

Revelation 2:18-29 | “To The Church At Thyatira”

Background on Thyatira

Thyatira was a city in between Pergamum and Sardis in Western Asian Minor. It was relatively insignificant politically and culturally, but it was very important economically. To use modern language, one might call it an “industrial” city, and its importance lies in metal and fabric trade guilds.

Thyatira has the distinction of being identified as the city where Lydia was from. She was a seller of purple fabric. Acts 16 reports her as the first Christian convert in Europe. There was a Jewish presence in Thyatira that probably served as a source of Christian converts.

The central issue threatening the church at Thyatira was their toleration of those (in particular, a self-proclaimed woman prophet) who led them into immorality and idolatry. The prominence of trade guilds in Thyatira would have also produced a problem for Christians because the guilds would have certainly been observant of and involved in the pagan social life and festivals of the city.

Verse-By-Verse Notes

Verse 18

- * Notice Jesus always seems to identify himself in unique ways that would have special meaning to the cultural context of the churches in Revelation – “feet like bronze” would relate to the prominent metal trade in Thyatira.

Verse 19

- * Christ’s *commendation*: The Christians at Thyatira were growing deeper in their faith.
- * Love, faith, service and patient endurance should characterize *every* church and every Christian – even and *especially* in seasons of trial and persecution.

Verse 20

- * Christ’s *critique*: “you tolerate Jezebel.” See 1 Kings 16 and 2 Kings 9 for her story. She (along with her wicked husband King Ahab) led Israel into deep depravity and idolatry.
- * Jesus is not talking about the literal Jezebel but a woman who comes in the spirit of Jezebel (i.e. with her characteristics).
- * Three practical observations – 1) beware of anyone calling themselves a prophet or claiming to speak for God; 2) the influence of women in the church can either be productive or destructive; and 3) the male elders at Thyatira were obviously failing to do their job by tolerating her influence.

Verse 22

- * Notice the violence of Christ’s language – “throw her” is similar to the language of Rev. 20:15 “*And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire*”
- * Jesus will also judge those who listened to her false teaching.
- * Just as he gave the Jezebel woman time to repent (v. 21), Christ also gives those under her influence time to repent.

Verse 23

- * “Strike her children dead” – mostly likely a reference to those who have fully embraced her false teaching (i.e., her “spiritual” children).
- * “All the churches will know” – this will be a public judgment and word will spread to the rest of the church. (see also Acts 5:11)

Verse 24

- * “Deep things of Satan” – Mounce: “The view that in order to appreciate fully the grace of God one must first plumb the depths of evil.”
- * The idea is that to know grace fully we have to sin more, so it is lawful for believers to participate in the local pagan festivities.

Verse 25

- * “Hold fast” – perseverance (see v. 26)

Verse 26

- * Christian perseverance in the NT is consistently final – you have to hold fast *until the end*. This does not make perseverance an act of sheer human effort and strength though, because God enables and empowers our perseverance (see Philippians 2:12-13; Jude 21-25, etc.)

Verse 28

- * “Morningstar” – a reference to Christ himself (see Revelation 22:16 – “*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.*”) The idea is that overcomers will reign with Christ.

Verse 29

- * “He who has an ear” – the consistent universal call to anyone with an ear to listen and obey.

The Big Takeaway: *We must judge sin in our churches internally and preemptively, lest we be tolerant of it and Christ come and judge us all.*