

REVELATION STUDY 5

Ch. 2. 18-29

**“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,
‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and
His feet like fine brass: ¹⁹ “I know your works, love, service, faith, and
your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the
first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you
allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and
seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things
sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual
immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a
sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation,
unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and
all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and
hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.
²⁴ “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have
this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they
say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I
come. ²⁶ And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to
him I will give power over the nations He shall rule them with a rod of
iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels as I also
have received 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.**

We have looked at the church at Ephesus which had lost its first love, the church at Smyrna which had been persecuted and the church at Pergamos, which was guilty of compromise. Now we come to the church at Thyatira which had gone deep into sin. In this church there was full scale immorality and idolatry and tolerance of both

The city of Thyatira was situated about thirty five miles from Pergamos: it had been occupied by the Romans since about 190 B.C It was a city without

natural defences, and so its history was a succession of enemies conquering, and destroying, and rebuilding. However since the Romans took over, they brought in what was called the Pax Romana, or the Roman Peace, and now this little city of Thyatira flourished. It turned from a military place to become a commercial city.

It also became the centre of wool and dyeing of cloth. Do you recall the story of Lydia in Acts chapter 16? We read this in verses 14-15 ^{Now} **a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.**

She was a business woman, a seller of purple. At the time she was in Philippi, probably on business, but her home was Thyatira. Maybe she and her family were responsible for starting the church in Thyatira. The purple dye was famous and came from two sources. One source was a root called the madder-root which grew around Thyatira, and from that root they could extract purple dye. The other source was a little sea shell fish called murex and from the throat of that tiny little sea animal came one drop of precious purple dye. Because it was difficult to get out of the madder-root, and even more difficult to get it out of the little murex, the dye was very expensive.

The city was also famous for its guilds or unions. The people in the city banded together in the various trades they were engaged in. There were wool workers, linen workers, dyers, tanners, potters, leather workers etc. Each union had a god, a kind of guardian that particularly gave himself to taking care of them. If you were associated with a guild, you were in a religious group and there was a god over that group you had to worship. Associated with that worship was immorality, idols, feasts celebrations and orgies. Imagine then you were a Christian in the city and you had a trade. In order to have good standing in the guild, you would need to engage yourself in the guild activities, otherwise you could lose your job

See how Jesus identifies Himself to this church **“these things says the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and His feet like fine brass”** He is identified as **the Son of God**; that’s His messianic title; He is God the Son. In chapter one He is described as **the Son of Man** as he moves among the churches tending to them lovingly, sensitively, sympathetically, because He too was a man and understands. But here John identifies Him, not as the Son of Man, but the Son of God. The emphasis is in His divine power; He’s emphasizing Him in deity; His sympathy is over: He is coming in judgement; He is angry. His flaming eyes miss nothing; His feet like blazing bronze are ready to trample in judgment, to stamp out the sin. Heb 4:13 - **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**

There was a commendation, since there were some good things to see **“I know your works, love service, faith and your patience (perseverance)”** These are related. Love leads to service, and if you love God, you will serve his people. It is a sign that you love that you are willing to serve. And if you have faith you will persevere; you will understand that God is in control and things will work out according to his purpose. You keep at your work; and will not quit.

So here was a church that had people who loved God, and served his people. If you and I had been there at Thyatira, we would probably have been greatly impressed by this church. It was a busy, bustling, active church with some wonderful people in it, but now the blazing eyes and the burning feet of Jesus go into action. We begin to learn deeper facts about the church.

Jesus says." ²⁰ **Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.** ²¹ **And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.** ²² **Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.** ²³ **I will kill her children with death**

Despite the growth and the apparent faithfulness, love and ministry seen in the church, they were being misled doctrinally. This church looked good on the outside, but inside it was rotten. We may look at other churches and may say - God is really doing something in their midst - they are loving. Look at all the people flocking to their services. They are reaching out to the community and really making an impact. But you can't judge a book by its cover. People rush to hear speakers of big churches thinking that they must have it all together because their church is growing. Thyatira, was a growing church - a thriving church, filled with love and faithfulness - but they were rotten on the inside because they were following wrong doctrine

