Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet-anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives.

Ulysses S. Grant

"But hold fast what you have till I come." Revelation 2:25

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad Baruch Shem k'vod malchutto, I'olam va'ed

Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God. The LORD is One. Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.



Letters to the 7 Churches

Ancient letters with an urgent message for today...

LETTER 4: THYATIRA

¹⁸ "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: ¹⁹ "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

²⁰ 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. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ 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.

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—

²⁷ '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; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '



BACKGROUND ON THYATIRA

- Not particularly important, beautiful, or wealthy city.
- Now **inland**, not on coast, but on trading route. Good roads, good location to rivers, necessary for trade.
- Compared to other cities, way down scale many levels
- Began as *Pelopia*, then called Semiramis (a goddess of Babylon), followed by Euhippia.
- **Dedicated to protecting Pergamos**, would be <u>sacrificed</u> <u>if necessary</u> to protect much grander, more valuable city of Pergamos. (considered worth losing to protect Pergamos...)

- Thyatira = similar to Greek *thygater* for "daughter." Appropriate: <u>Jezebel</u>, daughter of Priest of Astarte (Babylonian goddess, and Ba'al), King of Sidon (1 Kings).
- Named Thyatira after Seleucus (Nicator) told a daughter was born to him.
- "<u>Daughter</u> of Zion" also used throughout scripture to indicate God's people.
- Women associated with sexual immorality, often seen as seductresses (Eve). A "woman" has starring role here.
- Others: name from a Greek root word = to "sacrifice." Also relevant for this city's letter.

- Not known for religious significance. Had normal temples to Apollos, Artemis, other gods, but more <u>focused on business</u> <u>aspects of city</u>.
- <u>Not</u> special center for emperor worship.
- <u>No great risk of persecution to</u> <u>believers</u>, unlike other cities in Asia Minor.



- However: one major stumbling block to believers. Thyatira bustling center for manufacturing and marketing, well known for dozens of trade/craft guilds. Guild (union) for every trade.
- Most common: woolen + linen workers, dyers potters, leather workers, bronze workers, slavers.
- Paul's first convert in Europe was Lydia, a Thyatiran who sold purple cloth in Philippi (Acts 16:14). (purple cloth of Thyatira well known, very expensive)

- Trade guilds = <u>major problem</u> to believers in Thyatira. To be successful had to belong to appropriate guild, participate in "meetings," which <u>often became orgies</u>.
- Each guild had own <u>pagan patron god</u>. Common for guilds to have lavish ceremonial meals together. *Meat came from animals sacrificed to guild's god*.
- Frequently became wild parties <u>full of sexual fornication</u>.
- Why Paul talked so often about not eating meat sacrificed to idols, <u>linked that to sexual immorality</u>. <u>Leading pastime</u> of world of his day. MAJOR <u>TEMPTATION</u> TO BELIEVING CHURCH.

- Everyone doing business in Thyatira had to belong to guilds. Expected to participate in "parties." HAD TO DO BUSINESS THE WAY THE WORLD DID BUSINESS!
- What to do?
- Some, like Nicolaitans (and early Roman church = perverted marriage of pagan and Christian), suggested OK to participate in orgies and idol worship since physical body was evil anyway, and it was the spirit that would live forever, <u>so why not just have fun</u>? (roots of Gnosticism).

 Real problem in Thyatira not from outside, but INSIDE church:

COMPROMISE, FALSE TEACHING and TOLERATION.

