

**Revelation 2:18-29**

<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.”

The fourth church addressed in the opening of the Book of Revelation is the church of Thyatira. In terms of length, the address to Thyatira is longer than any of the other 7 churches. There are

positives in this church and of course there are negatives, but in this church the negatives seem to far outweigh the positive. Last week I said that the Church in Pergamos was the church that reminded me most of the modern American Church. The key characteristic of that church being their willingness to compromise. I still hold to that, but there are many traits in the church of Thyatira that seem pretty American. If compromise is the word that describes Pergamos, corruption is the word that describes Thyatira.

With that being said, I would like to point to a popular yet mistaken view of interpreting the letters to the seven churches in Asia minor. This view is popular primarily in Dispensational churches, and the view is known as the Church-Age approach. In brief, though they do not deny that the churches were individual churches they add to their interpretive scheme the idea that each church is represented by an age of church.

Let me explain, according to this way of interpreting Scripture the Church at Ephesus was the historic church from Pentecost to about the year A.D. 100. This church dealt with persecution from apostate Israel and an increasingly hostile Roman Empire. Most people who hold this view, also hold to a late date of authorship of Revelation and they view the losing of the churches first love to the relaxed diligence of the church after the gradual death of the Apostles.

Smyrna, who is described as a faithful and yet persecuted church is compared to the historic church from about A.D. 100 to about A.D. 313. During these 200 years the church underwent many trials and persecutions. A.D. 313 is not just a random year, this is where Constantine comes on to the scene and the church changes from the persecuted to eventually officially accepted. At this point I am not saying if this is good or bad, I am just wanting us to see these delineations as they are described by our dispensational interpreters.

The Church of Pergamos is compared to that era from A.D. 313 to A.D. 538. Remember the defining characteristic of Pergamos is compromise. Once Constantine changed the official designation of the church to tolerated and accepted, the problem of persecution changed to a willingness to compromise.

Thyatira, the church we are talking about today is compared to the church of the middle ages, or as many historically inept people like to refer to as the dark ages. The period of the middle ages runs from about A.D. 538 to 1517. This period can be said to end with Martin Luther nailing the 95 theses on the door at Wittenburg. Of course many of the people of the land were hungry and poor, and during this time the Roman Catholic Church was characterized by wealth gained through corrupt means off of the backs of the poor.

The Church of Sardis is compared to the church from 1517 to about 1798. This school of thought calls them the dead church.

Now at this point in their interpretive scheme there is some disagreement, because according to them there are two last days churches. One is Philadelphia and the other is Laodicea.

Philadelphia is the faithful church and Laodicea is the lukewarm church. In the dispensational scheme of things, these churches exist side by side and though there may be slight variations on how this is interpreted, both of these churches will exist until the rapture of the church.

Dispensational teachers see a rapture occurring in Revelation 4:1.

There are some novelties and interesting things to look at in this way of interpreting Scripture, but I want to be clear, it is a very popular method of interpreting Scripture that has absolutely zero Biblical support. Remember just because something is popular does not mean it is accurate.

One of the reasons for the popularity of this view is that many modern readers of the Bible cannot get around the impact of what happened in the first advent. The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible actually words it this way: *“It is incredible that in a prophecy covering the church period that there should be no such foreview.”* Dispensational interpreters learned their system not from Scripture, but from Scofield, and yet they have elevated their system to an equal standing with the Word of God because they are still waiting for the accomplishment of much that has already occurred. To view the Scriptures in this way places modern Christians in the last days church and of necessity affects the way we will go about all of our current actions.

However, that being said, there are things that we can learn from each of the seven churches, but we cannot take our focus off of the fact that these letters are addressing actual people, events and things. The Church in Thyatira certainly had many things going for her, but the slow and subtle shift into compromise and corruption is a warning to every church in every age.