Evidently there was in the church at Thyatira a woman who was a very dominant lady. Jesus names her "Jezebel." That was probably not her name, but sometimes Jesus seems to name people according to their character. Jesus chooses the name of the most evil woman in the Old Testament. Let's look at the history of Jezebel in the Old Testament. She was the daughter of the king of Sidon, a town in Lebanon. She was the wife of King Ahab of the Northern kingdom of Israel. She is particularly noted for having made the worship of the god Baal popular in Israel. Baal was a fertility god, a nature god, and his worship involved immoral practices. There were temple prostitutes, both male and female, associated with the worship of Baal. It was Jezebel who spread that degraded worship widely among the ten tribes of Israel, until it became one of the popular religions of the day. She herself supported over 800 prophets of Baal, who ate at her table. She was the one who tried to kill Elijah after his famous encounter with 480 of the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel when fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. She was also the one who murdered her neighbour Naboth because her husband wanted his vineyard. She was a ruthless, immoral, seducer of the people, and that is why Jesus selects her name for this dominant woman at Thyatira. Jezebel replaced God's word, as given through his appointed prophets, with a counterfeit one given by the prophets of Baal and Asherah. She sought to replace the worship of God completely with the worship of other gods, and introduced idolatry once again to the people of Israel. According to the prophecy of the Old Testament, Jezebel ended her days by being thrown

from her palace window into the courtyard below where the dogs came and ate her body and licked up her blood.

This Jezebel in Thyatira called herself a "prophetess." There were women prophets in the Bible, the Old Testament lists a number of them who were well respected in Israel. In the book of Acts, in the New Testament, we are told that Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters who were prophetesses. But the trouble with Jezebel is that she was a false prophet. She taught that it was all right for Christians to indulge in sexual immorality and in idolatry.

As I have mentioned, the problem for the Christians in the city was that in order to work in the guilds, the unions, which constituted the entire business of the city, they had to join a union, or guild, made up of pagans. The meetings of the guilds were devoted to licentious and debaucheries which were connected with the worship of erotic idols of the Greek world. Apparently Jezebel was teaching that it was all right for them to go along with the requirements of the guild. She taught that they needed to submit to the pressures of the world around in order to make a living, and that God would understand and overlook this.

Jesus declares punishment for the people involved. First Jezebel Jesus says **"I will cast her into a sickbed"** There is a note of irony or sarcasm there. He is saying, in effect, "She likes beds, so I will give her one, but it will prove to be a bed of agonizing pain and hurt." Second to those who practice immorality and consequent idolatry as she does. **"And those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds** Perhaps a sexual disease which was widespread in those days". Third yet another group, Jesus says **"I will kill her children with death."** That is not just those who practice immorality but who teach it as well, as Jezebel was doing. The "death," I think, refers to spiritual death

Now Jesus speaks to those who overcome **"I will give him the morning star"** This expression is mentioned in Job 38:7 when The Lord speaks to Job out of the whirlwind **"where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth. Tell me if you understand. He goes on "or what were its**

foundations fastened or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together all the sons of God shouted for joy” The songs of principalities and powers. A sharing of Christ’s glory. The expression is also mentioned in Revelation 22:16 **“I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David. The Bright and Morning star”** They will share in His glory.

Let me finish with a little ditty to make a point

A sailor on duty got frantic
When he fell into the Atlantic
After hours in the sea
He was saved yes sirree
And was hoisted above the Titanic

It is no good getting saved by a ship that is bound to sink, likewise it is no good following teachers whose doctrines are bound to be condemned. There are many false teachers out there who are being followed by people in many churches. The doctrine of Jezebel hates God’s true Word: Jezebel hated Elijah and tried to destroy all the true prophets who faithfully spoke God’s word. Those who call themselves Christians who are bound by Jezebel’s doctrine, similarly have no regard for God’s word. They would rather “experience God” rather than study His word. They don’t want to sit under Biblical teaching; they are unmoved by proclamations of God’s judgment.

King Ahab said about Micaiah, God’s faithful prophet in 1Ki 22:8 **“There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.”**

On the other hand Jezebel prophets prophesy only good things and see what God has to say of these in Jeremiah 23:16-17 **“Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD.¹⁷ they continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The LORD has said, “You shall have peace “And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you.’**

Despite the dire condition of this church Jesus made a remarkable promise. If they overcame they would be given power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron. God's grace is wonderful, as he raises nobodies to be the noblest princes who will rule and reign with Christ Himself.