

Sermon Mark S. Aites  
SERIES ON THE 7 CHURCHES OF ASIA  
**#4: THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA**

**TEXT: REV. 2:18-29**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. We continue the series on the 7 churches of Asia.
2. In our previous lessons:
  - 1) We noted the great church in Ephesus, who greatly opposed false teachers and false doctrine, but whom left their first love.
  - 2) We learned then of Smyrna, and the persecution which was about to try them, and the Lord's admonition, "*Be thou faithful...*" (**Rom. 2:10**).
  - 3) In our last lesson, we examined the church in Pergamos.
    - 1) We noted their weakness in that some were holding to false doctrines.
    - 2) The Lord admonished them to purge out this falseness from among them, and to hold to the truth, that they might overcome.
3. Our attention now turns to the church in Thyatira.
  - 1) It was a wealthy city: served as the main business and commercial route between Pergamos and Sardis.
  - 2) Thyatira was located in the northern part of Lydia on the river Lycus.
  - 3) It was located in a valley of Lycus and became a well known commercial center.
  - 4) It was a Roman city since the year 190 B.C.
4. Thyatira was perhaps most noted because it was an important trade and manufacturing city.
  - 1) In particular the city was known for its purple dye and dyed garments.
  - 2) You may recall that Lydia, whom Paul converted at Philippi, was from Thyatira, and was a seller of purple (**Acts 16:13-15**).
  - 3) The city was also known for other trades and guilds: wool, leather, linen, bronze, garments, dyers, potters, bakers, slaves, etc.
  - 4) "Every artisan belonged to a guild, and every guild wielded a wide influence. These guilds were closely connected with the various forms of pagan worship carried on in the city." (James Tolle)
  - 5) It is reported that those who refused to be a part of these guilds "faced ostracism and loss of jobs." (Robert Taylor, Jr.)
5. Most noted in their pagan worship was their chief deity Tyrimnos, also known as the Greek sun god Apollo.
6. Unlike the other opening statements to the churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos, the remarks are being made from one who identifies Himself as "*the Son of God.*"
  - 1) To Ephesus it was the one "*who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands*" (**Rev. 2:1**).
  - 2) To Smyrna: "*These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life*" (**Rev. 2:8**).
  - 3) To Pergamos: "*These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword*" (**Rev. 2:12**).
  - 4) But here it is plainly stated as to His identity. Many believe it is so stated because He stands in opposition to their sun god; the Lord is the true Son of God.
7. The Son of God has "eyes like a flame of fire" --a burning gaze that sees and knows all.
8. The Son of God has "His feet like fine brass."

- 1) These are feet which the craftsmen could not duplicate.
- 2) These were feet which would “tread down any and all opposition.” (Taylor)

## DISCUSSION:

### I. THE PRAISE (2:19).

- A. *“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first” (2:19).*
- B. He who sees and knows all recognizes their works.
  1. Each of the congregations, as with Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos; the Lord has stated that He *knows* their works.
  2. No church can escape the notice of the Christ.
- C. In Jesus public ministry His works were redemptive in nature.
  1. **Matt. 11:5** Text states, *“The poor have the gospel preached unto them.”*
  2. His servants the apostles likewise were evangelistic and benevolent; even in the face of persecution (**Acts 8:4**).
  3. The Lord commends those who continue the Lord’s works.
- D. The Lord also commends them for their *“love.”*
  1. Of interest, this is the first of the churches to be commended for their love.  
**John 13:35** *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*
  2. They stood in contrast to Ephesus which left their first love.
  3. It should not be surprising to see love preceding service, for service stems from love.
- E. There is also praise and commendation for their service.
  1. The Lord Himself in His earthly ministry taught the need for service.
  2. In **John 13** Jesus taught His disciples the importance of service as He washed their feet.
  3. **Rom. 7:6** *“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”*
  4. In **Gal. 5:13**, Paul taught the Galatian brethren, *“...through love serve one another.”*
- F. The praise continues, as the Lord notes their *“faith.”*
  1. They were living examples of walking by faith (**2 Cor. 5:7**).
  2. They were praised because they had a working faith.  
**James 2:20** *“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”*
  3. Only a working faith does the Lord praise; as was the case with the writing of **Heb. 11**.
- G. Next on their list to be praised, their *“patience.”*
  1. A word which signifies endurance or continuance.
  2. It was a great tribute to their lives that they were able to withstand the outside pressures refusing to surrender their faith.
- H. And then the crown to their praise is a repeat of *“works.”*
  1. *“...and as for your works, the last are more than the first.”*
  2. This appears to be a sign of a growing church, apparently not going backward as was Ephesus.

