

Revelation Unraveled Part 6 – Thyatira & Sardis

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. Berean Sunday School Class 2/26/2017

Revelation 2:18-29 & 3:1-6

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

As you would leave Pergamos and travel down the road you would enter into the city of Thyatira. You may remember this city as being the city where Paul's first convert in Macedonia, Lydia, was from. **Acts 16:14** *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

It is very likely that this Church was started because of Lydia returning home spreading the Gospel into that region. Thyatira was not a large place, in fact, they were the smallest city of all of the cities that these 7 churches are in. They were known for their trades; potters, tanners, weavers, robe-makers, and dyers, of which Lydia was.

It was a very religious city; not Christian religion but Roman and pagan religions and worship. The majority of people in Thyatira worshiped the Roman light and sun god, Apollo, the son of Jupiter. They were also very much into the worship Apollos' twin sister, Diana, the goddess of hunting and motherhood, of whom the great temple of Diana was built for in Ephesus.

I don't know if you realize just how hard it was for a Christian church to survive in that time period or not but they were really up against some deep seeded pagan worship and rituals.

These things saith the Son of God, there is no mistaking Who is speaking here, it is the Son of God, Jesus. Up to this point there were only references made to the attributes of Jesus and not an out and out claim of a title like this. In chapter 1 he called himself the **Son of Man**, meaning the one who identifies with human man, and has sympathy on them and love and care but here he calls himself the **Son of God**, meaning the one who brings judgment and stands in authority. I believe he wants to make certain that this church understands exactly Who is speaking because they are going to receive one of the harshest rebukes of all of the churches. The reason being is because this is the church that tolerates sin. Being the Son of God, gives him all of the authority and rights to say what he is about to say. **who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire**, These eyes of a flame indicate the all knowing, all seeing, all convicting piercing gaze of our Saviour. Fire represents a cleansing and purging and the very look of our Lord can cleanse all unrighteousness and friend, He WILL cleanse His

church. **and his feet are like fine brass**; this represents how he will trample out judgment on this church.

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be more than the first*.

Notice that the Lord starts off by commending them for their good deeds; works, charity, service, faith, patience, and he even says that here lately they have been doing more and more of that. More than they were in the beginning. So, there was some good going on in this church but there is something missing from their works; sound doctrine and holy living, and that is what is going to destroy them.

20 *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

Now we see the ugliness of this church. Despite the good things that the Lord mentioned, they are into some very, very bad stuff, and because of it, the Lord is **"against"** them. How scary is that, for the Lord to be against you? The reason being they are allowing this woman to run the show. It says that they **"sufferest"** this means that they tolerated it, they allowed it to go on without speaking out against it or doing anything about it. The Lord calls her **Jezebel**, not that that was her personal name but because that portrays the kind of woman she was; a Jezebel. Now, we all know who Jezebel was, way back there in our Old Testament. The wife of King Ahab, the woman that tried to kill the prophet Elijah, the woman that had Naboth killed so she could give her husband a vineyard, the woman that lead the Children of Israel to commit sexual sin and worship false idols, the woman that brought Baal worship to God's people... yeah, that Jezebel. She was a vicious, wicked, perverted woman and she brought in Baal worship with all the feasts, idols, and orgies that went with it. The priests of Baal were wicked sex perverts, that's what the worship of Baal was. That name Jezebel has become universal for the name of a loose or deceptive, trouble making woman. This woman in the church at Thyatira was like her and they were tolerating it. It says that she even called herself a **"prophetess."** In other words she is claiming to be called by God to do the things she is doing.

Now, I'm going to say something here that may upset some people. It is not my intention to upset anyone but I'm going to tell you what the Bible says.

Turn with me quickly to **1 Corinthians 14:34-40**: **34** *Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.* **35** *And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.* **36** *What? came the word of God*

out from you? or came it unto you only? ³⁷ If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

This passage of Scripture has always been a sticky spot. It was even when Paul said it, you can tell by the way he writes it that he expected there to be some backlash. You see, Paul was giving the instructions for how a Church service should be conducted. The entire chapter 14 was specifically pointed to behaviour in the Church during worship. He covered speaking in tongues and prophesying and then he gets to this part about the role of a woman during the worship service. Let me just say that if the Church at Thyatira had been doing things right, they would never have had this problem with this woman Jezebel. If they had been obeying God's law then she wouldn't even of had a platform to perform her wickedness on. **1 Timothy 2:11-15** *Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. ¹² But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was first formed, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. ⁵ Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.*

A woman is not to have any kind of authoritative position of teaching or preaching role in the worship assembly. She is not to have any position of authority over the man in the worship service. I didn't say that, the Bible said that. Now before you run out and say Brother Byron hates women and don't want them to do anything at church, please understand what the Bible is saying. God placed the man over the woman. This is the natural intention of God. In this modern day was live in, the lesbians and the women's rights movements have tried to change God's design. There are even women preachers and pastors nowadays. This does not mean that a woman can't teach a Sunday school class or hold private Bible studies, or pray, or testify. It clearly and simply means that a woman is not to exercise authority over men by having a teaching or preaching position in the Church worship assembly.

