The Open-Minded Church
Revelation 2:18-29
11-15-2026

When he designed the Imperial Hotel in Japan, the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright was ridiculed by many of his peers. They gave the hotel little chance to survive because most believed for a structure that size to withstand large earthquakes like Japan gets, it needed to have a deep, rigid foundation. But his foundation was unique. It was a shallow, curved slab that rested on the ground.

On September 1, 1923, within just a year of its completion, the Great Kanto earthquake struck. With an estimated magnitude of 8.0, it killed 140,000 people and was considered the worst natural disaster to ever strike Japan up to that time. It devastated the region, but because of its foundation, the Imperial Hotel was one of the only buildings left standing in the city.

As Frank Lloyd Wright later said, such a large building had to be built like a ship so that it could ride out the earthquake. The foundation was critical to its survival.

What is true of buildings is just as true of people. In the midst of all life's uncertainties and challenges, our foundation is critical.

Jesus said as much 2000 years ago in the Sermon on the Mount in Mount when he said, it's the wise who build their lives on the rock of his word. For when the storms of life come, they are the ones who will be able to stand because their foundation is built on the rock. But the foolish, those who take the easy route and build on sand, will not hold up in a storm.

> **God also told Isaiah, "*Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a firm and tested stone. It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never be shaken.*" (Isaiah 28:16)**

Our foundation, what we build on and with, is critical!

> **Paul told the Ephesians our foundation is to be built on "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*" (Ephesians 2:20)**

To compromise or undermine or ignore it is the surest way to defeat in our Christian lives

Yet that is what was happening in Thyatira, the 4th of the churches addressed in the book of Revelation
Here was church that had been built on the solid foundation of Jesus and His word.
The evidence of this was still obvious through such things as their love and faith, service and perseverance, good work and continued growth in the Lord

But they were in danger of having their foundation undermined by a false teacher that came in and was welcomed by some in the church which it refers to as Jezabel.
Teaching things which found them greater acceptance by people in the community but clearly contrary to God and His ways.

The church in Ephesus was a church with almost everything, yet lost their first love and forgot why they did the things they did.
The church at Smyrna may have been small and struggling but because they had Jesus, they had all they needed and were commended for holding true to him.
The church at Pergamum was a church without boundaries, enticed and being led astray by moral compromise.

And now at Thyatira, we find a church which was so open minded, that in allowing this false teacher in, they were undermining their foundation.
In the name of tolerance and seeking acceptance, the faith of some was becoming corrupted.

And in his letter to the church, Jesus calls them to accountability

As he does so, he follows the same pattern used in each of his messages to the churches of Revelation.
It starts with highlighting a particular characteristic which was used in chapter 1 to describe Jesus, which then becomes the basis for the message.
It then commends the church for what it is doing right.
This is quickly followed by condemnation for what they are doing wrong and the judgement they will face if they don't repent and turn back.
the message then finishes up with a promise of what will happen if they do shape up and listen the warning.

I. The particular trait used to describe Jesus in chapter 1, which is the basis for the message to Thyatira is found in 2:18

"*"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.*" (Revelation 2:18)

Thyatira was the smallest and least significant of the seven churches

It was built as a military outpost to help protect the capital of Pergamum
Soldiers were stationed there as a first line of defense but it wasn't located in a particularly good position to defend, so it had been destroyed and rebuilt numerous times throughout its history.
But because it was located at the junction of three major roads connecting Pergamum, Smyrna, and Sardis, over time it did grow and became fairly prosperous
Acts 16 says it is where Lydia was from, who made her living in the sale of purple cloth

The cities prominent deity was Apollo, the sun-god and son of Zeus, who as the messenger of the gods carried their authority.
At Thyatira, the Roman emperor was declared to be Apollo incarnate
their coins even had an image of Apollo on one side and the emperor on the other
When emperor Domitian's son died, special coins were even printed with an image of his son sitting on a globe surrounded by seven stars.

In answer to this, Jesus, the one described earlier as he who holds the seven stars in his hand and walks among the seven lampstands, is now here addressed as the Son of God, the true and only son of God. This is the only place he is referred to in this way in the book of Revelation.
This title as the Son of God, is a claim to His authority and that he is the true messenger from God

For as Paul quoted to the Athenians in Acts 17, "In Him we live and move and have our being"

At the entrance to the city was a shrine for Sibyl Sambathe, an ancient oracle like the one at Delphi to which people travelled from far and wide to see the priestess, whom they believed the gods had given special knowledge and understanding to see the future.
In answer to this the message states that it is Jesus, whose eyes are like blazing fire is the one who sees and knows, he is the one who carries divine insight and intimate knowledge of all things

It is the one whose eyes are like blazing fire that burns through the fog of this world's deception who :23 says searches hearts and minds.
Because he sees and knows and understands and has intimate knowledge of our circumstances and the things we face, the message he would speak into our lives is true and right

> **as Psalm 33:13–15 put it, "*The LORD looks down from heaven and sees the whole human race. From his throne he observes all who live on the earth. He made their hearts, so he understands everything they do.*"**

He sees and knows you intimately, your strengths and your weaknesses, your sin and your triumphs. Isaiah 37 says he knows where you stay and when you come and when you go and there is no place in all creation where he cannot reach you
Hebrews 4:13 says there is nothing in all creation that is hidden from his sight, everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account
There is nothing and no one can ever separate you from his love which is in Christ Jesus
So trust him and pay attention, let him not the world guide your path and your life

And his feet are described as being like burnished bronze which symbolized both strength and purity
He is able to carry out just what he promises
As Paul told the Ephesians He is more than able to do immeasurably more than all we ask and imagine according to his power that is at work in us

- So the message to the church at Thyatira are the words of the true Son of God, the one to whom Jesus said in Matthew 28 all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him and will one day judge the nations.
- his eyes are like blazing fire, the one who knows and sees all things and will not be swayed by mere appearance. The one whom Hebrews 4:13 says there is nothing in all creation that is hidden from his sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before his eyes and therefore he will not be fooled or taken in by mere appearance.
- And His feet are like burnished bronze, who not only knows and has authority, but has the power to bring it about. The one whom Jude 25 says belongs all glory and majesty, power and authority, before all ages and forevermore

There is a warning here, who are we listening to
Instead of seeking guidance from the words and thoughts and opinions of celebrities and podcasters and influencers and politicians and all those who so many turn to for advice today, we need to continue to look and listen and follow the words of Jesus the Son of God and His word which carries the authority reserved for God alone so we better pay attention

So his message to the church is that what he now says is certain to come to pass because he alone has not just the authority but the ability to make happen.