3. When love, faith, service, and patience prevails in a congregation, a church cannot help but to grow.
4. But unfortunately, all was not good with this church...

## **II. THE PROBLEM (2:20-21).**

A. **2:20-21** *"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."*

B. Notice the name that stands out: "Jezebel."

1. This name was apparently given because this individual was like the character of old.
    - 1) The original Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal; king of the Sidonians, also known as the Phoenicians.
    - 2) We read of her record in **1 Kings 16-21** and **2 Kings 9**.
    - 3) She was the wife of king Ahab, and helped to lead her husband into Baal worship (**1 Kings 16:31**).
    - 4) She was a vicious lady, having destroyed the prophets of God (**1 Kings 18:4**).
    - 5) Even Naboth's death is laid to her charge, as she had him killed that Ahab could have his vineyard (**1 Kings 21**).
    - 6) She encouraged idolatry: evening feeding at her table the prophets of Baal and Asherah (**1 Kings 18:19**).
    - 7) Jehu described her practices as harlotry and witchcraft (**2 Kings 9:22**).
    - 8) Her name is virtually synonymous with evil.
    - 9) We read of her death in **2 Kings 9:30-37**, and it was a very violent death.
  2. The woman teaching in Thyatira was a proverbial Jezebel, in that she was a false prophetess.
    - 1) She was teaching the people to commit sexual immorality.
    - 2) Teaching them to eat things sacrificed to idols.
    - 3) It is of little doubt that she was trying to bring pagan worship into the church, the holding again of the doctrine of Balaam.
  4. Again with reference to the guilds, it is evident from the background information that compromise would have been a danger.
    - 1) Membership in the guilds would have been difficult for a member of the Lord's church, especially since the guilds were tied in with idolatrous worship.
    - 2) With pressure even coming within the church, it is possible that members may have succumbed to the pressure and temptation.
    - 3) Compromise has long been a tool of satan.
- C. **21** *"And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent."*
1. Even in the face of evil within the church, we see the longsuffering and patience of God (**2 Pet. 3:9**).
  2. God's patience was tremendous in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared for 120 yrs.
  3. His patience is also evident today, giving men time to repent.
  4. Repentance signifies a change; and there are too many Jezebel's today preventing people from repenting of their sins.

### III. THE PUNISHMENT (2:22-23).

- A. **2:22-23** *"Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.*  
**2:23** *"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."*
- B. When God's patience and longsuffering comes to an end, there is judgment and punishment.
- C. Jezebel's bed of immorality would become a bed of sickness.
1. Those who shared this bed would also face the consequences.
  2. But again, note that God provides the opportunity to escape His wrath.
- D. *"...unless they repent of their deeds."*
1. Here we are reminded of the free moral agency of man.
  2. The choice is to change or be cast into the sickbed.
- E. *"I will kill her children with death."*
1. It is not talking of physical children in this text; but the spiritual, those converted to her wicked ways.
  2. They were her followers; her disciples.
  3. They would be killed in that they would face eternal separation from God.
  4. **Gal. 6:7-8** *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*  
**8** *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."*
- F. *"...and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts."*
1. The judgment will be just, and of such a nature that no doubt will remain.
  2. No one can escape the scrutiny of God.
  3. The Psalmist says, *"The Lord knows the thoughts of man..."* (**Psa. 94:11**).
- G. *"And I will give to each one of you according to your works."*
1. In **Rom. 2:6**, Paul writes that God *"will render to each one according to his deeds."*
  2. **2 Cor. 5:10** *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."*

