

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA
REV. 2:18-29

Introduction:

- A. "And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira, write."
 - 1. Angel = messenger = Pastor.
 - 2. Thyatira = thygatira = a daughter; or, thugates + teiro - the idea of feminine oppression.

- B. "These things sayeth the Son of God, who hath eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass"
 - 1. Jesus is presented as "the Son of God."
 - 2. His eyes are flames of fire, seeing, judging.
 - 3. His feet are as fine brass, Judgment.

I. THE CHURCH'S COMMENDATION. V19

- A. "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience."
 - 1. works = ergon = that which is accomplished by labor
 - 2. charity = agape - love that is self denying and compassionately devoted to its object. The highest kind of love.
 - 3. service = diakonia - servicable labor, service rendered, a service to benefit others, ministry in every form.
 - 4. faith = pistis - firm persuasion, conviction.
 - 5. patience = hupomone - patient endurance, a bearing up under, holding out, a remaining under.

- B. "and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."
 - 1. works = ergon = the things accomplished by labor.
 - 2. last = eschatos - that which concludes anything.
 - 3. "you are working harder and achieving more now than you did in the beginning."

II. THE MAIN PROBLEM IDENTIFIED. V20

- A. "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols."
1. few things = holigos - little as opposed to much.
 2. sufferest = eao - to let, to let be, permit, suffer, not to hinder.
 3. teach = didasko - to give instruction or direction.
 4. seduce = planao - to make to wander, to lead.
 5. fornication = porneuo = to commit fornication.
 6. eat = phago - to devour, to eat up, It combines both eating and drinking.
 7. sacrificed to idols = anything sacrificed to idols, the flesh of victims offered to idols which remained over, and was eaten or sold.

B. Who was Jezebel? What did she teach?

1. A literal female person, whom the church allowed to exercise great influence.
2. The culture:

MORE THAN CONQUERORS by: William Hendrikson, Baker Book House.

Thyatira became a trading city. Here were to be found the trade-guilds: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, etc. These trade-guilds were associated with the worship of tutelary deities: each guild had its guardian god. The situation, therefore, was somewhat as follows: if you wish to get ahead in this world, you must belong to a guild; if you belong to a guild, your very membership implies that you worship its god. You will be expected to attend the guild-festivals and to eat food part of which is offered to the tutelary deity and which you receive on your table as a gift from the god. And then, when the feast ends, and real--grossly immoral--fund begins, you must not walk out unless you desire to become the object of ridicule and persecution!

In this difficult situation what must a Christian do? If he quits the union, he loses his position and his standing in society. He may have to suffer want, hunger, persecution. On the other hand, if he remains in the guild and attends the immoral feasts, eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication, he denies his Lord. Thus, this controversy was of the utmost importance in the early Church. It affected and determined, more than any other, the relation of the new religion to the existing form and character of Graeco-Roman city society. The real meaning of it was this--should the Church accept the existing forms of society and social unions, or declare war against them? And this again implied another question-- should Christianity conform to the existing, accepted principles of society, or should it force society to conform to its principles? When the question is thus put in its full and true implication, we see forthwith how entirely wrong the Nicolaitans and their Thyatiran prophetess were; we recognise that the whole future of Christianity was at stake over this question; and we are struck once more with admiration at the unerring insight with which the Apostles gauged every question that presented itself in the complicated life of that period, and the quick sure decision with which they seized and insisted on the essential, and neglected the accidental and secondary aspects of the case. We can now understand why St. John condemns that very worthy, active, and managing, but utterly mistaken lady of Thyatira in such hard and cruel and, one had almost said, unfair language; he saw that she was fumbling about with questions which she was quite incapable of comprehending, full of complacent satisfaction with her superficial views as to the fairness and reasonableness of allowing the poor to profit by those quite praiseworthy associations which did so much good (though they contained some regrettable features which might easily be ignored by a philosophic mind), and misusing her influence, acquired by good works and persuasive speaking, to lead her fellow-Christians astray. If she were

successful, Christianity must melt and be absorbed into the Graeco-Roman society, highly cultivated, but over-developed, morbid, unhealthy, "fast" (in modern slang). But she would not be successful. The mind which could see the Church's victory over the destroying Empire consummated in the death of every Christian had no fear of what the lady of Thyatira might do. "I will kill her children (i.e., her disciples and perverts) with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." Probably "death" is here to be understood as "incurable disease," according to the universal belief that disease (and especially fever, in which there is no visible affection of any organ) was the weapon of Divine power.

