



## **WEEK 5: THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA - THE TOLERANT CHURCH**

Early in the book of Revelation, the apostle John tells us of seven letters that Jesus wrote to churches in what is now known as Turkey. The fourth church Jesus wrote to was in the town of Thyatira. This city was located about 45 miles due east of Pergamum. The letter to them is the longest, yet it is written to the church in the smallest city! Unlike the other cities Jesus wrote to, Thyatira was not very significant politically or religiously. The city did boast 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). The importance of Thyatira was that it was the gateway to Pergamum, the capital city of Asia. If Thyatira fell, the way to Pergamum lay wide open for any invader. In history, its function was to fight and delay enemy armies until Pergamum was ready to resist.

But the one outstanding characteristic which distinguished Thyatira from other towns was that it possessed more trade guilds than any other town of its size in Asia. These guilds were made up of potters, tanners, dyers, and bronze workers. Because of the roads which passed through it, the trade of half the world was brought to its doors. In particular Thyatira was a great center of the wool trade and of those who sold dyes for garments. One of the town's cloth merchants was a woman named Lydia, who conducted business as far away as Philippi, and was one of the apostle Paul's first converts there.

It was extremely hard for a merchant to pursue his or her trade without belonging to one of these guilds. Yet to belong to these guilds put a Christian in a compromising position because of the pressure to participate in their pagan, idolatrous feasts.

Sometimes the pressure of “fitting in” with the world is overwhelming, but we are to stand firm in our faith, trusting God to provide and to take care of us. We are also to stand firm on the truth of God’s Word and not tolerate those who disregard and distort it. As you study this letter to the church at Thyatira, be open to what God wants to teach you through the message to this church.

It was to the church in this seemingly insignificant city that John had to deliver a message of severe warning and judgment:

<sup>18</sup>“To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. <sup>19</sup>I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. <sup>20</sup>Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup>I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. <sup>22</sup>So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. <sup>23</sup>I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. <sup>24</sup>Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): <sup>25</sup>Only hold on to what you have until I come. <sup>26</sup>To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— <sup>27</sup>‘He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’— just as I have received authority from my Father. <sup>28</sup>I will also give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Revelation 2:18-29NIV

## **DAY 1: THE OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST**

### **I. Looking to God’s Word**

Read Revelation 2:18-29

1. What is your overall impression of this church?
2. This is the only time in the book of Revelation that the expression “Son of God” appears.<sup>1</sup> What does this name infer and what are some possible reasons why it is used only with this church?
3. Christ is described in 2:18 as “the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze.” (See also 1:14-15.) Flame-like eyes suggest discerning and severe judgment. “Burnished” means highly reflective.<sup>2</sup> Why would this description of Christ be appropriate for this specific church?

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<sup>1</sup>Barker, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 1146.

<sup>2</sup>Constable, *Expository Notes on Revelation* [CD-ROM], 33.

4. The founding of the church at Thyatira is not mentioned in the Bible. However, as a note of interest, according to Acts 16:14, who is from Thyatira?

## **II. Looking Upward**

5. What do these passages reveal to us about the character of God?

Genesis 16:13

Jeremiah 11:20

Jeremiah 17:9-10

Jeremiah 20:12

Acts 1:24

Acts 15:8

6. In what situations in your life does it bring comfort to know that God sees and knows your heart?

When does it bring anxiety?

## **III. Looking Deeper**

As you read Psalm 139:1-16, list all the ways that God sees you and knows you.

## **IV. Looking Reflectively**

*“A church may feel satisfied with itself, have a good reputation in the community, or even with other churches. But the penetrating eyes of the Lord Jesus see it as it really is.”<sup>3</sup>*

As God searches your heart and mind today, what would He find? What does your heart and mind dwell on?

As God looks at us with His penetrating eyes which see all things, would He be disappointed with us as a church? Would He be disappointed with you as an individual? If so, why?

## **DAY 2: THE COMMENDATION**

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<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary*, 97.

## **I. Looking to God's Word**

Read Revelation 2:19

1. What did He commend this church for and why are these qualities so vital to spiritual growth?
2. Compare and contrast this commendation with the commendation to the church at Ephesus (2:2).
3. What similarities with the commendation to Thyatira do you see in Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:11-12?

## **II. Looking Upward**

4. How are the qualities of love, faith, service, and perseverance related?
5. In which of these qualities are you the strongest? In which are you the weakest?
6. What can you do to strengthen where you are weakest?

## **III. Looking Deeper**

How does Paul's commendation of the Colossian church in Colossians 1:3-8 compare to the commendation of the church at Thyatira?

In 2 Peter 1:1-9, what qualities does Peter encourage believers to pursue and why?

## **IV. Looking Reflectively**

*The Christian life should never become stagnant, but always dynamic and growing as we become more like Christ.*

In what ways do you see progress and growth in your walk with God?

Thank Him for all He is doing in your life. If you feel you are stagnant in your walk, be honest with God and ask Him to "rekindle the fire." What steps do you need to take?

