

Jesus Wants a Pure Church

(Revelation 2:18-29)



Churches so far:

- The Church at Ephesus (symbolized by the apostolic church, A.D. 30-100)
- The Church at Smyrna (symbolized by the persecuted church, A.D. 100-312)
- The Church at Pergamum (symbolized by the church that married the world, A.D. 300-500)
- **The Church at Thyatira (symbolized by the corrupt church of Middle Ages, A.D. 500-1500)**

Revelation 2:18-29 (NKJV) – Bible passage [my explanatory notes]

18“And to the angel [Gk. “messenger” – the pastor] of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God [the soldiers worshipped Apollos, known as the son of god, Zeus. Here, Jesus is reminding them that He is the true Son of God], who has eyes like a flame of fire [“He can see everything” - He is omniscient (He knows all things)], and His feet like fine brass [they were known for their bronze work, but nothing compares to His splendor]:

- Thyatira was a military outpost located 40 miles southeast of Pergamos. It was originally established by Alexander the Great and populated by soldiers. Its primary goal was to slow an enemy attack of Pergamos, which was far more important than Thyatira.
- Thyatira’s economy was dependent upon the trade guilds (like modern-day labor unions) for bronze work, leather work, linens, and wool. They had bakers, weavers, clothiers, blacksmiths, and various other trade workers. Each guild had their specific deity which they worshipped with pagan feasts and often included sexual immorality.
- Thyatira was known for the purple dye used in fabrics. Lydia was a seller of purple and from Thyatira (Acts 16:14-15). She was converted under Paul’s ministry in Philippi and helped start the church in Philippi in her home. She may have been instrumental in taking the gospel back to Thyatira.

19“I know your works, love, service, faith [Gk. *faithfulness*], and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

- Thyatira had love (for God and each other), but in verse 20, they were too tolerant of heretical teaching. This is opposite of the message to Ephesus, who stood firmly against heresy but lacked love.
- William Hendriksen says, “Thyatira was indeed a lampstand, a light-bearer. But this does not constitute an excuse for failure to exercise discipline with respect to members who make a compromise with the world.”¹

¹ William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, 89 as quoted by Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Revelation*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 70-71.

²⁰Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel [probably “your wife Jezebel”], who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. [the teaching that you can worship God in your heart, and worship through sexual immorality the pagan deities of the trade guilds and labor unions.]

- Jezebel is not her name, but a derogatory descriptor from Jesus Himself. “The name *Jezebel* is infamous and rightly so. She was probably the most wicked queen in Israel’s history; we find her treacherous behavior described in 1 Kings 16–2 Kings 9. She was ‘the power behind the throne’ as the wife of the weak and wimpish King Ahab. She led her husband to worship pagan gods (1 Kgs 16:31), kill God’s prophets (1 Kgs 18:13), and murder a righteous and plain man named Naboth for his vineyard (1 Kgs 21). She was evil personified, and when God chastised a church for allowing false teaching into His body, He said they were ‘tolerating the woman Jezebel’ (Rev 2:20).”²
- τὴν γυναῖκα σου Ἰεζάβελ³ - “your wife Jezebel” – Some manuscripts add “your” to the word woman. The Greek word for woman and wife is the same, which would read “your wife Jezebel”. Henry Alford, Greek scholar, favors this translation.⁴ Some say this influential woman was the wife of the pastor at Thyatira. Others say she was just an influential woman. **Either way, she was to Thyatira what Jezebel was to Ahab, the passive king of Israel.**
- She was a self-proclaimed prophetess. The Bible affirms the gift of prophecy and provides several instances where the gift involved women (see Luke 2:36 – Anna, the prophetess; Acts 21:9 – Philip’s four daughters who prophesied; Joel 2:28-29/Acts 2:17 – sons and daughters prophesy; 1 Cor. 11:5 – instructions to women who pray and prophesy in church). **However, God had not called this “Jezebel” as a prophetess.**

²¹And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

²²Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed [she was used to going to the bed of pleasure with her followers. This is a reference to future judgment. See 1 Corinthians 11:27-29], and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

²³I will kill her children with death [those who follow her teaching will suffer her similar judgment in v. 22], 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.

²⁴Now 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.

- “‘Satan’s so-called deep secrets.’ This phrase is normally taken in one of two ways. Some feel that it is no more than ‘a sarcastic reversal of their main slogan.’ Claiming to know the deep secrets of God, they are told that the “deep secrets” they claim to know are really the deep secrets of Satan. It is more likely, however, that knowing Satan’s ‘deep secrets’ is a reference to the view that in order to appreciate fully the grace of God one must first plumb the depths of evil. Later gnosticism boasted that it was precisely by entering into the stronghold of Satan that believers could learn the limits of his power and emerge victorious. On the basis that a believer’s spirituality is unaffected by what is done with the body, Jezebel could argue that the Thyatiran Christians ought to take part in the pagan guild-feasts (even if they were connected with the deep secrets of Satan) and thus prove how powerless is evil to alter the nature of grace.”⁵

²⁵But hold fast what you have till I come.

²⁶And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— [a reference to the millennial kingdom – see Rev. 20:1-6 and Matthew 19:28 – His disciples reign with Him]

²⁷‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ [quoted from Psalm 2:9] – as I also have received from My Father;

²⁸and I will give him the morning star [Christ Himself – see Rev. 22:16].

²⁹“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

² Akin, 67–68.

³ *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005, with Morphology.* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2006), Re 2:20.

⁴ <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/hac/revelation-2.html>; or “Alford, IV, 573,” as quoted by John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Galaxie Software, 2008), 73.

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the NT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 89.