

Revelation 2:18-29 January 29, 2012 pm
 What the Spirit Says to the Churches The 7 Churches of Rev.
 RV1205

“THE APOSTATE CHURCH”

INTRODUCTION: In the messages to the seven churches, the message to the Church of *Thyatira* holds the central place...

1. Revelation 2:18-29 (The Message to the Church of Thyatira)...
 - a. Is the central one: fourth out of seven
 - i. Three before and three after
 - ii. Chiastic construction: ABCDCBA
 - iii. A: loveless and lukewarm: *Ephesus, Laodicea*
 - iv. B: persecuted and faithful: *Smyrna, Philadelphia*
 - v. C: compromised and dead: *Pergamum, Sardis*
 - vi. D: apostate = one of a kind *Thyatira*
 - b. Longest of the 7 messages (12 verses)
 - c. Strongest title for Christ: *Son of God*
 - d. A picture of judgment: *Flaming eyes and holy feet*
 - e. Harshest warning: *the threat of death!*
2. Why? Why is this so? *Because of the seven churches, Thyatira was the only one on the verge of ceasing to be a true church and becoming apostate!*
3. Wow! “*the deep things of Satan*” (v. 24)
4. **Dennis E. Johnson:** *Triumph of the Lamb*; p. 79.
The longest and most difficult of the seven letters is addressed to the least known, least important, and least remarkable of the cities. Not only is the letter to Thyatira the longest, but it is also the centerpiece of the seven. The city was insignificant, but Jesus’ words and actions in the church there had something of central importance to teach all his churches.
5. Churches like this are hard to imagine, but they exist, more and more, in two venues of Christendom:
 - a. The apostasy of *mainline* denominations
 - b. The aberrations of *emergent* churches
6. In November of 1993, the *Global Theological Conference by Women; for Women and Men* met in Minneapolis, Minn.
 - a. PCUSA, UMC, RC’s, Episcopalians, Lutherans, American Baptists, UCC, Mennonites, and others were represented.
 - b. Largest group: PCUSA and WCC
 - c. Theme: “*re-imagining God*”

- d. A service of milk and honey (instead of the Lord's Supper) to the goddess *Sophia* (feminist goddess of wisdom)
- e. Formal papers and pronouncements denying the deity of Christ, the Fatherhead of God, the Trinity, or atonement
- f. It was a conference of heretical and apostate theology.

7. Here are the actual statements of some of the Conference speakers:

- a. “Be speculative, there is no ‘answer.’ We can’t imagine what God is like. Being together in our images is the ultimate.”
- b. Lois Wilson (Past President of WCC) “Joel: I shall pour out my Spirit on all mankind! Surely God didn’t mean all humanity; did he mean neo-pagans, did she mean the Wiccans, the Sikhs, Muslims, the Hindus, the men and women? Or did she?”
- c. Barbara Lundblad (Lutheran pastor) “Some would call our worship of last night verging on heresy... We did not last night name the name of Jesus. Nor have we done anything in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (laughter and cheers)
- d. Delores S. Williams (Womanist Theology Professor at Union Theological Seminary) “I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all. Atonement has to do so much with death. I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff. We don't need atonement, we just need to listen to the god within...if Jesus conquered sin, it was in the wilderness and life, not his death (resurrection). The first incarnation of God was not some dove on the shoulder, but in Mary and her baby.”
- e. Kwok Pui-Lan (Asian Feminist Theologian) “We cannot allow others to define our sin. What is sin? Who is this funny God that would sacrifice a lamb?”
- f. Elizabeth Bettenhausen (Feminist Theologian) “We laity have always crossed our fingers behind our backs when they lay out what orthodoxy is. We know in our daily lives theology has to be much fresher and more flexible than the definitions of orthodoxy can ever be.”

