

The Seven Letters from Jesus
Letter #4 – Sent to the Church of Thyatira
Revelation 2:18-29 (5/17/09 AM)

The entire Book of Revelation is written to seven churches. (1:11) “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia:”

These letters contain the last audible message of the risen Jesus to His church. These are seven literal local churches that existed in John’s day as well as seven types of local churches that exist today.

The city of Thyatira is the smallest city of the seven but it receives the longest letter. The city was located in a long valley that extended all the way down to Pergamos about 30 miles. From the time of Alexander the Great the city was constantly overrun by armies. At the time John wrote this letter the city was flourishing under the Pax Romana, the Roman Peace. It became a center for wool and dying of cloth. The city became a center for trade guilds. These guilds functioned something like trade unions today. The city still exists today and the main occupation is weaving oriental rugs.

The Bible does not record the founding of the church in Thyatira. Acts 16 records Paul’s visit to Philippi. “Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God”, Acts 16:14. It is possible that Lydia was instrumental in taking the Gospel back to Thyatira and helping to plant a church there. The trade guilds were an issue for the Christians in Thyatira. In order to hold a job you had to join a guild. Each guild had its own guardian god that each guild member was required to pay homage to. This would require burning incense and worshipping that god. Their worship was associated with immorality. Many in the church of Thyatira were involving themselves in the idolatry and immorality of the culture. What was tolerated in Pergamos took over in Thyatira. You can never combat sin by compromise.

The Church of Thyatira Is Symbolic of the Worldly Church

1. The Vision of the Lord Jesus (18)

The Part of His Nature that Best Applies to Each Church

“These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass”

• This identifies deity

The vision of Jesus in chapter 1 identifies him as “One like the Son of Man” (1:13). Son of Man emphasizes His humiliation and identifies Him as Israel’s Messiah from Daniel 7:13. Son of God underscores the fact that Jesus is God. This is the only place in Revelation this title is used. His eyes indicate His penetrating omniscience. He sees each church for what it truly is.

Hebrews 4:13, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Brass symbolizes judgment in scripture. In ancient times kings would sit upon elevated thrones so that those being judged would always be beneath his feet. Jesus is the one who judges sin in the church.

The emphasis Is upon Divine Judgment

2. The Commendation from the Lord Jesus (19)

Only Jesus Knows Their True Condition

“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.”

- **Their love was revealed through service**

The true Christians were genuinely loving each other and caring for one another. What was diminishing at Ephesus was growing at Thyatira. At Ephesus there was loveless orthodoxy and at Thyatira was loving heresy. They were so loving they refused to take a stand for righteousness. Love is no substitute for truth and holiness.

Their Love Was Out of Balance

- **Their faithfulness was seen in perseverance**

The believers endured through difficult times. They were faithful meaning they were dependable. In their perseverance they put up with the infiltration of false teaching. This letter must have come as a complete shock to the congregation.

Their Perseverance Was Misplaced

3. **The Rebuke from the Lord Jesus (20)**

They Propagated False Doctrine

What Pergamos tolerated they taught.

- **They compromised the biblical standard**

“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach”

Their first error was in allowing a woman to teach in their congregation.

1 Timothy 3:1-2, “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.”

1 Timothy 2:12, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”

Paul gave clear instructions concerning the proper use of the spiritual gifts of prophecy and tongues. In the context he is speaking of prophecy as preaching. 1 Corinthians 14:34, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak.”

Compromise Never Takes You Any Place Good

- **They cooperated with unbiblical teaching**

(20) “...and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.”

Most likely Jezebel was not her real name but describes what she taught. This is similar to the reference to “the doctrine of Balaam” in the letter to Pergamos. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab king of Israel, the northern kingdom. She enticed her husband to promote the idolatrous worship of Baal which involved immorality. This false teacher in Thyatira was doing the same thing. How did she accomplish this? She appeared authentic in her claims “...who calls herself a prophetess”. She seemed very sincere “...and seduce My servants”. She was actually Satan’s spokeswoman not God’s. She was very persuasive in her arguments “...to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.”

She most likely taught some form of Gnostic error that the body was evil and the spirit was holy. It didn’t matter what you did with your body because your spirit and soul were saved.

She Led a Majority of the Congregation into Idolatry and Immorality

4. **The Warning from the Lord Jesus (21-23)**

Judgment Is Coming

Try to imagine the impact of this letter at this point on the congregation. The time for repentance has passed.

“And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.”

God gives time for repentance but that time is always limited. God did not intervene immediately. The pronounced judgment is threefold.

- **The female false teacher is going to die**

“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed”

The word “sick” is not in the original language but has been supplied by the translators. Literally it says “I will throw her on a bed”. Peter in condemning false teachers in the church compares them to the fallen angels. 2 Peter 2:4, “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.”

She Has Made Her Own Bed in Hell

- **The erring Christians will experience severe trials**

“...and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.”

This is not the tribulation spoken of later in the book. Her death will be a warning to the true Christians to stop following her false teaching. If they refuse to obey God will discipline them.

1 Corinthians 11:30-32, “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

Jesus Takes Sin in the Church Very Seriously

- **Those who continue in this error will be killed**

“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.”

These are Jezebel’s spiritual children possibly the second generation of Christians who are following her teaching. God will at times dramatically intervene in the life of a church and a Christian.

Jesus Will Purge His Church in Time

4. **The Exhortation from the Lord Jesus (24-25)**

Within the Visible Church Is the True Church

Jesus is talking to “as many as do not have this doctrine, who have known the depths of Satan”. This is how Jesus describes false doctrine. Jesus is discerning in His judgment. Not everyone who heard this letter needed to be afraid.

- **Continue to cling to the truth**

“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. But hold fast what you have till I come.”

This was such a challenge for the minority of true believers in this congregation that Jesus will require nothing more from them.

Specifically His Coming to Judge this Church, Symbolically His Second Coming

5. **The Promise of the Lord Jesus (26-29)**

Those Who Overcome Are True Christians

- **The rod represents Christ’s millennial reign**

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations — 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.”

This is taken from Psalm 2 and is almost a direct quote. This Psalm predicts Christ’s rule over the nations.

We Will Reign with Jesus when He Rules the World

- **The morning star is Jesus**

“...and I will give him the morning star.”

At the end of this book Jesus says “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” (22:16).

The morning star is the star you see right before the dawn.

We Will Know Jesus in His Fullness

He concludes this letter with the same admonition He gives to all the churches.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”