### IV. THE PROMISE (2:24-29).

- A. **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."*
- B. *"I will put on you no other burden."*
1. In **Acts 15:28-29**, we find a similar thought in the message that was dispatched to

- the Gentiles from Jerusalem.
2. **28** *For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:*  
**29** *that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well."*
  3. The burden of the Lord is not more than what can be handled.
- C. **25** *"But hold fast what you have till I come."*
1. Here is another exhortation to keep the faith.
  2. **Rev. 2:10** *"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*
  3. The coming referred to here is not likely the Lord's 2nd coming, but rather the judgment that would occur unless they repented.
- D. What follows then is the promise to those who would overcome. This would be those who would remain faithful; those who would overcome the doctrines of Jezebel.
- E. *"I will give power over the nations."*
1. This is taken from **Psa. 2:8-9**: *"Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.  
**9** You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."*
  2. A similar thought comes from **Rev. 5:10**: *"And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."*
- F. The Lord is now reigning at God's right hand (**Heb. 1:3**); and when precious souls are raised from the watery grave of baptism, they are blessed to reign with Christ, both here and in eternity.
1. In **Eph. 2:6** Paul declares that we are raised and made to sit with Christ.
  2. **Rom. 5:17** *"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)"*
  3. We then are not talking of a future millennial reign, but that Christians reign with Christ now as we are partakers of Christ through the gospel.
  4. Certainly the ultimate reign is yet to come:  
**2 Tim. 2:11-12** *"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.  
**12** If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us."*
- G. The nations are broken with a rod of iron, and broken into pieces.
1. The *rod of iron* is symbolic of a strong rule.
  2. The potter breaking the clay into pieces is his right; he can destroy that which is imperfect or flawed.
  3. This thought appears to be figurative of our strength in overcoming the world which we draw from the reigning Christ.
  4. And Christ in turn draws from the Father: *"as I also have received from My Father."*
    - 1) **John 7:16** *"Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me."*

2) **Matt. 28:18** *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”*

H. *“And I will give him the morning star.”*

1. It appears that the Lord is referring to Himself.

**Rev. 22:16** *“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.”*

2. “Having Jesus as heavenly reward makes heaven all that much more precious and inviting. How much better to work towards that goal than to follow in the idolatrous, sensual lifestyle of the vanity element; Jezebel and her crew of permissive puppets.” (R.Taylor, Jr.)

3. Summers adds: “One who has frequently observed brilliant beauty in the morning star in the dark hour which precedes the dawn will understand the beauty of the promise. He may often walk in darkness and in many perplexities, but the morning star will be given to guide him; he must refuse to follow the false leadership . . . and wait for the star.”

#### **CONCLUSION: HOW DO WE APPLY WHAT WE LEARN HERE FOR US TODAY?**

1. From Thyatira we learn that every congregation, even those that are growing, are not without internal problems, and some of those problems may well be serious.

2. We learn here also of the dangers of seduction to every false way.

3. Jesus warned: **Matt. 7:15** *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*

4. Paul warned the Ephesian elders with a warning that may fall to any congregation: **Acts 20:29-30** *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

**30** *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”*

5. Even the best of congregations, like Thyatira, can be led astray; just as individuals can also be led astray.

6. How often we exhort you, the precious members of God's flock, to establish everything that is done with Scripture with a thus saith the Lord.

7. My friends, your soul is far too precious to allow a Jezebel to lead you away from God.

8. The key is to always remained focus upon the Lord; upon His will and His way which is clearly spelled out in Scripture.

9. **Heb. 12:1-2** *“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*

**2** *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

10. Look to Jesus; not the ways of man: **Matt. 15:9** *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”*

11. Your answer today lies within the Bright and Morning Star. He who will help you to overcome the world and cleanse you of all of your sins.