

REVELATION



**Letter To The Church
In Thyatira
(Rev. 2:18-29)**

The citizens of this city were widely known for their skill in dyeing purple.

• We recall that Lydia, the first convert to Christ in Philippi was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira (Acts 16:11-15).

**Located about 35 miles
southeast of Pergamum,**

**• Thyatira was a small but
bustling commercial center
on the main road between
Pergamum and Laodicea.**

- The longest
message
- was sent to the
church in the
smallest city!

- **Thyatira**

was a **military town** as well as a
commercial center
with many trade guilds.

- Wherever **guilds** were found,
idolatry and **immorality**
abounded.

- The city boasted a special temple to Apollo, the “sun god,”
- Which explains why the Lord introduced Himself as “the Son of God”
- (the only time in Revelation this title is used).

- John had to deliver a message of severe warning and judgment to this congregation,
- Which explains the description of the Lord's eyes and feet.

- The **Ephesian** church
was **weakening**
in its **love**,
- Yet **faithful**
to judge false teachers.

- The church in Thyatira was growing in love,
- But was too tolerant of false doctrine.

- **Both extremes**
must be avoided
in the church.

- **“Speaking the truth in love”**
is the biblical balance
(Eph 4:15).

Unloving orthodoxy

and

compromise

are both hateful

to God.

It might surprise you to know that Thyatira was a city in which trade unions were very important.

**You might think that
trade unions had their
beginnings in the
"sweat shop" factories
of 19th century
England and America,**

But the truth is that
carpenters, dyers,
merchants,
and other trade workers
had organized into
fraternal guilds even
before the time of Christ.

**In Thyatira the trades were
so strongly unionized
that it was difficult to make
a living without being
a guild member**

English Bible scholar

William Barclay

describes the dilemma

of the Thyatiran

Christians

this way:

• **These guilds met frequently, and they met for a common meal.**

• **Such a meal was, at least in part, a religious ceremony.**

It would probably meet in a heathen temple, and it would certainly begin with a libation to the gods, and the meal itself would largely consist of meat offered to idols.

- Here was the problem:
 - These Thyatiran Christians had to belong to a union in order to make a living.

**-belonging to the union
meant they were pressured
(and perhaps even required)**

**to participate in
immoral sexual practices
and idol worship.**

- So these Christians had to make a decision
 - a decision of either remaining faithful to God
 - Or physical survival for themselves and their families.

- The **threat** against the church in Thyatira came from **within**.
- There was always a **temptation** to:
 - Put **business interests** ahead of Christ's interests

Worst of all, this Jezebel in the Thyatira church was teaching that it was all right for Christians to join the unions,

- **To submit to the pressures of the surrounding evil culture, and that God would overlook their sin**

- **These wicked seducers were compared to Jezebel, and called by her name.**
- **Jezebel was a persecutor of the prophets of the Lord, and a great patroness of idolaters and false prophets.**

**Her philosophy was one we
often hear these days
whenever Christians want to
excuse or justify an
unethical or immoral
business practice:
"Business is business."**

- **If your Christian principles get in the way of your success in business, then it is those Christian principles that have to go.**
 - **"I have to make a living, don't I?"** is the plea of many.

- Here we see how relevant the book of Revelation is to our own time and problems.
- The Thyatira syndrome is closely paralleled by many churches in our era.

- The name **Jezebel** is **symbolic**:
- **Jezebel** was the idolatrous queen who enticed Israel to add **Baal worship** to their religious ceremonies (1 Kings 16-19).

- The seductive teaching of Jezebel was similar to the **“doctrine of Balaam”** that the Lord condemned in the church of **Pergamos** (Rev 2:14).

Jezebel taught believers how
to **compromise** with the
Roman religion and the
practices of the guilds,
so that Christians
would not lose their jobs
or their lives.

- **But the Lord holds such churches accountable today, just as He did in the first century.**

- **His charge against them is, "You tolerate that woman Jezebel."**

- **This is a problem that church leadership must face today just as church leaders of the apostle John's era had to.**

- Notice that in the letters to the churches at both Pergamum and Thyatira the Lord links sexual immorality with idolatry.
- Notice how often that idol worship was comprised of sexual activity.
 - This was the line the Devil used to hook generations of God's people into worshipping the gods of Canaan.

• Now the link between immorality and idolatry becomes clear:

• If people reject the Lord's authority over their lives and if God is no longer God in their lives,

• Then they must find another god!

**It is impossible for the human
spirit to thrive
without something
to live for,
something
larger than itself—**

- and that *something*
- *is what a god is!*

- **Whatever makes your life worthwhile becomes your god.**
- It may be the **god of pleasure**, of **self-gratification**, even of **sexual indulgence**.
- Or it may be the **god of wealth**, **success**, **ambition**, **power**, or **fame**.

