

# The Book Of REVELATION

## THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA *Revelation 2:18-29*

### Introduction

#### Structure of the Book

- **Revelation 1** *things which you have seen*
- **Revelation 2-3** *things which are*
- **Revelation 4-22** *things which will take place*

#### Four Approaches To Understanding The Seven Churches

- PROVINCIAL Seven literal churches that existed at the end of the first century
- PARTICULAR Seven types of church that can exist at any point in history
- PROPHETIC Seven general periods of overlapping church history
- PERSONAL Seven types of Christian

#### Structure

- Destination *"To the angel of the church in..."*
- Description of Jesus
- Commendation *"I know your deeds..."*
- Condemnation / Criticism *"But I have this against you..."*
- Counsel / Exhortation *"He who has an ear..."*
- Challenge / Promise *"To him who overcomes..."*

### Postcard From Thyatira

*"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write..."*

#### Guide Book

##### Location

- 40 miles southeast of Pergamos
- At the junction between Caicus Valley and the Gediz Valley
- The modern city of Akhisar

##### Attributes

- Smallest city (among the seven churches)
- Largest letter

##### History

###### Early Period

- Founded by the Hittite Empire
- Occupied by Medo-Persian Empire
- Conquered by Alexander the Great (Greek Empire)

###### Hellenistic Period

Time between the death of Alexander the Great and the emergence of the Roman Empire

- The territory of the Greek Empire was divided between Alexander's four top generals
- Lysimachus (later Philetaerus) had control of the Caicus Valley (Pergamos)
- Seleucid, had control of the Gediz Valley
- Thyatira was located where the Caicus Valley met the Gediz Valley

Lysimachus established a garrison of soldiers at Thyatira

- To protect the Caicus Valley and Pergamos from Seleucid conquest

- Thyatira was Pergamos' first line of defence
- Thyatira and Pergamos became very close

### Roman Period

Rome took control of Thyatira in 190BC

- The road, a trade route, ran
- From Pergamos to Thyatira
- From Thyatira to Sardis

Since the first century AD

- The city has been destroyed and rebuilt a number of times
- Due to fighting between Muslims and Christians
- As a consequence very little remains of the city from the time of John

## The Church

### Destination

#### Name

Former names

- Pelopia
- Semiramis

History records that Seleucid eventually conquered the city

- At the same time he learned his wife had given birth to daughter
- So he renamed the city Thyatira from the Greek word for daughter

There is some question about this account

- The derivation of the name Thyatira is uncertain
- Continual Sacrifice

It was a sacrificial city

- Established to defend Pergamos
- Continuously – invaded – destroyed – rebuilt (a number of times)
- The city of continual sacrifice

### Trade Guilds

#### The Number

By the end of the first century AD (when the letter was written)

- Known for it's trade guilds

#### Wikipedia

*more guilds are known in Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Roman province of Asia inscriptions mention the following: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths).*

- Principle trade was in purple/indigo dye and materials

#### Acts 16:14

*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

#### Membership

Membership of a guild was necessary to run a business

- Each guild had its own deity
- Festivals were held to that deity
- Where food and drink were in abundance
- Part of the food would be left on a table as an offering to the deity
- After the feast gross immoral activities would be entered into (orgies)

#### Church Dilemma

- The guild feasts posed strong pagan influence which was a big issue for the church

- To participate meant acceptance, work and a lifestyle that supported you
- To participate meant compromise, corruption and dishonour to Jesus Christ
- To abstain meant rejection, ridicule, persecution and poverty
- To abstain meant honour to Jesus Christ

## Temples

Principle deity of Thyatira was Apollo

- Temples to Apollo, Artemis, Tyrimnaios
- Shrine to Sambathe (a sybil)

## Sibyl

- An oracle / female prophet (prophetess)
- Sambathe was a Jewish sybil
- Christians regarded this sibyl as someone who had predicted the coming of Jesus Christ
- Thus Christians listened to this woman, a prophetess

The church was influenced by a pagan prophetess

- This integration between sybils and biblical influence in the church
- Is illustrated on the Sistine Chapel ceiling
- Michelangelo (1508-1512)
- Toward the end of the period of church history represented by this church

## Description of Jesus

### **Revelation 2:18b**

*These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass.*

Jesus is described in three ways

### Son of God

Jesus held the titles

- Son of Man
- Son of God
- One emphasised his humanity
- The other His deity

A son carries the character or nature of who or what they are a son of

- e.g. James and John were called "*the sons of thunder*" (they were characterised by thunderous anger)
- Jesus is characterised by His deity to the Church in Thyatira

