

**Christ's Messages To The Seven Churches Of
Asia;**

Part 3—The Message To Thyatira

(Revelation 2:18-29)

D. Message to the Church in Thyatira: *A Tolerant Church (2:18-29)*

Scripture: 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 ‘And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 ‘Behold, I will cast her upon 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 ‘And 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.’

Intro: This morning we continue our study of the messages Christ delivered to the seven churches of Asia, recorded in chapters two and three. We noted in our previous message to the believers in the church at Pergamos, that while they were commended for upholding Christ's deity, as the eternal Son of God, they were condemned for compromising with the world and false teachers of their day. Christ's message to the believers at Thyatira, that we are going to examine

this morning, was to quit tolerating the immoral and idolatrous teachings of the woman Jezebel. Christ closes with a fantastic promise that overcomers will share with Him in His rule over the nations in His coming Millennial Kingdom.

May I remind you, though each message is different, Christ's admonition to each of the seven churches follows the same general six-fold outline:

1. Destination of the letter (2:18a)

Christ's forth message was addressed to the angel/pastor of the church in Thyatira, a relatively small but thriving town located 35 miles southeast of Pergamos. Thyatira was located in a rich agricultural area, and was well known for its wool and dyeing industry. This ancient city was noted for its many trade guilds; organized groups and associations for potters, tanners, dyers and bronze workers. Thyatira had become famous for the manufacture of woolen goods colored with a special purple dye. This 'purple dye' was obtained from the madder root, and produced under the name 'Turkey red' (New Bible Dictionary).

Lydia, the woman who the Apostle Paul had led to faith in Christ in Philippi, was a seller of purple fabrics (Acts 16:14). She was from the city of Thyatira, and was apparently on an overseas trip selling dyed woolen goods in Philippi. Many commentators believe that Lydia may have carried the gospel of Christ back to Thyatira, and been instrumental in founding the church in her hometown.

The name Thyatira is derived from a compound of two words meaning "continual" and "sacrifice." Many believe that this refers to the ascendancy and dominance of the Roman Catholic Church during the middle ages, from the time of Constantine to the Protestant Reformation.

I should also point out that *while this was the smallest of the seven churches Christ addressed, it is by far the longest message He delivered, and it contains the most scathing condemnation of all.*

2. Description of Christ (2:18b)

The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze.

Christ introduces Himself to the saints at Thyatira as “the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze.” As in the previous letters, Christ draws from the vision given in chapter 1, verses 13-15, but here, He refers to Himself as the Son of God rather than the Son of Man. The designation “Son of Man” is usually a reference to Christ’s humanity, while the title “Son of God” is a reference to His deity.

Christ’s description of Himself as the Son of God, “who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze,” serves to stress His divine authority in judgment as the divine Son of God. Just as fire consumes everything it touches, Christ’s fiery eyes will penetrate the inner thoughts and motives of every person. The reference to Christ’s feet being “like burnished bronze,” likewise emphasizes the indignation and righteous character of His coming judgment.

3. Commendation (2:19)

As in His previous letters, prior to discussing the evil in the church that must be judged, Christ first commends the believers in the church at Thyatira for their many works of faithful and loving service, v. 19

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.

Though much was wrong in the church at Thyatira, Christ commends the believers for their deeds—they faithfully loved, served, and persevered in spite of all opposition and pressure. In fact, the believers in Thyatira were doing more for the cause of Christ as time went on. Christ noted that their deeds of late were greater than at the first.

But despite these evidences of Christian life, love, service, and patient endurance, the Christians in Thyatira had serious problems. Look with me at Christ’s condemnation in vv. 20-23

4. Condemnation (2:20-23)

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 ‘And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 ‘Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.

Christ delivers a scathing rebuke against the believers at Thyatira for allowing the woman Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess, to teach believers to take part in the immoral practices that accompanied pagan religious feasts and to eat foods sacrificed to idols. While this woman’s real name was probably not Jezebel, her corrupting influences were similar to the notorious Jezebel in the Old Testament.

According to 1 Kings 16, Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, one of Israel’s worst kings. Jezebel was the godless daughter of the Phoenician king Ethbaal. She was one of the most evil characters of the Old Testament. She worshipped Baal, the pagan god of storms and fertility, and his female consort, Ashtoreth. She did everything in her power to establish Baal worship in Israel. She got Ahab to build a house for Baal beside the palace in Samaria, and set up an idol of the fertility goddess Ashtoreth. She supported over 800 prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth, and killed all the true prophets of God she could find.

Without a doubt Jezebel serves as a symbol of immorality and idolatry. Even though she had been dead for nearly one thousand years at the time this letter was written, Jezebel’s spirit had been revived in this prophetess who had become prominent in the church at Thyatira.

In spite of the evil this woman had introduced into the church at Thyatira, Christ had graciously given her ample time to repent of her immorality, v. 21, but she had refused. The fact she was called Jezebel suggests she was not only a false prophetess, but an unbeliever. Christ calls for her to repent. He demands that she change her mind about her present evil course and receive Him as her Savior.