The description of the Lord Jesus Christ at the beginning of the address to Thyatira is this: *‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:* This description of Jesus as the Son of God is not an accident. It is also incredibly significant. I doubt that anyone here has never heard Jesus referred to as the Son of God. Some would argue that it is perhaps his most well known designation of Jesus in Scripture, but here in Revelation 2:18 this is the only time in the Book of Revelation that Jesus is referenced as the Son of God. Forty-Seven times in the Bible, Forty-Six in the New Testament, and John uses that designation more than any other New Testament author and yet he only uses it one time in the Book of Revelation.

Thyatira was a city that was heavily involved in trading. The City was known to be dominated by trade guilds. If a person wanted to be involved in the economy, if they wanted to be part of the business and prosperity of the community they would need to become a member of the guilds. However joining the guild involved more than just signing your name on the line. Membership in the guilds was also governed by pagan idol worship. The New Testament spends a lot of time speaking about two of the common practices involved in pagan idolatry and that was the eating of meat sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. Part and parcel of much of pagan worship was illicit sexual relations with temple prostitutes. To be involved in the guilds required this kind of participation.

The local God of Thyatira was Tyrimos, the name sake of the City and he was also considered the guardian of the City. Conflict between the local government and Christ was immediate in Thyatira and it is significant that here alone in the Book of Revelation does Jesus refer to Himself as the Son of God. Involving oneself in the idolatry that was commonplace was to put one self in opposition to the only one who truly deserved their devotion.

Thyatira was praised for the love, faith, service and patience. Some translations render patience as perseverance. In fact at the time of the writing they are praised because their more recent deeds are better than their first deeds. Thyatira in a sense was near opposite to Ephesus. Remember Ephesus was praised for her doctrinal exactitude, and their orthodoxy, but they were encouraged to return to their first love. Thyatira is specifically told that their later deeds are greater than their first. But even though this was the case, the BIG problem in Thyatira was their tolerance of and eventual acceptance of moral wickedness.

Something that often escapes our notice, and yet it is everywhere prevalent. The practices that were once considered abominable, eventually become tolerated. Tolerance leads to acceptance and before too long the very act of crying out against wickedness is itself seen as wicked.

There are several specific sins that can be pointed out in this regard, but with the decision last overturning Roe V. Wade this can be seen perhaps more clearly here than anywhere else. The act of abortion is not an area that is morally neutral. The Scripture's speak clearly on this subject and a few generations ago everyone cried out against such an evil practice. Even Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood advertised the opening of her first birth control clinic with these words:

*MOTHERS! Can you afford to have a large family? Do you want any more children? If not, why do you have them? DO NOT KILL, DO NOT TAKE LIFE, BUT PREVENT*

*Safe, Harmless Information can be obtained of trained Nurses at 46 AMBOY STREET NEAR PITKIN AVE.—BROOKLYN. Tell Your Friends and Neighbors. All Mothers Welcome*

Roe V. Wade was decided in January of 1973 and over a period of fifty years the language of what abortion was has changed. Abortion was no longer called the taking of a life it became an issue of choice and freedom for women. Roe V. Wade is overturned a few days ago and there are literally evangelical churches that refuse to speak of it because they have so been acclimated to the sinful lies of the world that they accepted the lies and are afraid to stand for truth. We see the same thing with the way the church deals with issues such as homosexuality. I know these are big letter issues, but the problem is when the church accepts moral compromise, or Biblical compromise in any area, they have opened the door to everything.

Thyatira is specifically called out for her toleration. <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.*

Tolerance is one of those things that is often praised and lauded, but tolerance is an adjective and what a person tolerates is far more important than the idea of toleration. I bought a shirt some years ago and I do not know where it is anymore, but on the front of the shirt it had the words, “Intolerance is a beautiful Thing.” The shirt was meant to upset people, but then when they looked at the back of the shirt there was a list of several people in history who are hero’s and it listed the things they were intolerant of. The prophet Elijah was intolerant of Baal Worship, George Washington was intolerant of the tyranny of King George, Martin Luther King Jr. was intolerant of black’s being treated differently because of their skin color. There were about 15 to 20 names on the back and some of the things they were intolerant of were quite progressive, but the point was that the problem was not intolerance, the problem is what it was that was tolerated. In Thyatira they tolerated, and this is an important and misunderstood phrase “...that woman, Jezebel.”

It is possible that there was a woman named Jezebel in there church, but more likely than not this was Biblical metaphor taken from a well known Old Testament story to address a problem that they had in their church. Listen to the description of what it was that this Jezebel was doing:

*...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.*

She claimed to be a prophet, and she used this position to teach and seduce the Lord's servants. Now something we have mentioned up to this point in the series is that when Jesus approaches each of the churches He is speaking to the angel or the pastor of those churches. One thing that is often missed in this passage to Thyatira is that this Jezebel woman was someone who was very likely to have had much of the support and encouragement from the leadership of the church. She was not an outsider, in fact when we look at the Greek text here, the Lord has something against the angel of this church, or the pastor, because he is allowing "that woman" and in the Greek it is singular so he is calling him out for allowing his woman or his wife, to have this influence on the church. The other leaders in this church will be addressed later in the text, but it seems that it was the pastor of the church who was allowing a woman, probably his wife with a Jezebel spirit to lead this congregation astray.

I believe that the Jezebel that was being spoken about in the Church in Thyatira was a person of great influence. She was probably the wife of the pastor, but even if I am wrong about this it is the Jezebel Spirit that is being spoken against.

Jezebel was one of most notorious women in the Old Testament. She was married to a wicked King by the name of Ahab. And it can be argued that she contributed greatly to his continuation in wickedness. So what is the Jezebel Spirit that is being spoken against in this passage?

Specifically she is encouraging members of this church to engage in Sexual fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols, But when we do a study on Jezebel in the Old Testament we see that she was a person who is first and foremost all about control. She wants control of her environment and the people in her life. Often the type of control is behind the scenes control but



given half a chance they will push for ever increasing influence in family, church, or any government her husband or authority figure is connected to.

One of the prime examples of this in the Old Testament is found in 1 Kings 21:

*21 And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. <sup>2</sup> So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money."*

*<sup>3</sup> But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!"*

*<sup>4</sup> So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. <sup>5</sup> But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?"*

*<sup>6</sup> He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" "*

*<sup>7</sup> Then Jezebel his wife said to him, "You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."*

*<sup>8</sup> And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. <sup>9</sup> She wrote in the letters, saying,*

*Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; <sup>10</sup> and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, "You have blasphemed God and the king." Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die.*

*<sup>11</sup> So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. <sup>12</sup> They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. <sup>13</sup> And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!" Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. <sup>14</sup> Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead."*

She saw Naboth as a threat to the control of her husband the King, so she went behind the scenes and using I'm sure very flowery speech attacked and undermined the rightful claim of Naboth and had him stoned.

She did the same thing with the Prophet Elijah, she used the men under her influence and control and to drive the Prophet of God into hiding from her terror. She was not above being deceitful and she was not above lying, but here is where this becomes problematic. Jezebel could never have gotten away with what she did had she not had some charms. I imagine she had many. But

something we have to see is that a person who will compromise with and tolerate sin is setting themselves up for this kind of problem.

In Jezebel's efforts to establish the Kingdom of her husband, she knowingly or not undermined any of his legitimate authority. The Jezebel woman in the Church at Thyatira is accused of leading the church in fornication. This is somewhat interesting because the Jezebel in the Old Testament has her sexual sin mentioned in only one verse in the Old Testament. That is from the mouth of Jehu. Philip Kayser rightly points out sexual sin is not actually the dominant description of Jezebel. But these women, while clearly seeing the sins of others, cannot seem to see their own sin. Now, speaking of sexuality, in many of the case studies where this demonic spirit has been present, there was no evidence of adultery. But there was almost always evidence of using sex to get her way with her husband. Sexuality was a tool of control. Now sometimes that tool was used with others by way of flirtation and other devices. But I think we will miss the point if we focus on sexual sins. She rationalizes error and obvious sin - that is the key point.

