

The Book of Revelation to John

Study 4
Chapter 2 v 18-29

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Thyatira

We look at the church at Thyatira the 4th church of the seven that the Lord spoke to. We also remind ourselves that all seven are a picture of the kind of church that we find in any church age. Every church in the world will fall into one or more of the categories we are looking at in our studies and the Lord has something important to say to all of them.

Thyatira was a very small but busy commercial centre it was on a major road that linked several towns and cities which was ideal for trade. There was a trade union presence in all the cities but it was very strong in Thyatira. Everyone who worked was a trade union member no matter what your trade was. The Apostle Paul planted the church in Philippi and one of his first converts was a Christian woman named Lydia, (Acts 16v14). She ran a successful business selling purple which was in great demand amongst the priests and Noblemen in Rome. It was a deep rich expensive colour extracted from a special dye obtained from a snail caught in Tyrus from which many of the tunics were made and she came from Thyatira. We are not told but Lydia may have found it too difficult to trade as a Christian in this town and for that reason she may have moved to Philippi.

Jesus had some important things to say to the church at Thyatira.

Verse 18

These things say the Son of God, Who has His eyes like unto a flame of fire and His feet are like fine brass.

At the outset of this letter it was made clear from whom this letter came, None other than The Son of God. If any of us received a letter that started “from The Son of God” how would we react? Better than these people in Thyatira I hope. The Son of God has eyes like blazing fire, eyes that sees everything and misses nothing, the disguises, postures and the pretensions of these people His eyes got right to the heart of what they were doing. His feet were as burnished bronze which can trample sin under foot punishing the sinful wrong doer. Both eyes and feet like His were needed in this church. His all searching eye seeks out their works of love and service, faith and patience and He commends them for it. More so in this town because of the opposition the Christians had to put up with it was very hard to be a Christian in Thyatira.

Verse 20

Notwithstanding I have a few things against you,

The oldest manuscripts omit “a few things against you” and the way it reads is more poignant, it just says “I am against you that you suffer that woman...” Two oldest MMS read “Thy Wife”. Some believe therefore that this woman Jezebel was the wife of the Pastor of the church in Thyatira. I believe that this Jezebel was symbolic of the Jezebel who was Ahab’s wife in 1 Kings 16v29 and our Jezebel had that same evil spirit. This Old Testament Jezebel was the daughter of the king of Sidon, and he worshipped pagan Gods. When Jezebel married Ahab the king of Israel she brought with her the evil pagan spirits she was brought up on and they permeated the land from the top down. From the outset she worshipped the god of Baal and made that god popular in Israel. Baal was a fertility god and his worship involved all sorts of immoral and licentious practices including child sacrifices.

The Temple prostitutes both male and female were associated with the worship of Baal. Jezebel spread the worship of Baal widely among the tribes of Israel and she made it one of the most popular religions of the day. She supported over 800 prophets of Baal who eat with her daily; she was the one who tried to kill Elijah who had a mighty experience with 480 Prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel calling fire down from Heaven that consumed their sacrifice, only to run from the scene when Jezebel got involved.

The Angel or Pastor of the Thyatira church allowed her to teach and acted as the perfect ‘Ahab’. Jezebels can only thrive if they can trick a bunch of weak ‘Ahabs’ into following them. In this case nobody was man enough to confront her false teaching and false prophecy. Instead the Pastor of this church, the one who Jesus had placed in authority (Eph. 4) tolerated it and may even have spread these false doctrines himself. There is a spirit of Jezebel in the land today. Our Pastors and Leaders must not bow-down to its politically correct teachings that want to tell us what is evil is good (e.g. same sex marriages and abortion) and what is good is evil (narrow minded Christianity) Those in church leadership who do not confront this spirit of the age will be held doubly accountable before the Lord.

She claimed to be a prophetess but in fact seduced them to indulge in practices associated with immorality and idolatry. She promoted the cult of the Nicolaitanes and Balaamites (see Pergamos study) which was marked by immorality and Idolatry.

If we assume that the Balaamites the Nicolaitans and now this woman Jezebel were representing the same cult under different forms but still under the control of Satan, we can observe that the Ephesians **hated** this cult see verse 6, the Pergamos Christians **disliked** this cult but nevertheless did not deal with it (verse 14), and the Thyatirans **tolerated** it without opposing it or being disturbed by its evil influence. Isn’t it a shame that sin in all its forms can creep into a holy place or into the soul of a man or woman given over to Jesus and like a cancer will take such a hold that it becomes very difficult, not only to recognise it but to eradicate it.

Verse 21

And I gave her space (in the Greek-Time) to repent of her fornication and she repented not. Behold I will cast her into a bed and them who commit adultery with her into great tribulation except they repent of their deeds.

So God gave her time to repent of her wicked deeds and her leading the church astray with her teachings but she would not listen to the voice of God. It would appear that Jezebel knew something of the true faith and recognised that God was giving her time to change her ways, which may be the reason for those who believe she was the Pastor’s wife as early manuscripts indicate. But with hardened heart and a sure defiance she trampled on the Son of God profaning the blood of Christ and outraging the Spirit of Grace (Heb. 10v29). Her will had become fixed against repentance and her spirit was one of apostasy.

Verse 22

Behold I will cast her into a bed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds.

The bed of lust soon becomes a bed of sickness, unbridled licentiousness and unnatural vice leads to diseases of the most dreadful kind and more than that it rots the soul. Rejection of God's calling, mercy and grace leads to great tribulation. We have seen first-hand those who follow such a path whether the everyday man in the street or a superstar of film or Television this type of disease is no respecter of persons and the death that follows is very painful and cruel. This was the reward of those who followed Jezebel who had induced them to commit adultery of the physical and carnal kind; this was also a symptom of spiritual decline of the most devastating kind, leading to eternal death. The human make-up is such that the body cannot be separated from the spirit, what damages the spirit effects the body.

