

## **Jesus' Letter To The Church At Thyatira**

**Text : Revelation 2: 18-29**

### **INTRODUCTION :**

**A. As we study these messages from Jesus to the seven of the churches of ancient Asia Minor we can learn something from each one :**

1. **Ephesus** was a church on autopilot; they were doing the right things, but to no avail because they were no longer motivated by love.
2. **Smyrna** was praised and encouraged to keep on standing in the face of persecution because suffering is a normal part of the Christian life.
3. **Pergamos** was the political church; they had compromised with the world rather than steadfastly resisting Satan. They had wed the world.
4. **Thyatira** was the tolerant church; they had closed their eyes to sins even when it had been brought right into their midst.

**B. As we look at these churches we also see that every church is one of these.**

1. All congregations have one or more of these qualities.
2. As we study, we ask ourselves, "*Which of these are we ?*"
3. Bible study is about conforming one's self to God's standard.  
SO ... we should also be asking ourselves, "*Which of these am I ?*"

**C. As we observe ourselves in these churches, let us also give heed to the instructions given to each one by our Lord.**

**The message of Jesus to the church in Thyatira is the longest of the seven letters and it contains the harshest message. Jesus is not politically correct, but rather direct and stern. It is a matter of eternal life and death.**

### **I. Thyatira is a very different city than the previous three.**

**A. The previous three cities were cities of great prominence.**

1. They were cities of great wealth.
2. They were known for their beauty.
3. They had beautiful temples to their gods.
4. They were the cultural centers of their time.

**B. Thyatira's only importance stemmed from its location.**

1. It was where two river valleys met. ( *Caicus and Hermes River beds* )
2. It was also at the intersection of major highways. ( *Pergamos - Smyrna, Laodicea Rd* )
3. It was built by the Macedonians in 290 BC as a forward base to protect Pergamos.
  - a. There was a very significant military presence there.
  - b. Being strategically located, it had experienced significant destruction / rebuilding.

**C. Thyatira had temples, but nothing on the grand scale of the other three.**

1. They had a temple to Apollo. ( *They viewed temples like denominations.* )
  - a. He was called "the son god."
  - b. He was supposedly the son of Zeus.
  - c. There were other temples, but this was the main god worshipped.
2. They were more well known for the shrine of Sibyl Sambathe.
  - a. Female oracle .. pagan prophetess
  - b. Shrine built for her just outside the walled city.

**D. Thyatira was a blue-collar town dominated by unions.**

1. Archeologists have uncovered inscriptions of a number of guilds. ( *guild = union* )
 

|            |                    |                  |               |
|------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
| a. Bakers  | d. Leather Workers | g. Blacksmiths   | j. Fullers    |
| b. Potters | e. Shoemakers      | h. Wool Workers  | k. Dyers      |
| c. Tanners | f. Coppersmiths    | i. Linen Workers | l. Dye Makers |
2. The most important of these guilds related to fabrics.
  - a. Thyatira's main industry was the wool trade.
  - b. It's location gave it access to many raw materials for making fabrics.
  - c. If the Apostle Paul was making tents in Ephesus, he got material from Thyatira.
3. Thyatira was most famous for the purple dye it manufactured.
  - a. Lydia ( **Acts 16: 14** ) was a seller of purple from Thyatira.
  - b. Purple dye cost 1000 denarii per pound. ( *1000 days wages* )
  - c. Made from the root of the madder bush which is plentiful around Thyatira.
    - 1) Still manufactured in Akhisar, Turkey
    - 2) Now called "*Turkish Red*"

**\*\* Like a modern union town, one could not work unless he belonged to a guild.**

**E. Understanding the local situation is fundamental to understanding our text.**

## II. Vs. 18 The way Jesus identifies Himself to each church is different -and- significant.

### A. Jesus calls Himself “the Son of God.”

1. This is the only time in the book of the Revelation that this title is used.
2. In chapter one ( Vs. 13 ) he is referred to as “one like a Son of Man.”
  - a. Jesus most often referred to Himself as “the Son of Man.”
  - b. “Son of Man” emphasizes His empathy with mankind.
3. “The Son of God” emphasizes two significant points.
  - a. One ... Those in Thyatira worshipped the son of a pagan God,  
BUT Jesus is the son of the true, the all-powerful God.
  - b. Two ... Jesus IS God and as such is all powerful and totally sovereign.