Now a point that needs to be made is that the Jezebel Spirit is usually, though not always a woman's sin. Anytime we see these characteristics in a church, the undermining, the behind the scenes manipulation, and the attempt to control we are seeing a Jezebel Spirit at work. Now something else that has to be pointed out in this case is since this address is to the leaders of the Church there is a warning to them that they are the one's who are allowing Jezebel to run rampant. If there are no Ahab's there will not be Jezebel's. Ahab was a weak and shall I say it tolerant of evil leader in Israel, he tolerated it in his own home, and the men leading the church in Thyatira were following the example of Ahab. They were put under condemnation for allowing Jezebel to run rampant in this church.

If you are being judged for allowing something...there is a simple solution. Stop allowing it. The Scripture says here <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.*

Apparently, Jezebel had actually encouraged God's people to commit physical fornication in connection with the religious rites of the trade guilds but we must also remember that the word fornication has a long Biblical history as a symbol of rebellion against the true God by those who belong to him. We can see this in particular in the Book of Ezekiel. We have already noted the symbolic aspects of idolatrous eating and fornication; it is important to recognize also that John describes the Great Harlot of Babylon, identified with apostate Judaism, with very clear references to the Biblical story of Jezebel, the Harlot Queen that is a harlot.

This again confirms the interpretation that the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, the Balaamites, and the Jezebelites were identical, and were connected with the false Israel, as we have mentioned the last few weeks, the "synagogue of Satan." "Jezebel" had to be punished, and in a play on words the Lord declares: Behold, I will cast her into a bed! As many of the modern translations point out, this is a sickbed, explained by the next clause: and those who commit adultery with her into Great Tribulation.

Jesus is saying to His people if you want to get into bed, I have a bed for you. Let us note carefully too that this first-century judgment against the followers of Jezebel is spoken of in terms of the Great Tribulation. Every Biblical indication regarding the Great Tribulation leads to

the plain conclusion that it took place during the generation after Christ's death and resurrection – just as He said it would in Matthew 24:34. His promise to kill her children with death is strange to our modern ears. But just as in Genesis 2 when God tells them not to eat of the fruit He literally says to them, the day you eat of is, “Dying you will die.”

The 23rd verse is also interesting because we learn some of the purposes behind the judgment of this Church. The other churches are said to see this judgement and it will cause them to see Who it is who is doing the judging. He is the One who searches hearts and minds and He will judge righteously. The judgement of God is a frightening thing bit to the ones who truly love the Lord they will heed the judgment and be pushed on to renewed obedience when they are reminded again that He renders to each of us according to our deeds.

*24 “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. 25 But hold fast what you have till I come. 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—*

The 24<sup>th</sup> verse begins with a direct statement to the leader and to the rest in that church and they are addressed as those that have not known the depths of Satan. David Chilton says it this way: “Connecting this with what we already know of her teaching, it seems that her doctrine was a proto-Gnostic teaching that Christians would attain new and greater levels of sanctification by immersion into the depths of Satanism: worshiping idols, committing fornication, entering to the fullest extent into the depravities of the heathen around them – sinning that grace might abound.”

Jezebel's doctrine of sanctification through idolatry and fornication was simply a slightly Christianized version of the most ancient heresy in the world, and one which has been manifested in every culture from the beginning: salvation through chaos. Eve saw chaos, anarchy, and revolution as the key to wisdom and the attainment of divine status. R. J. Rushdoony points out: "Chaos as revitalization has a long and continuing history in Western civilization, and, with the French Revolution, it gained a new vitality as revolution and sexual chaos became the means to social regeneration.

In spite of the many problems in Thyatira, in spite of many in this church being seduced by the deep things of Satan there are faithful followers who have not embraced these teachings. John does not place any extra burden on them but commands that they hold fast to what they are already have. They are told:

*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'—*

This is of course from Psalm 2 and is a prophecy of the reign of the Messiah. Christ has been promised by His fathers the nations and it is interesting that to the overcomers Jesus promises that as He has been given by His father He will share it with those who are His.

*as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star.*

The overcomers are promised that the night of tribulation and darkness will end and they will share in the reign of Christ.

<sup>29</sup> *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*