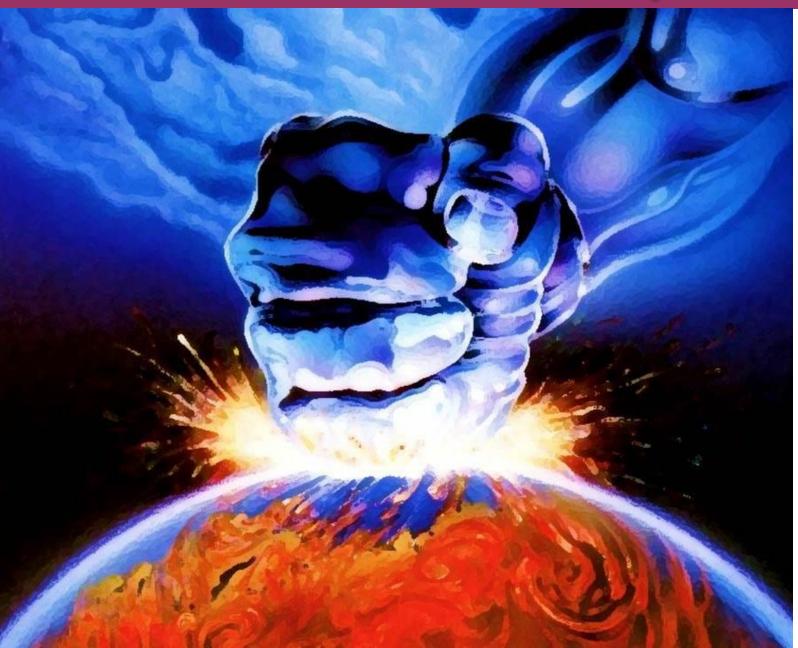


THYATIRA Not important or "Jezebel" (Gnosticism) beautiful, inland Threat not so much. Built/dedicated to **OUTSIDE**, but inside protecting Pergamos (sacrificed if needed) **Compromise** Manufacturing/trades False teachers/leaders Trade guilds Toleration-Orgies to pagan gods

¹⁸ "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:

- Description/Title of Jesus: "... the <u>Son</u> of God, who has <u>eyes like a flame of</u> fire, and His feet like <u>fine brass</u>..."
 - Son of God = Almighty God Himself (Judge)
 - <u>eyes like a flame of fire</u> = anger, indignation, all-seeing, all knowing
 - blazing feet "<u>like fine brass</u>" (furnace, white hot, brass = judgment)





- The All-Seeing, All Knowing One, Judge of all sin, <u>full</u> of righteous anger!
- What was happening in Thyatira to <u>HIS</u> <u>daughter</u> (Church) cause for righteous indignation!

¹⁹ "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

- Commendation: Jesus knows:
- 1. their works (deeds they were doing for Him)
- 2. their love (faith not just a label, had relationship)
- 3. their <u>service</u> (were serving God, not man)
- 4. their <u>faith</u> (continued to believe steadfastly)
- 5. their <u>patience</u> (enduring in midst of paganism, and pressure to conform to the world)
- 6. their <u>increasing works</u> (continue to do more for Him, signs of their maturing)

²⁰ 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.

- There's that <u>NEVERTHELESS</u> again!
- In other words, while this church was likely DOING good things for Yeshua, and seemingly had a relationship with Him, they had allowed in some things that He hates. (And threatened to destroy them as a church.)
- "Nevertheless" also applied to church at Ephesus.
- All their "good works" could not overrule the glaring sin they were tolerating.



Big question here...Who was/is "Jezebel?"

- Probably not real name of person in this letter. Jesus uses <u>character of people</u> to "name" them.
- Jezebel of scripture in Israel, time of kings, pagan (daughter of king of Sidon, town in current Lebanon) married King Ahab, northern Kingdom of Israel. ("treaty" wife)
- Made worship of Ba'al popular
- Ba'al fertility god, worship involved immoral and perverted practices (including temple prostitutes).

- Jezebel spread degraded worship in No. Kingdom (supported over 800 prophets of Baal, who ate at her table. Tried to kill Elijah after encounter with 450 prophets of Ba'al on Mt. Carmel)
- Ushered in worst time in history of kings (split kingdoms of Israel).
- Incredibly wicked, ruthless, immoral (seducer of people) tried to kill all prophets of God, no one to stood in way of getting what she wanted.

Above all other women in scripture, Jezebel most evil, cunning, daring and unscrupulous. Led Ahab to evil also. Pushed out of her window and eaten by dogs.

Jezebel?

- Woman referenced here has same name.
- Calls herself a prophetess, which implies she was <u>NOT a prophetess</u>. A phony.

• Who is this?

Options...

- <u>Common name</u>, person's real name. *Some even suggest she may have been the "pastor's" wife!*
- Name used deliberately, equate to original seductress
- Seduction of believers away from God work of a "Jezebel"
- Jezebel may have been a "secret gnostic." To faithful, Gnosticism pure blasphemy, but livelihoods were at stake.
 Huge temptation to compromise.
- Behavior of this current Jezebel as bad in God's eyes as the original - leading church (His betrothed), astray.