### B. Jesus reminds them that He is the one “who has eyes like a flame of fire.”

1. Referring back to 1: 14 ( *All of the details in scripture are important.* )
2. Jesus has eyes which are all seeing. ( *We used to sing song, “Watching You.”* )
3. Jesus not only knows what they are doing, he knows why.
  - a. When Jesus dealt with people He knew their thoughts. ( e.g. Luke 5: 22 )
  - b. When God judges He is always completely just because He knows all.  
**I Cor. 4: 5-** *Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time,  
but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the  
things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's  
hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.*
  - c. Evil tries to hide in dark places, but God sees all.  
**Psa. 139: 12-** *Even the darkness is not dark to You,  
And the night is as bright as the day.  
Darkness and light are alike to You.*
4. When we get down to verse 23, Jesus refers back to this introduction.  
**Rev. 2: 23-** *... all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and  
hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.*
  - \* Literally : *“Searches the heart and kidneys.” The ancients believed the  
heart was the center of thought and the kidneys were  
the center of emotion. ( Thus, He searches thoughts and emotions. )*

### C. Finally, “His feet are like burnished bronze,”

1. In Prophecy, bronze is associated with power and strength.
2. Bronze is also associated with judgment. ( Cf. .. Dan. 2: 31-39 - *thighs of bronze* )

### III. Vs. 19 Jesus begins by recognizing the positive attributes of the church.

#### A. Many people evaluate others as ALL one thing or another.

1. The only thing consistent about people is that we are all inconsistent.
2. No one is all good and no one is completely void of positive attributes.

#### B. The one with the eyes of fire says, “I know your deeds.”

1. Our Master is a hands-on ruler. ( *The commendation was earned, not flattery.* )
  - a. **Eph. 1: 18-23** -cf- **Col. 1: 16-18** Jesus the Christ is the head of His church.
  - b. **Rev. 1: 12-13** ... Jesus dwells in the midst of the churches. ( **Lampstands** )
2. Jesus is aware of how every one of His servants is performing. ( *You, me, all.* )
  - a. **Rev. 2: 13** ... He was aware that Antipas stood faithful while tortured to death.
  - b. He is aware of every time you overcome the trails that Satan thrusts upon you.
3. Jesus is aware of how every congregation serves Him, whether good or not.
  - a. We can make excuses that will satisfy other people, but Jesus knows even our thoughts and our motives.
  - b. **Rev. 2: 5** ... Jesus alone can remove a church from His service **and He will.**

#### C. He commended them for six ( 6 ) good attributes.

1. Deeds ... They were seeking to do right, not just holding assemblies.
2. Love ... Unlike the brethren at Ephesus, they were doing the things they were doing out of the proper motives. ( *Motive is important to God.* )
3. Faith ... The brethren at Thyatira were sincerely trusting in Jesus. ( *Not a form* )
4. Service ... The natural fruit of faith is to serve. ( *Can't serve two masters* )
5. Perseverance ... They serve consistently even in the face of adversity.
6. Growth ... All living things grow or die. Their faith is growing so their deeds are increasingly more holy, they serve more, they love more, etc.

*Basically, they had met the goal of the Christian teacher.*

**I Tim. 1: 5-** But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

### IV. Vs. 20 After assuring them that He knew their good points, Jesus then points out their problem areas.

#### A. It is an unloving thing not to correct that which will cost a brother his soul.

1. Jesus will surely do that which He commands His servants to do.  
**Gal. 6: 1-** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.
2. Christians are commanded to correct those who stray from the right path.
  - a. **Matt. 18: 15 ff** ... When a brother sins, we must GO TO HIM.
  - b. Even the very elders of the church must be disciplined.  
**I Tim. 5: 19-21** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. <sup>21</sup> I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