to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Notice that he calls these people that have been led astray his "servants." These are genuinely saved Christians that are being misled. Can a real Christian really get misled and engage in this kind of deviant behavior? Sure they can. Our Bible points out numerous examples for us, this being one of them. If you are a servant of the Lord then you belong to Him, you are saved, but if you aren't careful, you can get lead astray. They aren't just being led astray but they are indulging in sexual sins. **Fornication** comes from the Greek word "**por-ni'-ah**" which has all kinds of implications:

- 1) illicit sexual intercourse
 - 1a) adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.
 - 1b) sexual intercourse with close relatives; Lev. 18
 - 1c) sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman;
- 2) metaphorically the worship of idols
 - 2a) of the defilement of idolatry, as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols

It's the same word we get our English word "**porn**" from. It includes acts of sexual sins including; unlawful sex between unmarried men and women, adultery, incest, and idol worship. **1 Corinthians 6:18** *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*

and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. If they were eating things sacrificed unto idols then they were participating in idol worship. As hard as it is to imagine, these people were indulging in fornication and idol worship all under the name of the church of Jesus. You can't get much sicker than that.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. If you ever want to see just how far God's grace will extend, just look at this verse. Despite how bad this woman has been, despite leading God's own astray, despite her evil, sexual, and perverted idolatry, the Lord said that he gave her a chance to repent.

Friends, you can push and push and push the boundaries and God will allow you to push them. He will put up with you for so long, giving you time to find the err of your ways and repent. I think that's what He is doing with the United States right now. I think He is giving us time to repent and call on His name but I think that grace period is about to be over. There finally comes a time when God says "NO MORE!!!" He did it in the days of Noah, he did it during the building of the tower of Babel, he did it in the days before Jewish captivity, until he finally says "ENOUGH!!!"

He gave her ample time but "**she repented not.**" I take this to mean that her wicked ways had been pointed out to her. She was fully aware of the evil she was doing. God made a way for her to repent and be forgiven but she chose not to repent.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And now we see God's judgment on her unrepentance. He will cast her in a bed, and this isn't a bed of roses or a bed of feathers friends, this bed is

one designed for those of her type, this is a bed of pain, suffering, and hell. She made her bed of hell, and now she must sleep in it. God is going to pronounce swift and destructive judgment upon her.

and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. Also, for those that she led astray, they must too repent or they will be suffering the consequences. No, not a bed of hell for them but great tribulation. This is not speaking of the coming 7 years of tribulation, but of the consequences of unrepented sins. Friends that is why it is so important for us to repent of our sins when we commit them because if we are one of His and we sin we must be chastened. It is my full belief, based upon the teachings of the Bible that unrepented sin leads to all manners of problems; sickness, pain, and sometimes even death. For whom the Lord loves, he chastens. This is what he is trying to tell the church, if you have sin you must repent or face certain tribulation and chastening. He wants all churches to understand this.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. And it gets even worse. Not only is she going to be cast into a bed of hell and those believers that did not repent will suffer tribulation, but the next generation will suffer death because of these sins.

I want to tell you this morning, that sin has consequences. When you sin it not only affects you and your relationship with the Lord, but it affects those around you; your children, your friends, your fellow church members, sin is a black disease! -- and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. -- Not only is all of this going to happen but EVERYBODY is going to know about it. They are going to be an example for all Churches. Oh everyone thought your church was full of good deeds; works, charity, service, faith, and patience but they are going to know that all of that was just a smoke screen and that you allowed that harlot Jezebel to rule your church. You allowed sin and debauchery to go on in your church. They are going to know that I see all and know all, they are all going to know!

Now imagine if you will the panic on everyone in that church when this letter is read. They all know who they are. The ones that have allowed this to go on, the ones who have participated, Jezebel herself, they all know it and now they find out they are going to be judged according to their works! My friend YOU and I are going to be judged according to our works!

Romans 2:6: tells us that God will render unto every man according to his deeds!

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. Now, those that were indulged in these gross sins will be judged accordingly so if they were not involved then they had nothing to worry about. He said he wouldn't burden them with this judgement. 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. -- So what is in store for the Christian? He is going to rule and reign along beside Christ. We are promised the morning star. What is the morning star? Well, Revelation 22:16 tells us: 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Revelation 3:1-6

- 1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.
- 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.
- 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.
- 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.
- 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
- 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

As with several of these churches, not much is said in the Bible concerning them. History tells us that Sardis was the capital of Lydia. It is said that this is where the art of dyeing wool was discovered and the city was a very prosperous one because of that trade. It is said that when King Cyrus captured the city of Sardis that he plundered \$600,000,000 worth of treasures from them.