The Lord can come to you

- As a brother or a friend, when you need companionship
- As a comforter or a healer when you are hurt
- As a shepherd or a guide when you are lost

But when He manifests Himself in His deity

- He is coming with authority
- It should cause humility
- It should cause reverence and fear
- It should make us sit up and pay attention

### Eyes of Fire

*who has eyes like a flame of fire*

This description is drawn from **Revelation 1:14**

Fire is a symbol of judgement and purification

For Jesus to manifest Himself this way to a church

Is to say that with His piercing eyes of fire sees

- Things that are not right
- Things that need purifying
- Things that need to be judged

This is born out in what Jesus says later in the letter:  
*"I am he who searches the minds and hearts"*

## Brass Feet

*And His feet like fine brass*

This description is drawn from **Revelation 1:15**

Brass is also a symbol of judgement

- It is highly refined with fire

As Jesus walks among the church

- He is unmovable in His refined purity
- He is unmovable in His expectation of refined purity in His people

## Commendation

### Revelation 2:19

*I know your works, love service, faith, and your perseverance; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.*

In some ways the church was outstanding

**Question:** How many of us would like to be known as people of love, service, faith and perseverance?

## Works

Their works are listed as

### Love

- Greek = agape (sacrificial love)
- A church should be characterised by love (for the lost, for one another and for God)

### Service

- Greek = diakonia (sacrificial / service to others)
- A church should be characterised by service (to the lost, to one another and to God)

### Faith

- A church should be characterised by faith
- Faith is the source, the trigger for love and service)

### Perseverance

- A church should be characterised by perseverance
- This is the virtue that ensures you continue in love and service

### Growth

- A church should be characterised by growth in works (i.e. fruitfulness)

## Weakness

- Despite the good works that were coming out of the church
- It was what was being let in that was the problem

## Condemnation / Criticism

### Revelation 2:20

*Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols.*

## Jezebel

*you tolerate that woman Jezebel*

Jezebel was a Phoenician princess who married a Jewish King, named Ahab

- The Phoenician Princess, Jezebel, worshipped Baal (a pagan deity)
- She first corrupted her husband, Ahab, so that he worshipped Baal
- He then corrupted his people, Israel, so that they worshipped Baal

In Samaria, Ahab, built a temple, an altar and a wooden image (an idol) to Baal

- The nation gathered to worship at Baal in Samaria
- When the people turned from worshipping Yahweh and began worshipping Baal
- All Israel was guilty of apostasy because of Jezebel

## False Prophet

The church had allowed in Jezebel

- A real woman (a woman in the model of wife of Ahab)
- Jezebel not her name, but the character of her behaviour
- She had three distinct effects

## A Prophetess

*who calls herself a prophetess*

- Many female prophets in Scripture (e.g. Miriam, Deborah, Anna, Philip's four daughters)
- This woman was a self-styled prophetess (claiming a prophetic ministry, a direct line to God)
- People turned and listened to this woman
- She undermined the authority of the church
- Led members of the congregation into sin and corruption

Be wary of people who ascribe titles and positions to themselves

- God calls and appoints people to roles
- That calling is confirmed through the body

## A Teacher

*you tolerate that woman Jezebel...to teach*

This suggests this woman

- Held a position of authority in the church
- Held a teaching ministry

## 1 Timothy 2:12

*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.*

There is a God ordained authority structure for church

- Leadership is to be male
- Principle teaching is to undertaken by men

The exceptions are

- In a woman's ministry
- In a children's ministry

In the main church meeting

- All can sing
- All can read scripture
- All can pray
- All can prophesy
- All can share testimonies

The contribution, advice and counsel of women is fundamental for an effectively operating church

- But leadership and teaching is to be male

Thyatira appeared to move away from a male-lead ministry

- This provided an opportunity to Jezebel to have an influence

The corruption began with false teaching

- It is imperative that we received good, sound teaching
- From God fearing men who labour in the word
- We are faithful students of the word ourselves
- Examining what we are taught by the yardstick of scripture
- If you are confused or disagree to speak up (in respectful way)

### **A Seductress**

*beguile my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols.*

People were seduced/beguiled by this woman's ministry

- The same way the serpent seduced Eve in the garden
- And caused Eve to depart from the word of God

