

# Message to the Church of Thyatira

*Revelation 2:18-29*

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Introduction: The city of Thyatira was the smallest, youngest, & least important of the seven cities. It was located half-way between Pergamos & Sardis (35-40 miles from each). During the time of Pax Romana (Roman Peace), the city was transformed from a military post to a great commercial center. It was noted for its wool trade (rare & expensive black wool), for its manufacture of purple dye, sold all over the world (cf. Acts 16:14, Lydia), & for its making of fine brass (bronze). There were also a large number of trade guilds there (cf. labor unions, today). Membership in the guild was necessary in order to practice a trade or craft.

It is proposed that the Gospel reached here either through Paul's own efforts on his missionary journeys, or perhaps by Lydia's return from Philippi. Note the command, the commendation, condemnation, counsel, & challenge to the church in Thyatira, a divided church. We see a contrast here between those saved & serving Christ with those who are lost & enslaved to sin; the Church of Jesus & the church of Jezebel.

## I. The Command (:18)

A. His name > "*Son of God*" (cf. "*Son of Man*" in 1:13).

1. Speaks of His power & authority to carry out His word.
2. Significant to this city, which was once a military town.

B. His nature > as Sovereign Judge (cf. 1:14-15).

1. His eyes of fire - speaks of burning indignation & purifying judgment (piercing & penetrating).
2. His feet - "*fine brass*" (only time used in Scripture - an alloy of precious metals? a mixed metal of great brilliance?) used here as a symbol of judgment (cf. 19:15).

## II. The Commendation (:19)

A. Commended for their diligence >

1. Effort of one's labor.
2. Last works more than the first.
  - a. Contrast with the church at Ephesus - 1:5.
  - b. Indicates a growing church ["Growth is a good sign; we must ever seek to grow in grace" (Neal).] – If we are not growing we are declining (see II Peter 3:18).

B. Commended for their devotion >

1. Their love & service:
  - a. "Love for Christ is always manifested in service." (Neal)
  - b. "The proof of love is service." (Neal) - When we love someone, we want to give & work.
2. Their faith & patience:
  - a. True, saving faith in Christ will endure suffering.
  - b. "Patience ("to abide under") means perseverance, not becoming discouraged & giving up in the face of opposition. The proof of faith is endurance." (Neal) - see Galatians 6:9.

## III. The Condemnation (:20-23) - Lack of discernment (no doctrine of separation - holiness)

A. The description of Jezebel (:20) >

1. The O.T. character (Ahab's wife, daughter of the King of Sidon):
  - a. She introduced Baal worship into Israel.
  - b. She initiated Naboth's murder, so Ahab could have his land - I Kings 21:1-16.
  - c. She insisted on killing many prophets of the Lord & tried to kill Elijah.
  - d. She was indicted by Elijah's as to how she would die - II Kings 9:33-35.  
"She is therefore the epitome of subtle corruption & a symbol of immorality & idolatry"

2. The N.T. counterpart:
  - a. She was called "Jezebel", speaking of her character, not her real name.
  - b. She called herself a prophetess - a servant of God (claiming infallibility & new revelation).
  - c. She taught compromise with the world in the areas of immorality & idolatry.
    - (1) Those belonging to trade guilds were required to attend feasts (social events).
    - (2) These feasts began & ended with invocations & sacrifices to the gods.
    - (3) These feasts often ended in bouts of drunken immorality.
    - (4) Such feasts in Smyrna & Pergamos were a sign of patriotism; here in Thyatira they were required in order to keep one's job.

B. The destruction of Jezebel (:21-23) – [message to the “cult”] >

1. The longsuffering of God - gave "*space*" (time) to repent:
  - a. Compare Ezekiel 33:11, "*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*" (II Pet. 3:9).
  - b. God, in His longsuffering & mercy offers forgiveness of sin & salvation, even to these wicked people. Yet she persists in her sin & refuses to repent.
2. The judgment of God - "*great tribulation*":
  - a. The means of her judgment (:22-23).
    - (1) Cast into a bed (couch) [a. used for reclining at meals; b. her immorality; c. "*bed hell*" - Psalm 139:8; d. sick bed, one of pain & affliction]
    - (2) Cut off with her disciples - "*killed*" with death - emphatic judgment, in a sudden & unexpected way (an idiom for sure death by execution) – “second death?”
  - b. The message in her judgment (:23b).
    - (1) Christ searches the reins (kidneys, seat of emotions) & hearts (sin not hidden).
    - (2) Christ rewards according to one's works (not the basis of salvation, but the evidence).

IV. The counsel (:24-25) – [message to the Christians]

A. The remnant (:24) >

1. Those not holding this false doctrine of compromise.
2. Those not heeding the "*depths of Satan*" - satanic philosophy to justify immorality.

B. The responsibility (:25) >

1. The exhortation - "*hold fast*" - holding to faith in Christ; He, their Protector & Companion.
2. The expectation - "*till I come*" - Christ will return for His true Church (cf. I John 3:1-3).

V. The Challenge (:26-29) – [message to the conquerors]

A. Who? (:26) >

1. The overcomer - I John 5:4-5.
2. The one keeping His work(s), enduring to the end.

B. What? (:26-29) >

1. His "*Power*" - authority to rule over the nations:
  - a. Rule ("*shepherd*") with a rod of iron (cf. John 5:22).
  - b. Promised elsewhere in Daniel 7:18 & 27; Matthew 19:28; & Psalm 2.
2. His Person (:28):
  - a. Christ is the Morning Star - Revelation 22:16.
  - b. Christ gives the promise of His Presence [“A morning star appears just before dawn, when the night is the coldest & darkest. When the world is at its bleakest point, Christ will burst onto the scene, exposing evil with His light of truth & bringing His promised reward” (LAB).]

Conclusion: Those with an ear to hear are challenged to hear. There is an individual application to be made from this message by each of the 7 churches as well as by all churches. This church was diligently working & devotionally serving, but doctrinally lacking. There was no separation from false teaching, rather a toleration of evil. Apostasy must be exposed & opposed; we must earnestly contend for the faith. If (or when) persecution comes, how will you & I respond? Consider II Timothy 3:12.