## **DAY 3: THE CRITICISM**

### **I. Looking to God's Word**

Read Revelation 2:20-23

1. What is His criticism of this church and how does it compare/contrast with His criticism of the church at Pergamum in Revelation 2:14-15?

2. What does this passage tell us about the woman “Jezebel”?

3. It is most likely that this woman’s name was not Jezebel, but she was called by that name because of the similarities to the Jezebel in the Old Testament.

A. What do we know about the Old Testament Jezebel from these passages?

1 Kings 16:30-31

1 Kings 18:4

1 Kings 18:19

1 Kings 19:1-2

1 Kings 21:25-26

2 Kings 9:22

B. How are the two women similar?

4. What will be the results for her and for those who follow her if she continues in her lack of repentance? What lesson can we learn from this?

5. What is the purpose in His judgment and why would that be important?

## **II. Looking Upward**

6. There are those in the Thyatira church who are not only tolerating Jezebel, but they are also engaging in the sinful acts she is encouraging. How does a believer get to that point where he/she becomes so easily swayed by lies and sin?

## **III. Looking Deeper**

Jezebel refused to repent and there would be consequences. Paul addresses repentance in Romans 2:4-11.

List the attributes of God in this passage and how they relate to repentance.

What are the results of an unrepentant heart?

## **IV. Looking Reflectively**

*Knowing that Christ will judge us for our deeds should bring fear to those who teach and practice false doctrine, but comfort and hope to those who love God and follow Him wholeheartedly.*

Is He pleased with your deeds?

Are you causing another believer to stumble in any way?

Is there an area in your life where you are unrepentant?

Ask God to search your heart (Psalm 139:23-24). Confess any unconfessed sin (1 John 1:9). Meditate on Romans 2:4.

## **DAY 4: THE INSTRUCTION**

### **I. Looking to God's Word**

Read Revelation 2:24-25

1. What is His instruction to the faithful "remnant" in the church and what does this instruction mean?
2. What are some possible meanings to the phrase, "the deep things of Satan"?
3. We looked at Ephesians 6:10-17 when we studied the letter to the church at Pergamum and you listed practical ways to stand firm. Look at this passage again and describe the struggle we are up against as long as we are on this earth.

### **II. Looking Upward**

4. What are some lies that the "world" and Satan convey to us that are contrary to God's truth? Why do we sometimes believe them over God's Word?
5. How have you experienced spiritual warfare in your life? How did you overcome it?
6. How do we in a practical sense "hold onto" or "hold fast" to what we have until He comes?

### **III. Looking Deeper**

In Revelation 2:25, they were instructed to hold fast what they have until He comes (NASB). The NIV says, "Hold onto what you have..." What do these verses have to say about "holding fast"?

Deuteronomy 11:22-23

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

1 Timothy 6:12

Hebrews 10:23

#### **IV. Looking Reflectively**

*“The one thing that keeps the conscience sensitive to Him is the continual habit of being open to God on the inside.” – Oswald Chambers<sup>4</sup>*

*Be careful. Don't be subtly deceived by the practices and teachings of the world and Satan which are contrary to God's Word.*

What things in your daily life are you exposed to or involved with that might subtly distract or pull you away from a closer walk with the Lord? Yield these to the Lord and allow Him to have control.

*Hold fast to Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word.*

Are you holding strong or are you wavering? Meditate on Hebrews 10:23. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful” (NIV).

#### **DAY 5: THE PROMISE**

##### **I. Looking to God's Word**

Read Revelation 2:26-29

1. In verse 26, as Jesus begins to lay out the promises to the one who overcomes, what is different this time from all the previous verses addressed to the one who overcomes? What are some possible reasons why He included this in this letter?
2. What two things does Jesus promise to the one who overcomes?
3. According to Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6; and 22:5, what does it mean that He will give them authority and that they will rule?
4. In Revelation 2:28 He promises the “morning star” to those who overcome. According to Revelation 22:16, who is the morning star?
5. What exactly is He promising? (See also 1 John 3:2-3.)

##### **II. Looking Upward**

6. How does your life reflect the morning star?

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<sup>4</sup>Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, May 13.

### **III. Looking Deeper**

The quote that Jesus used in Revelation 2:26-27 is from Psalm 2, a Messianic Psalm which tells how the Father gave the Messiah the rule over the nations of the world. This psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament, where it is applied to Christ as the great Son of David and God's Anointed.

What do you learn about His future reign from these passages?

Psalm 2

Revelation 11:15-18

Revelation 19:11-16

### **IV. Looking Reflectively**

*No matter how dark life gets on this earth, we can always look forward to the hope of our future.*

Are you ready for His return?

Ask God to show you an area of your life that needs refining and polishing in order to more fully reflect His radiance and glory to the world. Ask God to make you willing for Him to work in your life as He needs to.

Spend some time praising Him in light of today's lesson.