- Trade Guilds
- Pagan ceremonies
- Foods sacrificed to pagan gods

The problem at Thyatira



- Festivities filled with open acts of sexual perversion
- Believers pressured
- Compromise
- False teaching within Church tolerated

COMMENTARY: The name Jezebel had a powerful association. If we called someone a "Judas" or a "Hitler" it would mean something strong. It's also a strong thing to call this woman Jezebel. "She was one of the most evil characters of the Old Testament, who attempted to combine the worship of Israel with the worship of the idol Baal . . . Jezebel herself had a most unenviable record of evil." (Guzik/Walvoord)

Perverted combination of paganism and Christianity, begun in age of <u>Pergamos</u>, continued in age of Thyatira, and still does. (It actually began many years ago when Israel entered Canaan, land of pagan gods.)

What is a Jezebel spirit? (though not mentioned in scripture as such, prevalent especially in Church. Look to original Jezebel for clues...)

- 1. "Jezebel's" ultimate goal is always control. (own agenda)
- 2. "Jezebel" spirit attacks, <u>dominates</u> or manipulates *(especially male authority).*



- 3. "Jezebel" causes fear, flight and discouragement.
- 4. People under "Jezebel's" influence are natural <u>leaders</u>, <u>although often covertly</u>.
- 5. People under "Jezebel's" influence are often insecure and wounded, with pronounced egocentric needs.

- 6. "Jezebel" spirit functions <u>subtlety and deceptively</u>.
- 7. Ultimately, people under "Jezebel's" influence are proud, independent and rebellious.
- 8. Takes an "Ahab" to let a "Jezebel" spirit operate unchallenged.
- 9. "Jezebel" spirit always in alignment/religious spirit.
- 10. Families of people under "Jezebel's" influence are <u>often out of order</u>.



YOU CAN WATCH THIS SHORT VIDEO AT: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWYMriZaPsE

JEZEBEL SPIRIT

²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

- Literal fornication/adultery, also used *spiritually* throughout scripture = <u>intimacy/false gods instead of</u> <u>One True God</u>.
- "Sexual immorality" here likely physical in worship to pagan gods, but also indicates this Church's "harlotry" toward her "husband" – Yeshua Himself.

"Jezebel" here will relate to the "harlot" of Revelation 17

- Apparently warned, but did not repent. Probably most dangerous place to be. Warned, but unrepentant. Then and now.
- Given "great tribulation" AND sickness. May be physical (STDs, etc.) spiritual, or both.
- **THE Tribulation??** Reference to THE Tribulation, or *merely trouble, trials and tribulation for those who do not repent?* Various thoughts about this.

²³ 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.

- *"kill" ...with "death"* kill = apokteino (Greek) to put to death, slay, kill outright, <u>to destroy</u>. Death = thanatos, literal and figurative death. Underscores seriousness.
- <u>He isn't fooling around here</u>. This compromising, "promiscuous" Church in real danger of being destroyed. *Individuals and whole groups*.
- Smallest, least important of all 7 churches. But perhaps most common, most deadly problem.

- "her children..., and all the churches shall know..." may indicate "children" (followers) of Jezebel who tempted God's people away, and "spiritual" children of original group of believers.
- "children" of original church. May involve <u>denominations, sects and branches of Christianity</u>, both then and now.
- More meaning in Revelation 17 and 18, judgment of Babylon (harlot).

EL ROI: YOU ARE THE GOD WHO **GENESIS 16:13**

- *"He who searches minds and hearts..."* some think they can fool God by their actions, hiding true intent/content of their hearts and minds.
- Good reminder that God sees the heart. He is, as Hagar spoke in the wilderness, the God Who Sees. He is El Roi.
- Does not look upon what we do, except as it originates in the heart.

- A "God who Sees" and searches the contents of our hearts and minds is <u>both GOOD NEWS and BAD news</u>.
- Good news for those who love Him. Bad news for those who don't.
- Even in this moment God sees us. What a comfort that is!
- From His harsh warning, also comes a beautiful promise...

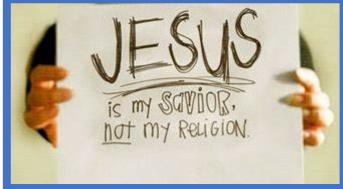
WATCH THE FILM

YOU CAN WATCH THIS BEAUTIFUL MOVING 12-MINUTE FILM HERE: (click on URL below) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz81dIfwf4Y

- "According to your works..." those who do <u>not</u> repent will be judged by works (as measured against Law?)
- Possible reference to "books" opened at Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:12). "And I saw the dead the great and the small—standing before the throne. The books were opened, and another book was opened—the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what was written in the books, according to their deeds."
- Those who do not repent are judged by their "works" of the Law, not by grace. <u>And they will all fail and be lost</u>.