In verses 22 and 23 Christ pronounces judgment on the woman Jezebel, and all those who follow her immoral and perverted teachings. According to verse 22 Jezebel was going to be cast upon a bed of sickness, and those who committed adultery with her into great tribulation. Jezebel’s being

cast upon a bed of sickness forms a sharp contrast between her luxurious and licentious couch of immorality, and the pain of God's divine judgment that she was about to experience.

Those who followed her immoral and adulterous teachings would likewise experience great tribulation, unless they repented. Here again God's grace is extended to those who had been enticed to follow Jezebel's immoral and perverted ways. The mention of **adultery** here would imply that some of those who had been seduced by Jezebel's teaching and immoral practices were believers, those who had been betrothed to Christ as His bride (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Jam. 4:4).

In v. 23 Christ pronounced sudden and immediate judgment upon Jezebel's true children—her spiritual progeny.

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.

Christ declaration that He **was going to strike her children dead**, meant that suffering would also extend to Jezebel's followers. This is clearly a reference to unsaved individuals that frequented the church at Thyatira, but had never come to faith in Jesus Christ. These like Ahab, who was influenced by Jezebel of old, followed her example by participating in the activities of the labor guilds which meant involvement in eating things sacrificed to idols and sexual fornication.

The judgment to come would be so sudden & dramatic that all the churches would know that Christ is the One who searches hearts and minds.

5. Counsel (2:24-25)

Christ next addresses the faithful believers in the church at Thyatira, [those] who did not hold to or follow Jezebel's teachings, or the so-called deep things of Satan, vv. 24-25

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.

Christ commends those believers at Thyatira who rejected Jezebel’s perverted teachings, and the so-called deep things of Satan. He placed no other burden upon them, except to “hold fast to the faith until He comes.”

Dr. Walvoord suggests that “Perhaps because the church was so small, Christ did not command them to leave this apostate church, but to remain as a godly testimony. Judgment on Jezebel and her followers would come soon and would purge the church. In modern times believers who find themselves in apostate local churches can usually leave and join another fellowship, but this was impractical under the circumstances in Thyatira.”

6. Promise (2:26-29)

As in each of His previous letters, Christ concludes His message to the believers in the church at Thyatira with a promise that those who remain faithful will be rewarded, vv. 26-28

26 ‘And 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.

Immediately following the prediction of His second coming in v. 25, *Christ provides the first reference in Revelation to His coming Millennial reign.* The faithful believers at Thyatira, and by way of extension you and I, are promised that we will be given authority to rule with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom (Ps. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4-6). The reference to ruling over the nations with a rod of iron is drawn from Psalm 2:8-9. The word for “rule” is the Greek word *poimanei*, which means “to shepherd.” *The faithful will share in Christ’s shepherding* of the peoples of the nations during His Millennial reign on this earth.

Christ also promises to give His faithful overcomers the morning star, which appears just before dawn. Morning star is used in 3 N.T. passages:

- (1) **In 2 Peter 1:19** it refers to the fuller understanding we will receive at the return of Christ for the church when the Lord is personally present to enlighten us.
- (2) **In Revelation 22:16** it refers to the Lord Jesus Himself.
- (3) **Here in Revelation 2:28** refer to the promise that overcomers will be granted authority to share with Christ in His rule over the nations in His coming Millennial Kingdom (Ps. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4-6).

v. 29 Jesus concludes in verse 29 with the familiar call to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches.’

This admonition, as we have seen in each of the previous letters, is a call that goes beyond this one church to all the churches. Again we see the personal and loving concern of the Spirit of God for His people, and His desire that we all respond in faith and obedience.

Conclusion:

Christ’s message to the believers in Thyatira was to quit tolerating the immoral and idolatrous teachings of the woman Jezebel. Christ had graciously admonished Jezebel to repent of her immorality, but she refused. She was going to be cast into a bed of sickness, and those believers who had committed adultery with her would suffer great tribulation, unless they repented. Jezebel’s true children, unbelievers in the church, were going to be struck dead. This reminds me of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5. They were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit.

Christ concludes with a promise that overcomers, all born-again believers, will share with Him in His rule over the nations in His coming Millennial Kingdom. It is encouraging to know that we will someday share in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom.

Show film clip: Christ’s Millennial Kingdom

Applications:

1. As believers we need to abstain from sexual immorality and idolatry.
2. Do you guard yourself against sexually explicit movies, media, and magazines?
3. Have you forsaken Christ for the idols of this age? I am referring to the material goods and activities that rob us of spending time with God.
4. Do you put God first in your finances by giving back to Him the first of all He blesses you with? Do you want to experience God's blessing in your life? Then give to Him as He has commanded you to give and He will bless you. Malachi 3:10—"Test Me in this says the LORD, bring your whole tithe into My storehouse, and see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."
5. Remember, our position in Christ's coming Millennial Kingdom will be determined by our faithfulness in service to Him and one another here and now.

Closing Prayer: