

Revelation Chapter 2: v. 18-29 – The letter to Thyatira.Title: The Corrupt Church.

<sup>18</sup> “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: <sup>19</sup> ‘I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last *are* more than the first. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. <sup>22</sup> Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup> I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. <sup>24</sup> ‘Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. <sup>25</sup> But hold fast what you have till I come. <sup>26</sup> And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— <sup>27</sup> ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup> ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Introduction

The letter to the Church in Thyatira is the longest of the 7 letters.

Thyatira was the gateway to Pergamum, which was the capital of the province. It was a great commercial town which was situated in a valley which connected two large rivers.

The town had no special religious significance. It was not a centre of either Greek or Caesar worship.

The local hero-god of the town was a man named Tyrimnus who appeared on their coins on horseback with battle-axe and club.

There was however one notable thing about this town from a religious point of view and that was that it possessed a fortune-telling shrine, which was run by a female called Sambathe.

There was no threat of persecution in this town.

Q. What exactly was the problem in Thyatira?

Although the historical records for this town are less than for the other Churches in the area, we do know something significant which was probably the main problem.

It was a great commercial centre, especially for the dyeing industry and the trade in woollen goods.

It was from Thyatira that Lydia, the seller of purple came. ( Acts 16: v.14 )

The town had a large number of trade guilds.

Every industry had their own guild or association.

There were guilds for the leather industry, the linen industry, the bakers, the potters etc.

To refuse to join one of these guilds would be similar to refusing to join a trade union today.

It would mean that basically it would be VERY difficult to trade.

Q. Why would a Christian Not want to join one of these guilds?

The reason that a Christian would not want to join one of these guilds is this.

They used to have regular meals together. These meals would often be held in a temple and they would begin with a formal sacrifice to the one of the gods.

They would eat meat that had previously been offered up to the gods.

There was lots of alcohol at these meals and quite often it would end up become immoral.

Therefore, any committed Christian would not want to be involved in a meeting like this.

There was a strong movement led by a woman called Jezebel who tried to persuade the members of the Church to compromise their faith for the sake of business and commercial prosperity.

So now we have a background into the situation we can proceed to the text.

There are 5 main things in this passage that we need to note.

1. A Description of Jesus – v. 18.

Jesus is described as someone who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass.

The description is taken from the messenger in Daniel 10: v. 6.

<sup>6</sup> His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

The flaming eyes stand for two things.

First the eyes are likely to be angry against sin and second the eyes would have a deep penetration which stripped away the veneer of a person and looked into the inner depths of their heart.

You can't hide from the gaze of Jesus, no matter how much make-up you have on or how you try and put on an appearance in some way.

He knows what is going on in our lives.

The fine brass feet stand for the immovable power of the risen Lord Jesus.

So this is encouraging for the disciple of Jesus.

Jesus is strong and will stand with us, but Jesus hates sin and deal with sin as He sees it and not always how we see it.

Hebrews 3: v. 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; <sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

It is possible to be deceived by sin in our lives and we need to constantly check our life-style not by our friends but by God's word through the eyes of Jesus.

2. Jesus Commends some things about the Church – v. 19.

There are 4 things that Jesus commends about this Church. These are "love", "service", "faith" and "patience".

The Greek word for used here is "agape" love. It is the love of God, through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit.

Agape love really means sacrificial love. It represents the love that Jesus has for everybody.

Jesus demonstrated that love when He went to the cross to die for our sins.

It is not human love.

Human love is very fickle and changeable.

Human love is attracted by something in that person or thing that you like.

God's love is not like human love, it is much deeper.

It is clear that the Church members displayed this love.

This love obviously led to service.

People were prepared to serve Jesus through His Holy Spirit because they appreciated the love that Jesus had shown them.

Their hearts were changed and their lives were transformed.

They wanted to serve because the Holy Spirit inside them was overflowing with God's love.

If we serve Jesus because we love Him, then it is a joy and a privilege.

If we serve Jesus through obligation, then our faith can become legalistic and cold.

The attitude of our heart towards service is a sure test of our love towards Jesus and an appreciation of the Gospel Message that we have understood and embraced.

This is why it is SO IMPORTANT to understand the gospel message of GRACE and how it affects us now and for all eternity.

The next positive commendation was the "faith" of the members.

In the context of the early Church, their faith was based upon the things that they had been taught from the scriptures.

They did not have a full Bible and things were often passed down by word of mouth. Although some manuscripts of the Old Testament were available.

Their faith was in God's word.

So often as Christians we believe God's word with our head, but when it comes to applying it to our lives we fall short. May I encourage you not only to believe God's word in your head but also to apply it to your lives.

Let me give you an example.

The Bible encourages us not only to tithe our income into the local Church where we worship but also to give sacrificially.

Here is the problem.

You know what you should do but you say to yourself." If I give 10% of my income to OIC then I can't pay my bills and live.

Well I have never met a Christian in all my Christian ministry of over 30 years who has said to me that God has left him short at the end of the month.

God is no man's debtor and He will find a way to provide for your needs.

Q. Why should I tithe?

1. Because God commands it – Lev. 27: v.30

2. Because Jesus commended it – Matt. 23: v.23

3. Tithing expresses my gratitude to God – Ps. 116: v.12, Deut. 16:17

4. God says that refusing to tithe is stealing from Him – Malachi 3: v. 8-10.

We do need to give with the right attitude, that is willingly, joyfully, generously and expectantly. ( 2 Cor. 9: v.1-14 )

Their other quality was "Patience"

This was a patience that held up under trials. They had been tested with some trials and held up under this testing.

Finally, it talks about their works that the last are more than the first.

This is a reference to the constant improvement in their ministries.

On the surface the Church in Thyatira was strong and flourishing.

If a stranger arrived at the Church they would be impressed by the love, faith, service and steadfastness.

However, there was something missing.

Something very important.

Herein lies a warning.

A Church can be crowded with people and displaying great love and energy in service but not be a real Church in the eyes of Jesus.

There is a danger that it will become a highly successful Christian Club.

A real Church must be seen through the eyes of Jesus.

Those flaming eyes we saw at the beginning.

Now we come to the source of the error.

### 3. The Source of the error – v. 20

The trouble in Thyatira centred around a woman who is called Jezebel.

She claimed to be a prophetess.

The members of the Church were being seduced into sexual immorality and into eating things sacrificed to idols.

In this day there were great challenges to Christians.

Q. Could a Christian eat meat that was sacrificed to idols?

Paul discussed this problem in 1 Corinthians 8-10.

It is a very complex problem.

Basically anybody who eat meat that was sacrificed to idols may cause a Christian to stumble so it is best not to do it.

It is mainly what it might lead to that was the problem.

However, when we come to Acts 15: v.29 we discover that one of the conditions on which the Gentiles were received into the Church was not to eat meat that was sacrificed to idols.

This prohibition actually almost cut off Christians from all outside social occasions.

Obedience to this rule also restricted a Christian in entering into a trade or profession.

As I mentioned in my introduction, tradesmen were forced to join a guild and they regularly eat together.

This involved eating meat sacrificed to idols and sometimes at the Temple.

So Jezebel seduced some of the members not to cut themselves off from both the social community and the business community.

She was ignoring a Biblical procedure both to protect her own interests and because she had allowed Satan to influence her life.

Jezebel's other seduction involved sexual immorality.

We don't have any details about this but it must have involved both adultery and sexual perversion.

The New Testament is clear that the Church is the bride of Christ.

2 Cor.11: v. 1-2

Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. <sup>2</sup> For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.

Eph. 5: v.24-28

<sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

We are His bride and we must keep pure for Him.

Romans 12: v. 1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

#### 4. Jesus promised punishment for unrepentance – v. 21-23

It is clear here that Jesus gave time for Jezebel to repent but she didn't.

Jesus then tells us of her punishment and of those who were seduced with her.

He was going to kill Jezebel's children and bring great tribulation into her life. Jesus was also going to cast Jezebel into sickness and also those who followed her seduction.

They all had opportunity to repent, maybe some did, but perhaps some didn't. I don't think that Jezebel repented.

Recently in Hebrews we discovered that God is a consuming fire.

(Hebrews 12: v. 29.)

God has to protect His Church from false teachers and seductive forms of error.

It may seem harsh, but if things like this get a hold in a Church then God's witness is damaged.

This is why doctrine is so important for believers.

Error is often so seductive you don't know it's happening, but we must check everything out from the Bible.

5. Jesus promises blessing to those who hold to the truth. – v. 24-29.

Jesus promised not to add any burdens upon the rest of the faithful believers in Thyatira.

They were told to hold on to what they had.

This was their faith, love, service and endurance.

Jesus promised two big blessing to those who were faithful until the end.

The first blessing was “Power over the Nations”.

Here Jesus quotes Psalm 2: v. 8.

This is an incredible promise. It is a promise that one day these believers will have the power to rule over nations.

To those Christians who believe in the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth in the future, it adds support to this doctrine.

If you don't then it is very difficult to make sense of this promise.

We will deal with the Millennium Reign of Jesus later on in Revelation.

The second promise of blessing was the “Morning Star”

There are lots of interpretations about what the morning star is.

However there is only one that really can be directly connected to Revelation.

Please turn with me to Revelation Chapter 22: v. 16

<sup>16</sup> “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

The promise of the morning star is the promise of Jesus Christ Himself.

To the Christian who is faithful, when his life comes to an end, he will have Christ Himself.

What a wonderful promise.

What more can you want than the person who loves you the most?

I end with a story to illustrate God's love through Jesus Christ.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war in France a man died and his friends desperately wanted to give him a good burial. They found a cemetery in a nearby village.

It happened to be a Roman Catholic Church and the dead man was a protestant.

The Priest refused to let them bury their friend in the cemetery.

They were very disappointed so the priest said that they could bury their friend in a field near the boundary fence of the cemetery.

After the war the friends returned to the grave side on the anniversary of their friend's death. They couldn't find their friends grave site.

They went to see the priest to ask him about it.

He told them that when they left he couldn't sleep at night for some time and finally decided to move the fence of his graveyard to include their friends grave site.

After he moved the fence he could sleep and had peace in his heart.

God has moved the fence to include us ONLY because of JESUS and His death for our SINS.