**B. Church discipline is not optional; it is a command of God.**

1. We do not have the option to tolerate sin; it must be corrected.
2. Those who teach wrong are to be rejected :
  - a. **Gal. 1: 8-** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
  - b. **II John 10-** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;
3. Sin spreads through a church like an infection in the body. **I Cor. 5** ( *Leaven* = yeast )

**C. Some of the brethren were not doing the sins of Jezebel, they were rebuked for tolerating her sin.**

1. To refer to her as “**Jezebel**” was to associate her with possibly the most wicked woman mentioned in the Old Testament. ( **I Kings 16-21** ; **II Kings 9** )
  - a. Daughter of the king of Sidon married Ahab the king of Israel.
  - b. She was a Baal worshipper and brought her idolatry to Israel. **She supported :**
    - 1) 400 prophets of the Asherah
    - 2) 450 prophets of Baal
  - c. She was killed and eaten by the dogs. ( *Worst conceivable death to Jew.* )
2. The name Jezebel was synonymous with the basest of evil.

**D. The sins of this “prophetess” were destroying the church from within.**

1. They were sinning by letting her teach in the church.
  - a. **I Cor. 14: 34-** The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves,

- b. **I Tim. 2: 8-9** A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.  
<sup>9</sup> But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.
- 2. This “**Jezebel**” claimed she could teach because she was a prophetess. ( *deep things* )
  - a. There were women prophets and they could teach, but not men or in church.
  - b. False teachers today still claim authority based on “*a word from God.*”
  - c. **Remember :** “**God is not the author of confusion.**” **I Cor. 14: 33**  
 His instructions are totally consistent. **I Cor. 1: 10, 4:17, 7:17**
- 3. She was causing others to sin.
  - a. Eating things sacrificed to idols
  - b. Committing acts of immorality
- 4. These could be the result of two common errors of that day :
  - a. Trade guilds were each associated with an idol. ( *Like a patron saint.* )
  - b. Since she claimed “**deep**” knowledge, she may have been advocating Gnosticism.

#### V. Vs. 21-23 There will be consequences to her sin and to their tolerating it.

- A. God had given her time to repent, but that time was coming to an end.
  - 1. God gave the Amorites 400 yrs to repent, but ultimately destroyed them. **Gen 15:16**
  - 2. He exercises patience toward us, **but** will always judge the wicked. **II Pet. 2: 9-10**
- B. Judgment will destroy her. ( **Psa. 7: 11**- And God is angry with the wicked every day. )
  - 1. She will be destroyed by sickness, but in a way that all will know God did it.
  - 2. Those who have followed her will suffer in a way that others do not.
  - 3. An element of fear is part of church discipline.
    - a. Vs. 23- all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts;
    - b. **I Tim 5:20**- rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

#### CONCLUSION :

- A. God is discerning in punishment. ( **Each according to your deeds** )
- B. God places no heavy burdens upon us; ( Vs. 24b ) just be faithful. ( cf- **Ax 15** )
- C. Those who are faithful to the end receive a reward.
  - 1. There will be no fear from the nations ... you'll have authority over them. Vs. 26-27
  - 2. You will receive the morning star, i.e., Jesus Himself ... **Rev. 22:16**

**Lesson Text :****Revelation 2: 18-29**

**18** “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:  
The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and  
His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

**19** I know your deeds, and your love and faith and  
service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late  
are greater than at first. **20** But I have *this* against you,  
that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a  
prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-  
servants astray so that they commit *acts of immorality*  
and eat things sacrificed to idols. **21** I gave her time to  
repent, and she does not want to repent of her  
immorality. **22** Behold, I will throw her on a bed of  
*sickness*, and those who commit adultery with her into  
great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. **23** And  
I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the  
churches will know that I am He who searches the  
minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you  
according to your deeds. **24** But I say to you, the rest  
who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who  
have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call  
them—I place no other burden on you. **25** Nevertheless  
what you have, hold fast until I come. **26** He who  
overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO  
HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; **27** AND HE SHALL RULE  
THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN  
TO PIECES, as I also have received *authority* from My  
Father; **28** and I will give him the morning star. **29** He who  
has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the  
churches.”