for he had made his point that money doesn't make a person "perfectly contented."

See: 1 Tim 6:6-12

Other Topic/Subtopic/Index:

Trust/In Riches/3185

Riches/Disappointing/2811

Contentment/829

3.

Challenge (vv.26-28)

1. The overcomer is the person who avoids apostasy and continues in the truth. They will not tolerate Jezebel or her teaching. Jesus quotes a messianic psalm of David. He promises the overcomer authority over nations. The overcomer survives the end of the world, and will rule and reign with Jesus in the kingdom to come. Psalm 2 anticipates the future kingdom of Messiah when his enemies are smashed.

Those who stand with God are given power by God. Abraham had power with men, because he was separated unto his God. Abraham, Hebrew, smashed the Sodomite coalition, that carried his nephew into captivity. Abraham's power was acknowledged by the king of Sodom in Gen. 14. Later, he confessed himself to the sons of Heth to be a stranger and a pilgrim. they replied "Hear us, my lord, thou art a mighty prince among us." (Gen 23:6) His reputation lingers. It is not the natural man or woman but the spiritual.

Marin Luther, William Carey, David Livingstone, Elizabeth Elliot Sussannah Wesley.

This is power in the earth.

2. The overcomer is promised the 'morningstar'. Rev.22:16 Jesus proclaims "I am the Morning Star". The greatest reward is Jesus Christ himself. This is power in heaven

Those who possess Jesus possess all. The story is told of a Roman patrician whose wealthy father had died, leaving all he possessed to Marcellus, a slave. In his will, he stipulated that his noble son could choose one thing and one thing only from his estate. "I'll take Marcellus," was his wise choice.