It was a hard and stern discipline, which undoubtedly left out some of the most charming, right and lovable sides of life and human nature; but it may be doubted if any less stern discipline could have availed to teach the world as it then was and bend it to the reign of law. It is a case similar to that of Scotland under the old Calvinistic regime, stern and hard and narrow; but would any milder and more loveable rule ever have been able to tame a stubborn and self-willed race, among whom law had never before been able to establish itself firmly?

And as to the prophetess, she had had long time to think and to learn wisdom; the question had been agitated for a great many years; but she had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, and only clung more closely to the policy of compromising with idolatry. Her end is expressed with a grim irony, which was probably for more full of meaning to the Thyatirans than to modern readers: there are allusions in the passage that escape us. She should have her last great sacrificial meal at one of those associations.

III. GOD'S WORKING WITH JEZEBEL. V21-23a

A. "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."

1. space = chr = time during which anything occurs.
2. repent = to change one's mind and purpose.
3. She wishes not to repent.

B. God's punishment of her.

1. "And I will cast her into a bed."
 - a. bed = kline - that on which one lies, a couch for meals, or a bed to sleep on, used by the rich.
 - b. cast = ballo - to throw, cast down, hurl.
Therefore I am laying her on a bed of sickness and pain.
2. "and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds."
 - a. Plunge her lovers into great suffering.
3. "And I will kill her children with death."
 - a. Her followers will I strike dead.

IV. GOD'S PURPOSE IN VIOLENT ACTION. V23

- A. "and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the hearts."
1. searcheth = ereunao - to seek out, to trace. Used of a lion who "scours the plains and traces the footsteps of a man." Used of dogs tracing game.
 2. reins = the kidneys, direction.
 3. hearts = the emotions, seat of affection.
- B. "and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."
1. Matt. 16:27.
 2. I Peter 4:16,17.

V. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE FAITHFUL. V24,25

- A. "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;"
1. Some had not believed Jezebel.
 2. All who do not accept such teachings.
 3. Death = bathns - deep things of Satan.
 4. Satanic mysticism.
 5. Proverbs 7:7-27.
 - a. Religious, v14
 - b. Dangerous, v24-27.
- B. "I will put upon you none other burden, but that which ye have already, Hold fast till I come."
1. burden = baros - the heavy weight of trial, a weight that can be transferred.
 2. hold fast = kratedo - to be strong, powerful, to rule over.

VI. GOD'S PROMISE TO THE OVERCOMER. V26-29

- A. Two requirements mentioned. v26
1. overcometh = nikao - to be victorious.

2. Keepeth = tereo - to watch over,
3. Unto the end = unto death.
4. How long are we to be faithful?

B. The rewards for faithfulness.

1. "to him will I give power over the nations."
 - a. power = eksousia = delegated authority.
 - b. Matt. 19:27-29; Matt. 25:23.
2. "and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."
 - a. rule = poimaino - to tend a herd or a flock, to provide for, to lead, to cherish and defend.
 - b. rod = hrabdos - a rod, wand, staff, used for chastising, a sceptre of authority and office.
3. "as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers."
 - a. shivers = suntribo - break in pieces by crushing, shatter.
4. "even as I received of my father."
 - a. Stand in the same relationship to receive this promise as Jesus does to receive God's promise to Him.
5. "And I will give him the morning star."
 - a. A bright planet seen in the Eastern sky before or at sunrise. The trials are over!

VI. THE APPEAL TO HEAR. V29

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