8. Others majored in promoting sexual immorality and perversion:

- a. Melanie Morrison (Founder of CLOUT: Christian Lesbians Out Together) “It is time to celebrate the miracle of being lesbian, out, and Christian.”
- b. Rev. Kittredge Cherry (Metropolitan Church) “It was time to reimagine the Church as the embodiment of justice for everyone, including lesbians and homosexual men.”
- c. Nadean Bishop (first lesbian minister in an American Baptist Church) – Martha and Mary were lesbian “fore-sisters,” i.e., lesbian lovers.
- d. Judy Westerdorf (UM Minister) Joked about the term “practicing homosexual” saying, “My partner says I’m not practicing, but pretty good.”
- e. Janie Spahr (Lesbian PCUSA Minister) “My theology is first of all informed by making love to Coni, my lesbian partner. Sexuality and spirituality have come together – and church, we’re going to teach you!”
- f. Mary Hunt (Lesbian Theologian) in a seminar called “Re-Imagining Sexuality-Family” said, “Pleasure is our birthright of which we have been robbed in religious patriarchy.”

9. Here is the *Chant to Sophia* read in unison at the communion of milk and honey:

“Our maker Sophia, we are women in your image: With the hot blood of our wombs we give form to new life. With the courage of our convictions we pour out lifeblood for justice...”

“Sophia, Creator God, Let your milk and honey flow. Sophia, Creator God, Shower us with your love...”

“Our sweet Sophia, we are woman in your image; we invite a lover, we birth a child; With our warm body fluids we remind the world of its pleasures and sensations...”

“Our guide, Sophia, we are women in your image. With our moist mouths we kiss away a tear, we smile encouragement. With the honey of wisdom in our mouths, we prophesy a full humanity to all the peoples...”

“We celebrate the sensual life you give us. We celebrate the sweat that pours from us during our labors. We celebrate the fingertips vibrating upon the skin of a love. We celebrate the tongue which licks a wound or wets our lips. We celebrate our bodiliness, our physicality, the sensations of pleasure, our oneness with earth and water.”

10. Little wonder that these mainline churches and the like are losing millions of members every decade.

11. **God’s heavy hand of judgment is upon them.**

12. An *apostate church* is a church that has fallen away from the orthodox faith and become anti-Christian in morals, message and ministry:

- a. From the Greek word *apostasia*: rebellion; apostasy
- b. Imported into the Latin language: *apostasia* (a borrowed word)
- c. *apostasion*: a written notice or bill of divorcement
- d. root verb: *aphistemai*: to leave, go away, desert, commit apostasy
- e. *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (2 Thess. 2:1-3)*

f. A common though sad fact in these last days of the New Testament era:

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. (1 John 2:18-19)

13. So...we turn tonight to understand the nature and the cause of apostasy in the church.

I. THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA (Revelation 2:18)

1. *“And to the angel of the church of Thyatira write...”*
2. Thyatira was the smallest, least important, and least well-known city of the 7 churches of Asia Minor.

- a. **Pliny:** “...*Thyatira and other unimportant towns.*”
- b. Not a great religious, political or educational city
- c. A second rate commercial city off the main road through Smyrna to Pergamum to Syria
- d. New Testament claim to fame? *Lydia of Philippi was from Thyatira*

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

- e. **John R. W. Stott:** *What Christ Thinks of the Church; p. 59.*

Perhaps it was Lydia, newborn in Christ, who returned to her home in Thyatira and was the means of planting the Christian church there. We do not know. Certainly by the time the Revelation was written, this prosperous city had a prosperous church.

- 3. But, like every town in the world, there was something that distinguished Thyatira. Actually...two things...

- a. **First:** It was a key military town

- i. A “*sentinel city*”

- ii. A buffer town for Pergamum’s safety; to fight a delaying action until Pergamum was prepared to defend itself.

- iii. **William Barclay:** *Letters to the Seven Churches; p. 65.*

It was in 290 B.C. that the name of Thyatira emerged in history, and it emerged as the name of a military centre. The supreme importance of Thyatira was that it was the gateway to Pergamos, the capital city of Asia. If Thyatira fell, the way to Pergamos lay wide open for any invader. Thyatira was not a natural fortress. There was no hill on which a citadel could be built to command the road and to be defended. In history its function was to fight a delaying action until Pergamos was ready to resist. The result was that Thyatira was one of these sentinel towns, fated to fight and to be captured, to be destroyed and to be rebuilt, because it was on the way to a city and to a prize far greater than itself.