“Enlightened,”

”modern,”

”sophisticated”

people

still have idols

just as the ancients had.

- The **idols** are not carved out of **wood** or **stone**.
- But they are just as real, **just as seductive**, **just as dishonoring** and **offensive** to the one true God.

V. 18 “And to the angel of
the church in Thyatira
write:

- These things saith the Son
of God, who hath his
eyes like a flame of fire.”

- In this passage Jesus stresses His deity.

- His eyes...
like blazing fire,

- and "feet...
like burnished bronze."

The picture of
eyes like blazing fire
suggests His ability
to pierce the disguises,
and
pretensions of the heart.

His eyes all penetrating.

**The eyes of the Lord are
His infinite wisdom.**

Zechariah 4:10

**“These are the eyes of
Jehovah, which run to and
fro through the whole earth.”**

Feet like burnished bronze

suggests His ability to

trample sin and

injustice underfoot,

• His authority

to punish evil.

- **Not only was the church at Thyatira tolerant of evil, but it was proud and unwilling to repent.**
- **The Lord gave the false prophetess time to repent, yet she refused.**

- Both the eyes of blazing truth
- and the bronze feet of justice
- are needed at the church in Thyatira.

**Tragically,
Thyatira is the
most corrupt
of the seven churches
of Revelation.**

V. 19 “I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry, and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.”

Nothing escapes His attention.

He had discovered their excellent qualities; now he specifies them.

Thyatira's virtues
had been increasing,
the

"last to be more
than the first".

- Growth is a sign of life.
- Growth is also commanded.
- *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ"*
(2Peter 3:18).

**Their growth was stopped by
the presence of sin, because
"ye cannot serve God [grow]**

and mammon [sin]"

at the same time.

(Luke 16:13)

First: their “love”.

**Love of God and man
is the essence of Christianity.**

**The garment of love is of
exceptional beauty.**

(1 Corinthians 13).

Second: their “faith”

- Faith ties man to his maker.
 - Faith reveals the great unseen world.
- Faith is the “eye of the soul”.
 - Faith is developed by Bible study. (Rom 10:17)

Third: their “Ministry”

**From their love and faith
flowed deeds of kindness.**

**Love and faith in the heart
find expression in life.**

(Gal. 5:6; Heb. 6:19)

Fourth:
their “patience”

**They were constant
and steadfast
in their devotion.**

Fifth: their progress.

**“Thy last works” said the Lord,
“are more than the first.”**

**They had not become
weary in well-doing.**

**Not like the saints in Ephesus,
who had left their first love.**

**Growth is the
grand object of life.**

- **Where growth ends,**
- **decay begins.**
(2 Peter 3:18)

When others had
left their first love,

- *and lost their*

- first zeal,*

- These were growing
wiser and better.

Condemnation

• Rev 2: 20

“But I have this
against thee”

• **No amount
of loving and
sacrificial works
can compensate
for tolerance of evil.**

**The church was
permitting a
false prophetess
to influence the people
and lead them
into compromise.**

- **Rev. 2:20.....that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess**
- **The threat against the church in Thyatira came from within**
- **Sad but true. “*We have met the enemy and he is us.*” -- Pogo**

**By calling herself a
“prophetess” she is
claiming divine authority
for what she is teaching,
thereby, bringing
damnation on herself
and her followers.**

•; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

- The one who has “eyes like flames of fire”
- Did not overlook their graces,
 - He also saw their sins.

**Rev 2:20 But I have this against
you, that you tolerate that woman
Jezebel,**

• **The Greek reads:**

"your wife, Jezebel"

• **instead of**

"that woman, Jezebel."

The word
“to seduce”
never means mere error
as such, but
fundamental departure
from the truth.

(Vincent Word Studies)

- **“You tolerate that woman Jezebel....**

(Rev. 2:2)

- **How could anyone be too tolerant?**

• Many
recoil at that idea.

• Tolerance, after all, has
become the greatest
virtue in our society.

- **The United Nations Declaration on the Principles of Tolerance**

states:

- **Tolerance involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism.**

- **According to the UN,**
if you believe
anything is absolute,

- **Then you are by**
definition intolerant and
worthy of rebuke.

G.K. Chesterton

**“Tolerance is
a virtue of a man
without
convictions.”**

- The Ephesians could not bear false prophets,
 - yet they lacked love.
- Thyatira had love,
- but they tolerated false prophets.

- We must seek both love and truth,
 - or we will eventually end up having neither.

• **21** And I gave her
time that she
should **repent**; and
she willeth not to
repent of her
fornication.