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.

- <u>Were faithful believers in Thyatira</u>, did not fall to evil practices/perversion of God's Word.
- Practicing pure Word, not man's <u>religion</u>.
- Would not "be burdened" with anything else from Jesus.
- Told to hold fast to what they now have faith untouched by enemy's perversion, temptation to compromise.



It's about RELATIONSHIP not Religion!

 "depths of Satan..." spiritual seduction, "prostitution" Serious!

COMMENTARY: "In the days of the NT, many non-Christian religions (various Gnostic groups) said they knew the "deep things of Satan." The ancient Christian writer Tertullian says that if you asked a Gnostic about their cosmic mysteries, they would furrow their brow and say, "it is deep." It may be deep - but deep into a dangerous hole.

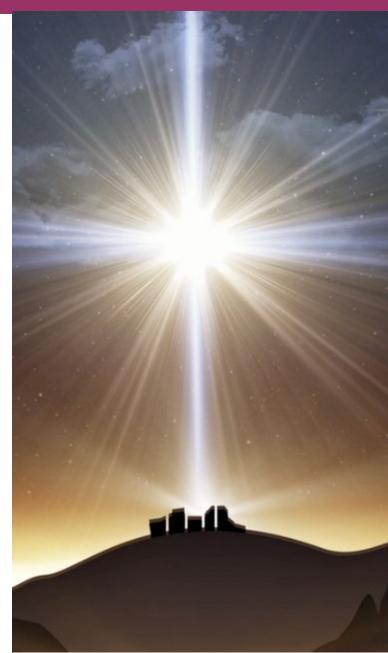
How could Christians ever fall for the depths of Satan? Perhaps the deceptive reasoning went this way: "To effectively confront Satan, you must enter his strongholds, and learn his depths in order to conquer him." People use similar reasoning in misguided spiritual warfare today." (Guzik) ²⁶ And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations -27. 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; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star.

The Promise: (2 parts)

- (1) True believers (overcomers) rewarded with true power from God, <u>HIS power over the nations</u> (not like Nicolaitans power over people, but coregents over nations)
- *"keeps my works until the end..."* does not imply "good works" or deeds. Implies behaviors/thoughts that come from a heart that knows and loves God.
- *"Power over the nations"* <u>Believers reign with Yeshua</u> <u>during Millennium</u>. Share power with Him. *Awesome thought!* (see Daniel 7:27; Revelation 5:10, 20:4-6; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:12)

- "Rod of iron" Jesus quotes Psalm 2 (Godhead conversation, re: Jesus' Millennial rule)
- Millennium, all at peace, <u>but enforced</u>!
- Those not fully redeemed, under "rod of iron" (see also Psalm 110:2, Hebrews 1:8)
- "dashed to pieces" if don't comply. <u>Jesus has received</u> this power from His Father. He shares this with us.

- (2nd promise) "...and I will give him the morning star." - seen before sunrise. Promise of dawn (redemption)
- Jesus = Morning Star 22:16. (See also 2 Peter 1:19 and Numbers 24:17)
- Jesus is THE morning star, the One who heralds the dawn of our redemption.



- Some might say, <u>what about Satan, isn't he also called</u> <u>the "morning star</u>?" No.
- In Isaiah 14:12 he is said to be "son of the morning."

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, <u>son of the morning</u>! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!"

 He is not called the morning star. (Lucifer means bright, shining) because he was ONCE numbered among angels (sons of God) shining like the morning (bright)

 "When the morning stars sang together, And all the <u>sons of God</u> shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7) Lucifer was an angel of brightness before his fall.

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the **morning star (Jesus!)** rises in your hearts; (2 Peter 1:19)

"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 <u>Bright</u> <u>and Morning Star</u>." (Revelation 22:16)

- The enemy was said to have "weakened the nations" in Isaiah 14:12. No accident that here Jesus says that power over the nations is now given to overcomers. No longer in enemy hands.
- Jesus is THE morning star. He is the very Light of God. And He is given to overcomers. No more darkness for us. No more chaos and confusion among the nations.