- iv. An “expendable” city of Rome!

- b. **Second:** Thyatira’s greater claim to fame was that it was a “*guild city*”

- i. A town full of trade guilds

- ii. A citizen needed to belong to one of these trade guilds in order to find work.

- iii. The #1 guild (and industry) was the wool trade and the dyeing of fabrics (*Lydia’s trade*).

- iv. The *purple dye* of Thyatira was world famous and very, very expensive (rare).

- 1. From *madder roots* that grew plentifully in the region of Thyatira

- 2. Or little *shell fish* called *murex*-from the throat of this little muscle one drop of purple dye could be extracted

3. Murex shell: a spiny conk shell found in the Greek Mediterranean Ocean

4. **Wikipedia:** *Tyrian Purple...*

Tyrian purple (Greek, porphyra), also known as royal purple, imperial purple or imperial dye, is a purple-red natural dye, which is extracted from seashells, and which was possibly first produced by the ancient Phoenicians. This dye was greatly prized in antiquity because it did not fade but became more intense with weathering and sunlight. The production of Tyrian purple was tightly controlled in Byzantium and was subsidized by the imperial court, which restricted its use for the colouring of imperial silks, so that a child born to a reigning emperor was, "born in the purple" The dye substance comprises a mucous secretion from the hypobranchial gland of one of several medium-sized predatory seashells that are found in the eastern Mediterranean

v. Thyatira contained more trade guilds than any other city her size in Asia Minor.

4. Here was the main problem: *To get a job, practice a trade or open a business, one had to sacrifice to the pagan gods and goddesses who were the patron gods of the different guilds.*

5. **William Barclay:** *Letters to the Seven Churches; p. 69.*

If a trader refused to join his trade-guild, he would be in much the same position as a working-man would be today, if he refused to join his trade union. Such a man has little hope of getting a job, and such a trader would have little hope of gaining any trade. The social activities of these trade-guilds were intimately bound up with the worship of the heathen gods. These trade-guilds had common meals together. The meal would begin and end with a cup of wine poured out as a libation and an offering to the gods. It was, in fact, the heathen grace before and after meat. Still further, such a meal would almost certainly follow a sacrifice. The token part of the animal would be offered on the altar. The meat of it would be given to the worshipper to make a feast for the members of his trade-guild. There is obviously a very real problem here. If in Thyatira the Christian merchant or trader or craftsman was a member of his trade-guild, and participated in its ceremonies, he would protect his business interests and ensure his material prosperity; if he refused to become a member of such a guild and refused to participate in its ceremonies, he was very definitely committing commercial suicide and would very soon be faced with poverty, and even bankruptcy.

6. In this commercially-charged pagan society, Jesus Christ had planted His Church...

II. THE CHRIST OF THYATIRA (Revelation 2:18)

1. *And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: "The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. (Revelation 2:18)*

2. No church is presented with such an ominous picture of Christ...

a. Again...drawn from the vision of Chapter One...

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8)

The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. (Revelation 1:14-15)

- b. *Son of God* – no doubt who speaks here: The Second Person of the Trinity
- c. The glorified Christ, the divine Christ, the authoritative Christ, the holy Christ ready to judge with fire!
- d. The *Son of Man* in Daniel 1:14, 15 and 10:6

*And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed. “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the
visions of my head alarmed me. (Daniel 7:14-15)*

*His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming
torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like
the sound of a multitude. (Daniel 10:6)*

3. **Geoffrey B. Wilson:** *Revelation*; p. 37.

*Christ presents himself to this church as the divine Judge, whose flaming eyes penetrate the
deceptions of the prophetess and whose brazen feet are ready to crush the enemies of truth. Here the
title ‘the Son of God’ anticipates the later allusion to Psalm 2.*

4. *Why do the nations rage*

and the peoples plot in vain?