Sardis was devoted to the worship of the nature goddess named Cybele (pronounced, sib-ah-lee) and there was a massive temple built there for that purpose, it's ruins can still be found today. No temple worshipper was allowed to approach the temple of the gods with soiled or unclean garments.

A white and clean robe was required to approach its so-called gods. Worship of Cybele consisted of disgusting orgies and all manner of impure sexual acts.

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Again, the Lord introduces Himself in a different way. He says He is the one that hath the seven Spirits of God: This is most likely referring to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, or the 7-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in **Isaiah 11:2: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;**

And he says he is the one that holds the seven stars, we covered what that meant in **Chapter 1:20: The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.** Of course this is the Lord Jesus and I think what he is trying to convey is that He is the head of the Church and he holds those church ministers in His hand and he works through them through the Holy Spirit.

I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Apparently this church was a flourishing church and had a name there in Sardis. By all appearances it looked to be a great church that any Christian would want to be part of. But it was just window dressing. Once you pulled back the curtains and saw what they really were, they were just posers. In other words, they had a form of Godliness but they lacked the power.

This is the only church the Lord does not have anything good to say about. In fact, he starts right off by telling them that they are dead. Not that they literally died but that they are spiritually dead. -- What an awful thing for the Lord to tell a Church that they are dead. I can't think of anything worse. I mean, the church is supposed to be the life of Christ here on earth. The Bride, the life, the blood of Christ should be thriving, living, breathing... not dead. -- Oh, they proclaim to be the Church of the living God and proclaim to be Christians who follow Jesus but it's all just for show. They are just coming in, going through the mundane order of service to say they had church but they are deader than a hammer.

Friends, there's nothing worse than an old, dead, dried up, church. I am suspicious of these churches where you are out of place if you say Amen, or no one gets excited and cries or testifies, or anything. Now, I don't believe in contrived worship to try and make something happen but to just come in, sit on the pew and count down the minutes until dismissal... I can't

imagine doing that. If that was all church was to me I would quit going or get right one.

It's the Spirit that moves us. It's the Spirit that guides us. It's the Spirit that gives us wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. A church without Spirit is a dead church.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Here he is telling the church to take note and be watchful of the little bit of good things that they have and build upon them because what good they do have is about to die. It is a warning to be watchful. Anything that is valuable needs to be watched after; your health, your finances, your walk with Christ, all of these things need a watchful eye or something will come in and disrupt.

for I have not found thy works perfect before God in other words, they have some works but they are empty and unfinished, just hollow works. I would compare this to someone taking a position or carrying a title but never actually doing what they are supposed to. Perhaps calling yourself a teacher but never really teaching.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

He is telling them to remember back when they first heard the Gospel and realized their need for a Saviour, and that feeling they had when it was brand new to them. Think back on that day and hold fast to it and repent. Stop doing what you are doing and do the things you know you are supposed to.

And if you don't watch and remember and repent I will come like a thief in the night and cut you off. There will be no warning because this is your warning. I will come quickly, swiftly, without warning and cut you off from life and hope. In other words, that is going to be it for this cold, dead, dry Church.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis - The word "names" here is equivalent to "persons"; and the idea is, that even in a place so depraved, and where religion had so much declined, there were a few persons who had kept themselves free from the general contamination. And this is true of most dead churches. You will find still a few faithful and true Christians that still linger, hoping things get better, hoping the others realize the

problem that is going on. These people hold fast to the faith and they are true Christians.

Which have not defiled their garments -The meaning is, that they had not defiled themselves by coming in contact with the profane and the polluted; or, in other words, they had kept themselves free from the prevailing corruption. They were like persons clothed in white walking in the midst of the defiled, yet keeping their raiment from being soiled.

And they shall walk with me in white - White is the emblem of innocence, and is hence appropriately represented as the color of the raiment of the heavenly inhabitants. The persons here referred to had kept their garments uncontaminated on the earth, and as an appropriate reward it is said that they would appear in white raiment in heaven.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Like we've said before, the one that overcometh is the one that is truly saved. There were obviously people in the church at Sardis who were not saved. They didn't overcome, they won't be clothed in white raiment.

As for being blotted out, this verse is not to be used with the thought that a saved person could possibly be blotted out of the Lamb's book of life, for that is impossible. He is assuring them that the saved would never be blotted out. He says that he **WILL NOT** blot out a name. It is words of comfort. That a saved person need not worry about their name be erased from the book of Life. For in this book all the names of the redeemed were written down from the foundation of the world. God could look ahead and see those that would accept him as their Saviour. He already knew it and he wrote their names down in the Lamb's Book of Life where they will forever remain.

The Book of Life that we are talking about in Revelation is the book of the redeemed, the Lamb's Book of Life. It is also mentioned in:

Revelation 13:8: *8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

Revelation 17:8: *8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

Revelation 20:15: *15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 21:27: *27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Not only will no saved persons name be blotted out but he will confess these names before God the Father and all of the angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And he ends the same way as usual making an appeal that anyone that can hear, they needed to listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. Take heed, take the warning, pay attention.