Romans 1v24

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.

1 Corinthians 6v19

What? do you not know that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you which you have of God and you are not your own you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.

The life of the followers of Jezebel was mapped out for them unless they repented, and God gave them time to do that. Mathew explains that adultery and fornication are the same in God's eyes. Fornication in the Bible means adultery of married or single people. Read, Matthew. 5:32, Mathew.19:9, 1 Corinthians.7:2 and 10:8, 1 Thessalonians.4:3. Out of 69 times the sin is referred to in scripture; only two passages speak of spiritual adultery.

The seed of dishonourable passions are cultivated in the soil of ungodliness,

1 Thess.4v7 tells us *God called us not for uncleanness but unto holiness*

1 Corinthians 6: 19

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price therefore glorify God therefore in your body and in your spirit which are God's.

So Jesus requires His Church to refrain from all types of impurity and to keep ourselves holy unto Him. I recognise and respect the choice that some make concerning this subject, that choice is yours; I hope you won't mind if I warn the rest of us the consequences if such a path is chosen.

Verse 23

I will kill her children with death and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searches the reins and hearts and will give every one of you according to your works.

To 'kill with death' is an old expression which means to kill with or through a deadly plague or affliction. As we have alluded to earlier, even with today's medical knowledge the illness of aids brings pain, wasting away of the body and a horrible death which no amount of medical help can cure.

This was probably the destiny of Jezebel and her followers unless there was genuine repentance from each of them. Also note that Jesus wanted to warn all the Churches, not just the church at

Thyatira the outcome of such impure living and sinful practises. The Lord says He can search the hidden recesses of our hearts and minds, nothing is hidden from Him. Psalm 26v2 says;

Examine me O Lord and prove me try my reins and my heart for your loving kindness is before my eyes and I have walked in your truth.

Every born again believer should ask the Holy Spirit to search deep into the depths of our being to see that we are abiding in the Word of God and not following a false 'gospel'. Because the Lord can search the hidden corners of our beings He can and will give to everyone according to our works. True works for the Lord proclaim the Fruit of the Spirit and all things Godly, and there were some in the Thyatira church who withstood the teaching and practices of Jezebel and kept Holy before the Lord. In verse 24 we find the words "*which have not known the depths of Satan*" This proves a Christian, with a renewed mind washed with the Word can, with the help of the Holy Spirit stand against Satan and all his works, fully able to shun evil and remain Holy before God, God recognises and honours the loyalty and fight of that overcoming person. Jesus said He would not allow any more burdens to be put upon them.

Verse 25,26

But that which you have already hold fast till I come. And he who overcomes and keeps My works to the end to him will I give power over the nations.

Jesus approved what the remnant in Thyatira were doing He told them to hold fast, stand firm, be strong in the faith...until I come back, which is the rapture of the Church. And here is that word again 'overcome'. Jesus is looking for overcomers, people who don't give in to sin, or to temptation, or give-up when affliction comes or when tribulation presses in on us, we are told to *have patience in tribulation, continuing in prayer.*(Rom.12v12) These few people in this church were encouraged to continue to bless those who persecuted them, serve those in need, rejoice with others who rejoice, weep with those who weep, implying that we should stand with those going through tribulation, be of the same mind one to another, be not wise in your own conceits, keep humble before the Lord, and above all to learn to distinguish between the "deep things of God", and the "deep things of Satan".

The Overcomers reward

The reward of the overcomer is that he will have power with Christ over the nations in the Kingdom Age. Christ encourages us to hold fast, hang on, don't let go to our faith in Him. It's almost as if Jesus is saying look I know the trial is hard, I know you think you can hardly make it but with Me by your side you can. I know the tribulation you are going through but I am with you all the time. He says again "*he who overcomes*" It is one thing for a runner to enter the race but when the running gets tough, when you feel you cannot take another step, but you muster up what strength you have left, you take what you are sure you think is your last breath and push on into God in prayer and worship, that's overcoming. When you feel you just cannot go any further, the pressure of pain, sickness, torment, family pressures, children problems, work trials, marriage problems and so on get too much He says to him ***who overcomes and keeps holding on to My works to the end he shall rule with Him in His new Kingdom.*** The runner in this race must persevere to the end to claim the crown. The crown will be to rule with Christ over the nations whose hearts will be hardened and unbelief set in. Two of the oldest manuscripts liken this as a potters vessel dashed to pieces because of its failure to answer to the design of the maker. The overcomer will rule as a shepherd in mercy and love but also if needed with a rod of iron not allowing evil to take root.

Verse 28

And I will give him the Morning Star

Likened to the planet Venus the brightest of the planets, which leads the way into dispelling the darkness of a new day, the overcomer will be like Jesus Himself who said in Revelation 22:16 “*I am the bright and morning Star*”. We remind ourselves that Paul was only too willing to suffer the loss of all things that he might gain Christ. Jesus promises to give us Himself and in comparison there is no other gift worth having. Let us pray and keep ourselves ready for His return because Paul reminds us:

The night is far spent and the day is at hand let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, let us put on the armour of light let us walk honestly as in the day . Rom:13:12.

Those, born again and living with the light of His glory in our hearts, shine dimly at present but at the coming of the Lord who is the light of the world, who spoke His word and light banished the darkness at creation, that light, His light will also be ours and we shall bathe in the light of the trinity for ever.

He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Word of God is not for the selective few, it is not written for just the church, neither is it written for the sinner alone, Jesus said let him who has an ear, or wants to hear, let him hear, do not hinder him, encourage him to hear from within, deep in his spirit. Become thoroughly acquainted with it. And His word was the same to all the seven churches, it is the same to us today.

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Be Blessed.

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