*The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,*

*“Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”*

*He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.*

*Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,*

*“As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”*

I will tell of the decree:

*The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.*

*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.*

*You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”*

*Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psalm 2)*

5. And this Jesus speaks to His apostate church...

III. THE COMMENDATION OF THYATIRA (Rev. 2:19)

1. *I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. (Revelation 2:19)*
2. Jesus commends Thyatira for **five things**
 - a. *Works*: good things they did in the community
 - b. *Love*: love for one another (*agape*)
 - c. *Faith*: belief in Jesus Christ
 - d. *Service*: ministry to others (*diakonia*)
 - e. *Patient endurance*: put up with difficulty
3. And they had grown in these things: “...and that your latter works exceed the first.”
4. Love and faith led to service and perseverance: good works that followed living faith. (James 2)
5. **Merrill C. Tenney**: *Interpreting Revelation*: “Thyatira was a church of deep devotion, perhaps also of an emotional character.”
6. A church that justified all it did in the name of “love”
7. But it was a *love without discernment or holiness!*
8. **Key Truth**: Whenever the Bible defines a group of people as apostate, it always does so **not** on the basis of love and relationships but **always** on the basis of doctrine and morals.
 - a. Proof? Read Jude, 2 Peter, the Pastoral Epistles
 - b. *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Tim. 4:1-3)*

- c. *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8)*
- d. Note: “*the lawless one*” (antinomian)
9. And that was Thyatira’s problem – *immorality and demonic ideas.*

IV. THE CONDEMNATION OF THYATIRA (Rev. 2:20-21)

1. *But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. (Revelation 2:20-21)*
2. The problem was “*that woman Jezebel*”
 - a. “*that*” a specific woman (person)
 - b. *gune*: Greek for wife or woman
 - c. *Jezebel*: not her real name but a caricature of a woman like the Jezebel of Old Testament history
 - d. *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1 Kings 16:30-33)*
3. Who was “*that woman Jezebel?*” Four views:
 - a. The wife of the pastor of the Thyatira church: “*that wife Jezebel.*” (probably not best interpretation of the Greek. No husband mentioned)
 - b. The **Sibyl Sambathe**: Greek pagan prophetess who gave oracles (Sibylline oracles) at a pagan shrine outside the city of Thyatira. (not associated with or in the church)
 - c. **Lydia**: speculation that she compromised her faith to do well in the wool-dye business, and became the apostate leader of Thyatira. (pure speculation, no proof)

- d. A symbolical figure: the spirit of the guilds. (but the Greek points to a specific person: “*that woman*”)
 - e. An unidentified false prophetess in the church who led the saints into idolatry and sexual immorality, as Jezebel in the Old Testament did to Israel.
4. **Grant R. Osborne:** *Revelation: ECNT*; p. 1156.
- a. *In conclusion, no positive identification for “Jezebel” can be made. All we can speculate is that she was a woman whose prophetic utterances made her the leader of the movement (most likely Nicolaitan, as at Ephesus and Pergamum) at Thyatira, probably a prominent woman who opened her home to the Nicolaitan prophets and supported them.*
 - b. *The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever.*
(2 John 1, 2)
5. First of all, the Church of Thyatira tolerated a female prophet (preacher) who was leading the church.
- a. A clear violation of Apostolic Scripture
 - b. *Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.* (1 Timothy 2:11-12)
 - c. ...and she was leading the church *astray*; leading them into *apostasy*.
 - d. *But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.* (Revelation 2:20)
6. Key word: “*seducing*.” Jezebel was purposefully drawing the hearts and minds of the saints away from devotion to Christ and Apostolic teaching.
- a. *planao*: to lead astray, mislead, deceive, to delude, to lie to; **ESV** “seduce”
 - b. *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* (Jude 3-4)
 - c. Jezebel had a “hidden agenda,” and she was successfully working her agenda to the demise of the saints and the destruction of the church.
 - d. An agenda that played to the local culture.
7. Jezebel told the Church of Thyatira that it was OK to sacrifice to the guild gods and participate in those pagan social events, in order to keep one’s job or business.
- a. *...that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.* (Acts 15:29)
 - b. *“...to practice sexual immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols.”* (v. 20)

- c. Note: same problem as in Pergamum: “so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.” (2:14)
- d. More than likely this was the essence of the Nicolaitan heresy. (2:15)
- e. **G. K. Beale:** *The Book of Revelation: NIGTC*; p. 261.