Her teaching and prophecy led to a form permissiveness

- Where people were permitted to attend the guild feasts
- This led to eating food sacrificed the guild deity
- Engaging in the immorality after the feast
- Fornication - orgies

This is apostasy

- This was a known problem among the Gentile world
- The council at Jerusalem addressed this

### **Acts 15:19**

*Therefore it is my judgement that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.*

## **Contrasting Churches**

### **Ephesus & Thyatira**

- **Ephesus** Weak on love / Strong on rejecting false teaching
- **Thyatira** Strong on love / Weak on rejecting false teaching
- Both extremes must be avoided in church life
- The Lord wants us loving and discerning

### **Ephesians 4:15**

*speaking the truth in love.*

### **Smyrna & Thyatira**

- The dangers to Smyrna (the persecuted church) were external
- The dangers to Thyatira (the corrupted church) were internal

## **The Pastor**

The indictment against the pastor of Thyatira was, *"you tolerate that woman"*

The pastor is to be the shepherd of the flock

- He is to feed the sheep (teach)
- He is to love the sheep (care)
- He is to guide the sheep (direct)
- He is to guard the sheep (protect)
- By tolerating *"that woman Jezebel"* he was failing on all of his God-given charges

## **The Great Shepherd**

As a consequence *"that great Shepherd of the sheep"*, our Lord Jesus, has to step-in:

- To deal with the prophetess
- To deal with the people who follow her

### **Revelation 2:22-23a**

*And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sick-bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death.*

Jesus gave this woman time to repent

- But she did not change her mind or conduct
- So now He will cast her into sick-bed
- The place of her fornication will become the place of her judgement

He calls on her people (her followers) to repent

- If they, like her, refuse to repent a judgement will be pronounced on them
- He will cast them into great tribulation
- A time of great distress, affliction and pressure

*And I will kill her children with death*

The end of this woman and those who do not repent is final

### **John Trapp**

*All men die, but all are not killed with death... Oh, it is a woeful thing to be killed with death.*

**Question:** When is death killed?

**Answer:** **Revelation 20:14**

*Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.*

## All The Churches

### **Revelation 2:23b**

*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.*

These letters circulated to all the churches

- Eventually it has reached Calvary Chapel Maidstone

The Lord wants us to know He is the one who,

- “searches the minds and hearts.”
- “will give to each one of you according to your works.”

Regardless of what any other church or so-called Christian are doing

- Where is your mind and heart before the Lord?
- Where are your works before the Lord?

A day will come when you stand before the one with eyes of flaming fire

- What will He see in you?

## Counsel / Exhortation

### **Revelation 2:24**

*“But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they call them, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come.”*

## Depths Of Satan

The doctrine that is perpetuated by this woman is called, “the depths of Satan”

There was a heretical movement called the Gnostics

- They maintained they had special insight and revelation
- That only the initiated were permitted to know
- An esoteric insight (the deep things)

You are in Christ – you are free from sin

- You can eat food sacrificed to idols
- You can enter into the guild feasts
- You can participate in the immorality

- And not be contaminated
- These “deeps things”
- Did not come from God
  - They came from Satan (from the pit of hell)
  - It brought corruption and dishonour to Christ

## Depths Of God

### **1 Corinthians 2:10**

*the deep things of God*

These are things revealed to us by the Holy Spirit

### **1 Corinthians 2:10-12**

*For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

The deep things of God (revealed to us by the Holy Spirit)

- Agree with the Word of God (the Bible)
- The deep things of Satan (revealed by the prophetess)
- Disagree with the Word of God

No matter how good or tempting the words from another sound

- If they do not line up with Scripture
- Reject them (have nothing to do with them)

## No Other Burden

Thyatira had a remnant of true believers

- Those who abstained from immorality and idolatry
- Jesus says to them, “*I will put on you no other burden.*”

The weight of the problem they face is already enough to manage

- The Lord knows how much we can face
- He doesn't heap up burdens too great for us to bear

### **Matthew 11:30**

*For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

## Hold Fast

*But hold fast what you have till I come.*

Jesus brings reassurance to the faithful that He is coming

- This should be our hope and our confidence
- That while we face pressures and burdens in life
- While the church is corrupt in areas
- We should hold fast to what God has given us...*until He comes*

**Question:** What has God given you?

**Answer:** A husband, a wife, a family

- Hold fast to that
  - Maintain your family in the fear of the Lord
- ...*until He comes*

