

“TO THE CHURCHES, WRITE . . .”

THE CHURCH THAT COMPROMISED

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

THE SEVEN CHURCH CHIASM

- A. Ephesus: an *unhealthy* church
- B. Smyrna: a *healthy* church
- C. Pergamum: an *unhealthy* church
- D. Thyatira: an *unhealthy* church
- C' Sardis: an *unhealthy* church
- B' Philadelphia: a *healthy* church
- A' Laodicea: an *unhealthy* church

(1) *Each church's message is relevant to all churches throughout history.*

(2) *Healthy churches (and healthy Christians) are the minority.*

IDENTIFICATION

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze.”

REVELATION 2.18

- ▶ Christ identifies himself with three descriptions that emphatically present him as the Judge of the churches—
 - (1) the “Son of God” (i.e. the Messiah-King of Psalm 2)
 - (2) “eyes like flames of fire” (cf. Revelation 1.14; Daniel 10.6)
 - (3) “feet like polished bronze” (cf. Revelation 1.16; 19.15)

COMMENDATION

“I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.”

REVELATION 2.19

- ▶ Christ is fully engaged with his churches, fully aware of everyone and everything. The church at Thyatira had not become stagnant in their faith or their works, nor were they doing the bare minimum; in fact, Christ commended them for doing more than ever.

. . . we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

1 THESSALONIANS 4.1

CONDEMNATION

“But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols.”

REVELATION 2.20

- ▶ Christ’s characterization of this individual as “that Jezebel” and his indictment and subsequent judgment, show that this issue of being “tolerant” was something that he would *not* tolerate! In their accommodating and progressive perspective, they were, in fact, aiding and abetting the spiritual downfall of others.

- ▶ Jezebel is synonymous with false teaching, idolatry and sexual immorality. A Phoenician princess and priestess of Ba'al, and the bride of Ahab, king of Israel, she pursued the religious “syncretism” that Solomon had begun and Jeroboam nationalized. Like the church at Thyatira, there was a syncretization of the worship of YHWH and Ba'al, and a remnant of exclusive YHWH followers (cf. 1 Kings 18.21; 19.18).
- ▶ Thyatira was conspicuous for its labor guilds. Participation – which included a patron deity, a meal dedicated to that idolatrous deity, and sexual entertainment – was a social and economic necessity. The teaching of this Jezebel prophetess had made the church believe that guild participation and Christ-following could be compatible.

WARNING

“Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.”

REVELATION 2.22-23

- ▶ To be without a repentant spirit reveals that one is outside of the effect and work of the Holy Spirit who has come to convict and convince of guilt and judgment (cf. John 16.8). Thus, those who did not repent would prove themselves to be children of Jezebel and not children of God (cf. 1 John 3.8-10).

ADMONITION

“But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching (‘deeper truths,’ as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come.”

REVELATION 2.24-25

- ▶ What did this remnant of believers possess that Christ urged them to “hold tightly” until his return?
 - ▶ The truth that was “once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3)
 - ▶ The teaching of Scripture regarding sexual identity, marital fidelity, morality, and sexual purity (cf. Matthew 19.4-6; 1 Corinthians 6.15-20; Ephesians 5.3-7)

- ▶ In contrast to Jezebel’s “accommodation theology,” they had the understanding that following Jesus comes at great personal cost (cf. Luke 14.33; John 15.18-20).
- ▶ Christ’s commendation for their *increasing* love, faith, service, and patient endurance.

*By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.
Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

1 CORINTHIANS 15.2

*We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to
the very end.*

HEBREWS 3.14

“To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, To them I will give authority over all the nations. They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!”

REVELATION 2.27-28

- ▶ This is an intensely and immensely eschatological promise; based on Psalm 2, it anticipates fulfillment of the Father’s promise that Christ will rule on earth as the King of kings. Christ himself is the “bright Morning Star” (22.16). Those who persevere, *“until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts”* (2 Peter 1.19) are promised to possess Christ’s full authority and co-rule with him over the nations! *(A wonderful and powerful fulfillment of Psalm 113.7-8)*