Jezebel incited King Ahab and Israel to compromise and “fornicate” by worshiping Baal. Similarly, the false teachers in the church were arguing that some degree of participation in idolatrous aspects of Thyatiran culture was permissible. It may have been especially problematic in Thyatira, since that city was the economic hub of a large number of prosperous trade guilds. The city had a guild for almost every trade, and most people involved in any economic activity belonged to one guild or another. And, since all the guilds had patron deities, Christian guild members would be expected to pay homage to pagan gods at official guild meetings, which were usually festive occasions often accompanied by immoral behavior. Nonparticipation would lead to economic ostracism. This economic factor was likely the reason that the teaching of Jezebel gained such a following.

- 8. The same pressures we have in the business world today:
 - a. Conventions, late dinners, drinks at the bar, adultery
 - b. Pressure to promote diversity (i.e., approve of homosexuality)
 - c. Tension between Biblical ethics and crass capitalism
 - d. Quandary: what is legal is not always ethical or godly
 - e. Leaving your Christianity at church when you go to work!

- 9. **Sarah Ivill:** *Let the One Who is Thirsty Come: A study on the Book of Revelation* (p. 51, draft).

We have “Jezebels” in the midst of our churches today, women who have crept into the churches, into the Christian bookstores, onto Christian radio stations and television stations, who are leading women astray. They speak a lot of truth, just enough to hook women and make them think that they are standing firm on the Word of God in their teaching. They are deceptive and secretive and very appealing to the emotions and the needs of women. They are Christian” counselors who counsel women according to their own wants and desires; they are small group leaders who tell women it’s okay to have one foot in the world and one foot in the church. They are authors who promote the “prosperity gospel.” They are retreat leaders who say God will heal you if you only have enough faith. We must be careful of these “Jezebels.” We must be so grounded in the objective truth of the Word of God that we recognize the subjective teaching of false teachers that play to the needs and emotions of women in an unbiblical manner.

- 10. Jesus warns Jezebel...and the church...

V. THE WARNING OF THYATIRA (Revelation 2:21-23)

- 1. *I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am*

he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:21-23)

2. **Note:** In this letter the order is reversed:
 - a. Usually exhortation followed by warning
 - b. Here warning followed by exhortation
 - c. Why? *Because the situation was more dire and dangerous*
 - d. In fact, the warning is really a **threat**.
3. **Grant R. Osborne** calls these verses “a judgment oracle”.
4. Here is what Jesus says. He warns three parties about His imminent judgment of them:
 - a. **First:** Jezebel. Christ gave her time to repent but she refused to do so.
 - i. Christ will strike her with serious illness
 - ii. She will die because she remains impenitent.
 - b. **Second:** “*those who commit adultery with her*”
 - i. Those toying with her heresy and immorality
 - ii. Great tribulation will come into their lives
 - iii. But they have time to repent and avoid this
 - c. **Third:** “*her children*”. Jezebel’s devoted followers
 - i. Her “spiritual children” (probably the Nicolaitans)
 - ii. They, along with Jezebel will be killed by Christ
 - iii. “*strike dead*” is literally “kill with death”
 - iv. **Robert Mounce:** a Hebraism that means to slay utterly or kill by means of pestilence (plague). (p.105)
5. Why is Jesus so “harsh” with the Church of Thyatira? He tells us in verse 23...
 - a. So that *all* the churches will know that Jesus is God, Lord, Savior, Head of the Church
 - b. *...and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:23)*
 - c. The lord who searches every human heart:

*The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?
“I the LORD search the heart
and test the mind,
to give every man according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his deeds.”* (Jeremiah 17:9-10)
 - d. Each church (and each person) will be repaid for their works.

6. **Dennis E. Johnson:** *Triumph of the Lamb*; pp. 81-82.

Though the congregation has failed to discipline Jezebel, Jesus will not let spiritual adultery go unchecked. Because her opportunity for repentance is past, Jesus will cast the prophetess on a bed of sickness, her paramours into great anguish, and her children to death. He will teach a vital lesson not to the Thyatiran church alone; rather, “all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.” Through insignificant Thyatira Jesus will show all churches that he does not tolerate undiscerning tolerance, which invites the Serpent’s venom into his Body.

