

The Church of Thyatira – The Adulterous Church

Revelation 2:18-28“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 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. ²² Behold, **I will throw her on 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 **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”.

Thyatira was a wealthy town on the Lycus River in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey). It was the church that had a Jezebel spirit who convinced them that it was OKAY to commit acts of immorality. Also known as the idolatrous church

Notice from what we have just read, Jesus starts again by affirming the church’s positive actions: “I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first” ([Revelation 2:19](#)).

The following five qualities were seen in the church of Thyatira

1. love,
2. faith,
3. service,
4. patient endurance, and
5. greater works.

Next, Jesus notes their sin: “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” ([Revelation 2:20](#)).

Apparently, a false prophetess was leading believers into compromise. The church was engaging in sexual immorality and dabbling in idolatry. It is possible that “Jezebel” was her real name, but it is more likely the name was a metaphorical reference to the [Jezebel](#) of the Old Testament—another idolatrous woman who opposed God’s ways. Rather than rebuke this false teacher and send her out of the church, the believers in Thyatira were allowing her to continue her deception.

Jesus pronounces judgment on this “Jezebel” and calls the church of Thyatira to repent of their sin: “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. I will strike her children dead” ([Revelation 2:22-23](#)).

Then Jesus encourages those who had remained faithful: “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): Only hold on to what you have until I come” ([Revelation 2:24-25](#)). The faithful believers did not fall into Satan’s trap, and they only needed to remain faithful until Christ’s return.

Jesus lists His promises to the believers in Thyatira: “To him who overcomes and **does my will to the end**, I will give authority over the nations—‘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. I will also give him the morning star” ([Revelation 2:26-28](#)). These blessings would include 1) authority over the nations, 2) victory over all enemies, and 3) the morning star. This morning star is Jesus Himself, as [Revelation 22:16](#) reveals. Jesus will give Himself to His church, and they will fellowship together forever.

Further explanation of the Thyatira Church

The Thyatira period of the church is thought to be during the church “**dark ages**” when the Roman Catholic Church reigned from about 538 A.D. to the start of the Protestant reformation in the 16th Century.

Though by worldly standards Thyatira was the least known among the seven Revelation’s cities, it was distinctive for the large number of trade techniques related especially to textiles and armor that prospered there. Roughly every month they sponsored common meals for their members, feasts that involved worship of the Roman emperor with local patron deities which is idolatry including sexual immorality. If one did not give himself or herself to these pagan practices, he or she were placed under significant economic risk, particularly if one wanted to get ahead in business and society. (Bribery was at stake high)

What, then, does Christ want us to learn from His letter to the church at Thyatira?

Christ’s message to the Christians at Thyatira is a warning that they are in grave spiritual danger. But how can this be? This church, unlike the one at Ephesus, has not lost its first love ([Revelation 2:4–5](#), says that) In fact, the Bible records that the church grew in love and faith with service and endurance (2:19).

The danger and the risk of this church was not coming from outside the church: just as it was at Laodicea, persecution by imperial Rome poses no threat to Thyatira’s wellbeing. Instead, the danger was coming from within. The church was tolerating the presence of a false prophetess and her disciples (2:20).

Indeed, the influence of this bad tree and its bad fruit ([Matt. 7:15–20](#)) resulted in compromising Thyatira’s professed betrothal to Christ (see [2 Cor. 11:2–3](#)).

It would have been one thing at Thyatira for Christians in the trades (such as Lydia, [Acts 16:14](#)) to be invited to these feasts by coworkers outside the church; it would have been another thing for a leader in the church to approve of Christians accepting those invitations. Imagine these tempting words from the leaders at Thyatira church. “You know that ‘idols are nothing’ ([1 Cor. 8:4](#)); you know that ‘all things are lawful’ for you. So, go to the feast; eat, drink, and be merry! You have to make a living, don’t you?”

No wonder the Lord Jesus Christ called the false prophetess at Thyatira by the derogatory term “Jezebel.” Because – Jezebel Spirit was controlling the church of Thyatira.

Like in Babylon, Jezebel spirits makes her followers complicit in the harlotries of this world, body and soul. And at the heart of those harlotries is the lure of economic security. People desired prosperity more than Holiness. It is happening today!

To follow Jezebel spirit, meant to share earthly in Babylonian system and identity. To renounce her (Jezebel spirit) meant to share heavenly Jerusalem’s identity.

But Christ gives us a choice to make. With a wisdom surpassing Solomon’s, He desires for the churches today just like He desired for the church of Thyatira, to discern their destiny which is Spiritual Heavenly Gain. The Bible states in Revelation 2:22-23 that those He identifies as the unrepentant prophetess with her children He will punish with suffering and death in this age and those He identifies as His repentant and steadfast people (vv. 24–25) He will reward with a share of royal authority to crush their enemies at the end of this age (vv. 26–28).

The lesson for Thyatira and for modern day church is simply plain: to denounce false gods / idol worship so as to share in Heavenly reward.

Do we have ears to hear Christ’s message to Thyatira? Has the lure of economic security led our churches to tolerate false teaching? Our Protestant forebears saw their church turn into a harlot liable to Christ’s judgment. So they denounced Jezebel; they “let goods and kindred go, denounced idol worship,” and the reformation followed.

Can we also repent of our promiscuous desire for economic security in this Babylonian world and refuse to associate with affairs of false teachers and prophets who would tempt us away from the holy safety of Jerusalem above and the world to come.