**Question:** What has God given you?

**Answer:** A small church of faithful believers

- Who study the word
  - A worship together regularly
  - Hold fast to that
- ...*until He comes*



**Question:** What has God given you?

**Answer:** A job with just enough pay

- A small sphere of influence where you can be a witness for Christ
- Hold fast to that  
...until He comes

## Challenge / Promise

### **Revelation 2:26**

*And he who overcomes, and keeps my works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations, "He who overcomes with a rod of iron; as the irons vessels shall be broken to pieces" I also have received from my Father; and I will give him the morning star.*

### He Who Overcomes

When it says, "he who overcomes"

- It's not a case of maybe you will and maybe you won't
- It's a case of you already have

John uses this word repeatedly in his letters:

**1 John 2:13** you have overcome the wicked one.

**1 John 2:14** you have overcome the wicked one.

**1 John 4:4** You are of God, little children, and have overcome

**1 John 5:4** whatever is born of God overcomes the world

**1 John 5:5** whatever is born of God overcomes the world

If you are born again, you are an overcomer

### Keep My Works

So, John is saying:

To all who are born again, "and keeps my works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations"

It's not enough to be born again

- The Lord wants you to operate in good works
- And continue to do so "until the end" (until He comes)

Anyone who says they responded to an altar call 25 years ago

- But has been living how they please ever since
- Is living outside of God's purposes (and in truth is probably not saved at all)

### Power Over The Nations

But, if you are born again

- And, if you are operating in good works
- You will be rewarded with, "power over the nations"

Believers in Christ will rule and reign with Christ in the Messianic Age

This is foretold in the Old Testament

### **Isaiah 32:1**

*Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, And princes will rule with justice.*

This is elaborated on in the New Testament

### **Luke 19:17-19**

*'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'*

### **Revelation 20:4**

*And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

### Tribulation

A seven-year period will precede the reign of Jesus Christ

- This is called Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week or the tribulation

- That last 3½ years are called the Great Tribulation

The overcomer, the one who holds fast

- Will escape this tribulation – the Lord will catch them up and meet them in the air

The Lord says to that woman Jezebel:

- *I will cast that woman Jezebel and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation*

Those who attend a church, but are not born again

- Those who engage in immorality and idolatry
- Those who tolerate apostasy
- Will endure the seven years of tribulation
- Will endure the wrath of God
- The one who comes with brass feet

## Morning Star

### **Revelation 22:16**

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

- Jesus is the “Morning Star”
- Jesus is the “Sun of Righteousness” (Context is judgement, the day of the Lord)

### **Malachi 4:2-3**

*But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the Lord of hosts.*

- The morning star appears in the sky before sunrise
- Venus – harbinger of the Sun
- Jesus will appear as the “Morning Star” - To gather His bride
- Before He appears as the “Sun of Righteousness” - To reign judgement over the earth

To be given the “Morning Star”, is:

- To participate in the rapture
- To escape the great tribulation

To be given the “Morning Star”, is:

- To receive the true prize
- The person of Jesus himself

### **Revelation 2:29**

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

## Closing Thoughts

### Prophetic Approach

#### Historic Change

The Seven Churches can be understood to represent seven general periods of overlapping church history

AD30-100	Ephesus
AD100-313	Smyrna
AD313-600	Pergamos
AD600-1547	Thyatira

#### Sin of Thyatira

##### **Jezebel**

- Led the church into paganism
- Allowed idolatry
- Permitted sexual immorality
- Embraces guild membership
- Ate food sacrificed to idols

##### **Roman Catholicism**

- Led the church into paganism
- Allowed idolatry (Mass, Mary)
- Permitted sexual immorality (priests)
- Embraces false religions
- Eat transubstantiated mass

- Unrecognizable church
- Unrecognizable church

### Ten False Doctrines

- Justification by works
- Baptismal Regeneration
- Worship of Images
- Celibacy
- Confessionalism
- Purgatory
- Transubstantiation
- Indulgences
- Penance
- Mariology

The Roman Catholic Church is a false church

- Aside from its paganism, idolatry and spiritual fornication
- Belief in the systems of Roman Catholicism deprive a person of salvation
- Satan's Counterfeit Church

The judgement proclaimed over the Thyatira Church is that

- It will be cast in the great tribulation
- The seven year period of the Wrath of the Lamb

The true church will be delivered from this period of wrath