²⁹ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

- Interesting...Starting with Thyatira, + remaining 3 churches, closing statement <u>now AFTER message to</u> <u>overcomer</u>.
- First 3 <u>before</u> promise. Why? We are not sure.
- <u>May</u> indicate first 3 churches (actual and throughout history), still capable of repentance and restoration.

- Thyatira prophetically = "Dark Ages." <u>Medieval</u> papacy ~ 600 to 1500 AD
- Thyatira often referred to as compromising "corrupt" church.
- From this point on organized "church" existed in corruption...possible messages to overcomers are for individuals, not church as whole, which is now "mixed" with paganism, and completely corrupted.

- Historical note: 378 AD, Damasus, bishop of Rome (pope) took title and office of **Pontifex Maximus** (high priest of Babylonian/Roman religion). Previously reserved for Roman pagan priests, then the Emperor. (happened in "Pergamos age" but continued)
- Roman church now <u>officially combined with paganism</u>, never been separated.
- "Church" at that time steeped in mysticism and paganism.

- Rites, rituals and ceremonies
- Titles
- Vestments
- celibacy of priests
- image worship
- veneration of saints
- adoration of "host"
- papal infallibility
- transubstantiation
- other "mysteries"



All from pagan religious rites originated in Babylon, moved to Pergamos, settled in Rome



- But promises applicable to <u>remnant of</u> <u>true believers</u> (individuals) who *would* hear and repent.
- Reformation (sometimes called Protestant Reformation) happened in 16th century (most of 1500s). Some say Martin Luther started it all.

- Roman Catholic Church split, Protestant churches started, but even those were split into multiple denominations.
- How God must weep over His divided people.
- Whenever man takes Truth and spins it, it is perverted.
 <u>Faith becomes religion</u>. Religion cannot save.
- We cannot assume Catholics are wrong and Protestants are right. God never intended these splits. In Revelation 17:5 we see the "harlot" has children. She is called "mother of harlots." She is not alone in her harlotry.

- "Church" no longer separate. Roman influence a <u>stumbling block</u>.
- Historical Roman church shows "bad marriage" (Pergamos) as pagan influence and gospel of Jesus side by side.
- Yet "ekklesia" has <u>always had true worshippers</u>, those who held fast to truth of Jesus

- Do not mean to offend! Facts reveal truth of organized religion. <u>ANY organized religion</u>.
- Preparation for <u>understanding Revelation 17</u> (Harlot)
- As letters progress, as church progresses in history, church gets farther away from truth and away from her God.
- John's vision in chapter 17 stuns him. <u>Must be aware of</u> what history has to say about the church to understand. Not pretty at times.

Symbolic Age	Established Church (Roman Catholic) 600-1500 AD
Speaker	<i>"Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass."</i>
Praise	More works, love, service, faith
Problem	Toleration of false teachers who lead others into sin (Jezebel)
Counsel Or Warning	Problem with "Jezebels" and her followers, not entire church. Would not "burden them" further, but hold fast what they have until He comes. Gave time for "Jezebel" to repent, but didn't, so will cast her on a bed of suffering, and her followers, and kill her "children." They would ALL be judged on their "works."
Promise	Power over the nations, and the morning star (will reign with Him in Millennium)
Nutshell	Compromise, toleration of false teachers, not remaining separate

 Church at Thyatira thought to prophetically represent the Established Church (Roman Catholic to Reformation, ~590 to 1600).

EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERGAMOS	THAYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILADELPHIA	LAODICEA
30-100 AD	100-312 AD	313 – 590 AD	590-1600 AD			
APOSTOLIC CHURCH (age of Apostles)	PERSECUTED CHURCH (age of Martyrs)	STATE CHURCH (Constantine to 1 st Pope)	ESTABLISHED CHURCH (1 st pope to Reformation)			



PASSION

- Can you compare the situation and responses of the church at Thyatira, to the church today?
- Do you see any false prophets or seducers leading believers away from God today?
 How would you compare the state of the "church" today with that in the time of Thyatira?

Yevarekh-kha Adonai veyishmerekha May the LORD bless you and keep you

Ya'er Adonai panav elekha vihunneka May the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you

Yissa Adonai panav elekha viyasem lekha shalom. May the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

