

7 Churches Tour – 2019 - Thyatira

Introduction

- The city of Thyatira does not sit on a mountain summit, nor is it a port on the sparkling Aegean Sea. It is located on a main highway where two valleys meet, generating commercial traffic. Madder roots grown nearby provided a dye that could be processed into the rare color purple, the color of royalty and of the senate.
- Lydia, the businesswoman who accepted Christ in the Greek city of Philippi, sold purple goods that she obtained from Thyatira (Acts 16.11-15). So, what would Jesus say to this innocuous, insignificant city?

The Message to the Church of Thyatira

- **Rev. 2.18-29.** Thyatira was known for its worship of the god Tyrinnos, the god of the sun, which later developed into the cult of the Emperor. As such, Jesus presents Himself as the One with “eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.” Jesus outshines the sun-god himself!
- Jesus commends the church of Thyatira (538-1560sAD) for their works of love, faith, service and patient endurance. This is the era of Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), Peter Waldo (1140-1217), John Wycliffe (1320-1384), John Huss (1369-1415) and Martin Luther (1483-1546). Hold fast to what you have! (2.25). Hang on!
- The compromised church of Pergamum has become the cruel church of Thyatira. The degree of compromise is devastatingly worse. The compromise of Pergamum – sexual immorality and idolatry – came from Balaam on the outside. Compromise has now matured to where evil reigns within the church. Jezebel is on the throne!
- Heresy is official and has joined hands with political power. The church is a union of church and state, is clad in the royal robes of purple, and as heresy is backed by civil authority, has turned into a persecuting power.
- Intolerance of truth, and persecution of the saints characterize this church. At the height of its power, the world is plunged into the Dark Ages. Thyatira is the church of the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Cathars, the Albigenses, the Waldensians, the rack and thumbscrew, and the martyrs death at the stake. This is a blood-soaked era. Millions perished. Unknown to history except by their sheer number, but by name to Jesus.
- Jesus reminds Thyatira that while they sit in judgement on His saints, He is the ultimate Judge. “And all the churches will know that am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve” (2.23). Pre-advent judgment, and then final judgment. And in an era of corrupt judges and bribed juries and unjust sentences passed on the saints, Jesus speaks as the “Faithful Witness.”
- And to those who are faithful, a beautiful promise. To those who refuse to participate in the corrupt earthly power that Thyatira had become, who refuse earthly advancement, position, prestige, praise and power, there is the promise of sharing in the dominion of the universe with Jesus Christ. Dan 7.27. The rod of iron – a shepherd’s rod – is used to protect the flock. Those who are faithful can then ensure that there is no more suffering for the name of Jesus. Jeers, threats, persecution, obscenities and social rejection will be no more!
- To the one who conquers, who holds on to the end (v. 25), there is the promise of the “Morning Star,” an allusion to Num. 24.17, “A star will come out of Jacob...” a messianic passage. The Morning Star is the promise of the 2nd Coming of the Messiah, in power and glory, when all earthly kingdoms and corrupt unions of church and state such as Thyatira had become, with all its instruments of torture and persecution, will be swept away. The promise that one day, every tear will be wiped away. Death and disease and suffering will be no more. God will dwell with His people, and they with Him. Oh wonderful promise! Oh blessed hope!

Conclusion

- In this letter to Thyatira, Jesus is speaks to a church where compromise has matured into overt rejection of Jesus and His word, where evil reigns supreme, and where persecution of the saints is the order of the day.
- Yet, Jesus distinguishes between the fallen institution of the church of Thyatira, and the perseverance of individual saints within Thyatira. Even in a fallen church, God has His own. We may not see them now, but God still has his 7,000 who have yet to bow the knee to Baal, as in the days of the original Jezebel.
- The promise of shared dominion of the universe is important. Unfallen worlds know about sin and forgiveness, but it is only the saints of God who know personally and existentially the pain of sin and the joy of forgiveness, the bitterness of guilt and the sweetness of grace. And because the saints know the reality of God’s grace at such a personal level, they can be trusted with the joint rulership of the universe. As the psalmist wrote, “Taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who trusts in Him” (Ps. 34.8).