> **So as the Psalmist said, "*With the LORD on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me? The LORD is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.*" (Psalm 118:6–7)**

After stating the basis for his message, comes the commendation

II. Commendation

> **"*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 foundation had been built well
The love which inspires faith, faith which leads to service, the service which is maintained in the perseverance of hope, and the perseverance which leads to continued growth, all remained in evidence

They were growing but their health and continued growth were under threat

For even the best structure can be destabilized when its foundation is compromised.
The foundation which had been so carefully laid and was still bearing fruit, was starting to be undermined by allowing false teachers into the church

> **The church at Thyatira was in danger of becoming like another, much more recent church. It was the model congregation. They had a lot of good deeds. There was love and faith, ministry and service and growth as they always seemed to be doing more to serve people and their community. More in the sense of building a heated swimming pool for the underprivileged in the community. More in providing free horseback riding for inner city children. More in the sense of scholarships for students and housing for seniors. It had an animal shelter and medical facility, an outpatient care facility and drug rehab program.**
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> **One national leader called it an inspiration for the whole country. The pastor was nationally recognized for their outstanding contributions. Of him people said, he knew how to inspire hope. He was committed to people in need, counseled prisoners and troubled children. He started a job placement center, opened nursing homes and homes for the handicapped, he had a health clinic and organized a vocational training center. He provided free legal aid, founded a community center and preached openly about the Lord. He even claimed to cast out demons, perform miracles, and heal the sick. He appeared to be a mighty spiritual leader doing tremendous things for God. But over time he allowed other, false teachings to enter the church, leading many astray.**
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> **Today the church is literally dead. It died when all 780 members of the Peoples Temple Christian Church followed their leader to Guyana and listened to the teaching of a man who had moved off the only true and sure foundation which is Jesus Christ. When Jim Jones said to drink the cyanide laced Kool-Aid, most obeyed and those who didn't were forced to.**

In their open-mindedness and in the name of acceptance and tolerance of others and their views, they were allowing teachings into the church which were clearly in contradiction of the faith they had placed their hope in
The one with eyes like fire could see where it was leading so after commending them for the good, comes the warning and condemnation for what was threatening to bring his judgement upon them.

III. Condemnation

> **"*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. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 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. 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." **(Revelation 2:20–23)**

Thyatira was being spiritually compromised by allowing and tolerating what is referred to as Jezebel and her teachings.

If the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans represented the moral compromise and immorality happening in Pergamum, Jezabel represents spiritual compromise and idolatry happening in Thyatira

This is a reference to the book of 1 Kings where Jezabel, the daughter of the king of Sidon and also the high priestess of their god Ball, married Ahab the king of Israel. When she did, she also brought her peoples religion with her, instilling it in Israel by feeding and housing 450 of its priests, encouraging the people of Israel not to turn away from God but to pollute their faith in him by mixing it with the teachings and practices of Baal.

while Thyatira couldn't claim to be first in power or influence or significance, first in beauty or education or culture or religion
What it was first in were its trade guilds, having more than any other city in Asian Minor
it was an ancient union town, like an ancient city of Detroit.
It had guilds and unions for almost everything: coppersmiths and metal workers, tanners and textiles, wool workers and dye makers, potters and bakers.
virtually every profession had a union and every worker was expected to belong
in fact, unless you did belong, you might find yourself with no business and no job

and each union had their own patron god and each member was expected to give appropriate veneration to that deity which meant you were expected to participate in celebrations and feasts which were a part of their worship
This often included both offering sacrifices and participating in immoral sexual practices
There was tremendous pressure to conform and participate, to compromise in order to make a living because the guilds had the power to blacklist you from all employment opportunities

It is possible, even likely, that the prophetess called Jezabel here, was teaching in the church that they didn't need to worry about such things
That they could freely participate because God certainly wanted them to be able to make a living and wouldn't judge them for that.
And after all what we do out there in the world shouldn't affect what we do here in church
Besides they were already forgiven and free from sin, and the flesh counted for nothing

In the name of being open minded and tolerant, this teaching was undermining their foundation upon which the church is built
And the one with eyes of fire sees and knows and judges those who would promote separating faith from practice, advocating compromise in order to get by

What we do and how we live must go hand in hand with what we believe.

> **For heaven and earth will pass away, Jesus said, but His word remains forever**

God is not just concerned that we believe but also with what we believe

And his message comes with the warning to those who would spread false teachings and practices done in his name in the name of open-mindedness and tolerance

And for those who listen he promises,

> **"*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. 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" (Revelation 2:24–29)**

Those who remain faithful are promised not just authority to reign with him, but also will receive the morning star, in 22:16 Jesus identifies himself as the bright morning star
So he is Jesus promises to give us more of himself, without limit and without end

The 16th century Swiss theologian and reformer Huldrych Zwingli said,

> **The business of the truth is not to be deserted even to the sacrifice of our lives, for we live not for this age of ours, nor for princes, but for the Lord.**