**22 Behold, I cast her
into a bed, and them
that commit adultery
with her into great
tribulation,
except they repent
of her works.**

**Even Thyatira's
Jezebel was given
a chance to repent**

but to no avail.

Exodus 34:6-7 (ASV)

⁶ Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth;

⁷ keeping loving-kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;

• Worldliness was in the church and tolerated.

• We cannot please the Lord merely by letting evil alone:

• we must actively oppose it.

- **First: note the sinner tolerated, “Jezebel”.**
 - This name is **symbolical**.
- An **unholy** influence.

- **Second: her sin.**
- **She refused to separate herself from idolatry.**
- **She also led others astray.**
- **“she teacheth and seduceth
my servants”**

- Third: the punishment threatened.
- The leader and her followers were to share the “great tribulation”
 - The “bed”
a place of pleasure
was to become a place of pain.

• However, the
punishment of her
followers was
conditional

• “except they repent”

- **Fourth: the purpose of the punishment.**
 - This was twofold:
 - Retribution for sin,
 - Also an object lesson:
“all the churches shall know”
(v. 23)

• **Fifth: Divine justice.**

• **“I will give unto each one of you according to your works” (v.23)**

• The impenitent
can read his own doom.

• The penitent
can read his own salvation.

**23 And I will kill her
children with death;**

**and all the churches shall
know that I am he that
searcheth the
reins and hearts:**

**and I will give unto each one
of you according
to your works.**

• I will kill her children
with death

• The second death leaves
no hope of future life.

• But only
everlasting shame.

Encouragement

v. 24 **“But to you I say,**

to the rest that are in Thyatira,

**as many as have not this teaching,
who know not the deep things of
Satan, as they are wont to say;**

**I cast upon you
none other burden.”**

- **“The deep things of Satan”**
(v.24)

• Some argued that it was to their advantage to learn the meaning of sin by actual participation in it.

• **“depths of Satan”**
delusions.

• **2 Thessalonians 2:11**

**And for this cause God shall
send them strong delusion,
that they should believe a lie:**

Ezekiel 23:35

**“Therefore thus says the Lord
GOD: ‘Because you have
forgotten Me and cast Me behind
your back, Therefore
you shall bear the penalty
of your lewdness
and your harlotry.**

- Not everyone in the assembly was unfaithful to the Lord, and He had a special word for them.
(Revelation 2:24)

- They had separated themselves from the false doctrine and compromising practices of Jezebel and her followers.

- **“depths of Satan”**
- **Satanic delusions,
diabolical mysteries.**
 - **There is a
“mystery of iniquity”
(2 Thess 2:7)**
 - **And the great
“mystery of godliness”.
(1 tim. 3:16)**

- It is a dangerous thing
to despise
the mystery of God.

- And dangerous
to receive
the mysteries of Satan.

- Note, how tender Christ is of his faithful servants:

- "I will lay upon you no other burden;

Rev 2:25 Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I 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 shivers; as I also have received of my Father:

**28 and I will
give him the
morning star.**

- Satan is named Lucifer, which in Hebrew means “brightness, bright star.”

- The compromising people in Thyatira were following “the depths of Satan,”

• Their star (Satan)
would lead
to darkness and death.

• God's over-comers, on the
other hand, would share
the Morning Star!

**29 He that hath an
ear, let him hear
what the Spirit
saith to the
churches.**

- Three promises were pledged:
 - First: immunity.
 - “I will cast upon you none other burden”
 - Set themselves against the corruption .
 - They were to hold fast.

- **Second:**
**“authority
over the nations”**
- **or the evil powers
that encircled them.**

- Sainly believers are powerful.
 - Ruling by wholesome influence.
 - Ruling with Christ in accord with His will.

· Third:

“the morning star”

• The dark cloud of evil influence will disappear and the

“bright and morning star”

shall shine.

(Rev. 22:16)

- And now the final and fitting admonition:
- **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”**

- **From this section we learn:**
 - **“the eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good.”**
(Proverbs 5:3)

From this section we learn:

That the Son of God
discovers every virtue,
and every
vice.

From this section we learn:

That the aim of the Christian is to
“grow in the grace
and knowledge”
of the Savior.
(2 Peter 3:18)

From this section we learn:

**That it isn't enough for the
Christian to refrain from
immorality;
he/she must
actively oppose it.**

From this section
we learn:

If we sin with sinners
we must suffer
with sinners.

From this section we learn:

We learn

**“the deep things
of Satan”**

**lead to our shame
and humiliation.**

From this section we learn:

**The church even today
must not tolerate
departures from
the word of God.**

From this section we learn:

- The world may see tolerance as the greatest virtue,
 - but Jesus does not share the world's opinion.

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say**

“Come”.

Revelation 22:17