7. Jesus is saying: *“Apostasy is worse than anything because it leads to death and then eternal death. Immorality causes ungodliness and ungodliness leads to idolatry and idolatry leads people away from Me, away from salvation and away from heaven. Apostasy leads to hell!*

I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. (2 Corinthians 11:1-4)

VI. THE EXHORTATION TO THYATIRA (Rev. 2:24-25)

1. *But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come. (Revelation 2:24-25)*

2. Jesus urges the faithful at Thyatira to lead the Church back to orthodoxy and morality.

3. He speaks of the “*deep things of Satan.*”

- a. The Gnostic heretics (Nicolaitans) spoke about knowing “the deep things.” (Esoteric, mystical, subjective ideas)
- b. Jesus says: These “deep things” are really the *deep things of Satan.*
- c. As opposed to the deep things the Spirit teaches the church...

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him” —*

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (1 Corinthians 2:6-10)

- d. The deep things of God’s Word: Gospel Truth

4. The charge is simple: “*only hold fast to what you have until I come.*” (v. 25)
 - a. The Apostolic faith of the New Testament
 - b. *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.* (Jude 3)
 - c. Our “common salvation” (Evangelical Faith)
5. **Apostasy always begins when teachers promise “deep things” not found or understood in the Scripture. New Gospels do not lead to new life, but rather to age-old sin and death.**

VII. THE PROMISE TO THYATIRA (Revelation 2:26-29)

1. *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’* (Revelation 2:26-29)
2. The longest of all the seven promises to the churches of Asia Minor is given to Thyatira.
3. Jesus promises this church two things, if they would persevere in the faith, overcome spiritual apostasy and keep His works –
 - a. **First:** They would share in the victory of the Son of God
 - i. *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.* (Revelation 2:26-27)
 - ii. A promise taken from Psalms 2 and 110 and the Messiah’s victory over the world

*“As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”*

*I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”* (Psalm 2:6-9)

*The LORD says to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

*The LORD sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!* (Psalm 110:1-2)

- iii. Old Testament promises that the saints will share in Christ's rule over the nations
- iv. Jesus' promise that the 12 apostles would sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel
- v. Matthew 5:5 – the meek shall inherit the earth
- vi. Paul's promise that believers would judge both the angels and the earth

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he also will deny us;

if we are faithless, he remains faithful—

for he cannot deny himself. (2 Timothy 2:11-13)

b. **Second:** The saints will possess the Morning Star

- i. *And I will give him the morning star.* (Revelation 2:28)
- ii. That Morning Star is Jesus Himself
- iii. *“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”* (Rev. 22:16)
- iv. A deeper measure of joy in knowing, loving and being loved by Jesus Christ
- v. *Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.* (Isaiah 60:1-3)

4. Victory, authority, glory, and joy for those who overcome apostasy and return to Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION: Apostasy is a deadly evil possible at any time in the life of a church.

1. The Process of Apostasy? Caving in to the culture, toleration of false teaching, immorality, the rejection of orthodoxy, denial of Christ, open idolatry
2. The Process of Judgment? Tribulation, sickness, impenitence, death and eternal damnation
3. The Process of Renewal? Repentance, return to orthodoxy, repudiation of immorality, and holding onto the ancient faith and Biblical ethics
4. *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”* (v. 29)
 - Homosexuality and fornication are not sins inconsistent with Christianity!
 - Evolution is true; God did not create us. We evolved.
 - Jesus is not the only way to God. The Lord is not that narrow.

- Women can hold office in the church. Christ is not patriarchal.
 - Same sex marriages should not be forbidden; that's unloving.
 - Holiness is not essential to salvation; that's legalism.
5. Those voices sound an awful lot like *Jezebel* and *her children*: **the voice of apostasy**
 6. Brethren, beware! A spirit of toleration now, a slackness about holiness and purity. The destruction of the church soon to follow.
 7. Remember: *When Jezebel is allowed to speak to us today, our sons and daughters will worship Sophia tomorrow.*
 8. As one apostate female leader said:
Some would call our worship of last night verging on heresy...we did not last night name the name of Jesus. Nor have we done anything in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.