

# THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA



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*Week Five - February 6, 2022*

## DAY 1

Thyatira is located in western Asia Minor about 42 miles inland from the Aegean Sea and about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. In its heyday Thyatira was known for its textiles and dyeing trade (note Acts 16:14-15 Lydia was a seller of purple was from the city of Thyatira.) Currently, this city is known as the Turkish city of Akhisar. Thyatira was very similar in its background and sin issue to the city of Pergamum. We might ask ourselves, what additional lesson can we learn from this church that we have not already learned from the previous churches? I believe that the answer to this question is that God wanted to show us that there is a downward progression of these churches. We started this series a few weeks ago looking at the church at Ephesus, and we cannot help but notice that each church that we have looked at has gotten a little bit worse, except for Smyrna. You cannot help but notice the sinful progression as we take a closer look at a new church each week. The one thing that is obviously clear is the downward spiral of sin that these churches were taking. Despite the downward spiral, Jesus commends this church for some of the good they were doing.

### **Read Revelation 2:18-29.**

The Lord begins this letter by recognizing several qualities this church had regarding service: 1) their works, 2) their charity, 3) their service, 4) their faith, 5), their patient endurance, and 6) greater works. This church did not settle for complacency, they continued to build upon their past efforts with a vigor. He recognized that they were a service-oriented church knowing that their passion was to serve others. He knew of their faith and patience striving to please him for the furtherance of the Gospel. He mentions works again to emphasize their greater works as He concludes this thought with the statement “... **and the last to be more than the first.**”

The believers in this church did not just claim to be Christians, they were living examples of James 2:18. Their works were an overflow of the love and faith that they had for Christ, their works were the outward evidence of their true faith in Christ. This church was experiencing spiritual growth because their faith and works grew stronger.

In verses 24 and 25 the voice of our Lord becomes more tender as He addresses these believers with a heartfelt and personal tone. For the first time in these church letters the Lord warns the believers of burdens that are coming because of their faithfulness to Him. To the faithful He states, to those “**who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan.**” I believe that this is in contrast to the reference to the “**deep things of God,**” that Apostle Paul spoke about in 2 Corinthian 2:9-10. Satan is a liar and a twister of the truth, and Jesus is commending those who have remained faithful to the Word of God. To all those who do refused these things, Jesus says, “**Hold fast what you have.**” Do not let it go. Do not accept the corrupting morals and sinful standards that are trying to corrupt the church. To those who do, Jesus offers a word of comfort, “**I do not lay on you any other burden**” He knows that it is going to be hard, so he adds this blessing. We also see that He is saying that it may be difficult to live for Christ in a worldly church but remain true to your moral standards. Do not go along with sexual immorality, do not accept the idea that idolatry and sexual sins are only minor sins. Hold on, Jesus says, “Hold fast...until I come.”

The commendation of the Lord is directed to those who remained faithful to Him in the church even though many in the church were growing more worldly and less godly. We need to draw closer to the Lord by repenting of our sin and worldliness and sharing the Gospel to those in need.

**How would the Lord Jesus see your efforts for Christ within the 4W Life?**

WORSHIP

Does knowing that the Lord is actively looking into your works encourage you to live your life closer to Christ, to be more like him? What changes do you need to make? What improvements can you make?

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WALK

The Christian life is one of progressive faith. Are you experiencing a closer walk with the Lord or are you leaning into the ways of the world? Are you walking in a way that pleases Christ? What life patterns hinder you from fully expressing your walk for Christ?

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The Lord provides us with daily opportunities to serve Him. Are you taking advantage of the opportunities that He provides you? Are you growing in your works of Love for Christ and expressing it to others?

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Are your works of service growing and becoming more frequent or do you hold back and pass on them? As you grow closer to Christ has your desire to share the Gospel with others changed? Take an honest assessment, “Are you losing or gaining fervency to share the Gospel with others?”

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## DAY 2

It is here that the Lord begins His real address of the church at Thyatira. After commending the faithful He addresses those in the church who have not only believed that false teaching, but they have accepted it. They are either practicing it, tolerating it, or simply overlooking it. Sadly, it was not just a few people in this church that were engaging in sinful activities. Sin had begun to take root in Thyatira and Satan was corrupting the church with idolatry and sexual sin. We must note the illustration being laid out before us: “If we do not deal with sin immediately, it will take over.”

Let's look at verse 20 which says, “**But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.**” This verse has a lot of controversy, speculation, and bias amongst various scholars and commentaries, I will not go into that in this short devotional but, it is worthy of some dedicated study time. We must remember that this warning came directly from God “**And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The words of the Son of God...**” (Rev. 2:18)

The problem noted here in the Church of Thyatira is two-fold, first is a woman in the church (called) Jezebel was calling herself a prophetess and was leading believers away from Christ and secondly that the believers were tolerating this woman's sinful practices in the church.

Contrary to what some believe, this is not the Jezebel mentioned in the Old Testament who was the wife of king Ahab of Israel, as found in 1 Kings 16 through 2 Kings 9. It is quite possible that the name Jezebel is used here because of the major characteristics, spirit, and mannerisms that she shared with Jezebel, and it is a reference that the believers in Thyatira would have been familiar with. Jezebel in the Old Testament is identified as, “**...the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians and went and served Baal and worshiped him.**” (1 Kings 16:31) she was a product of a family of idol-worshippers beginning with “Baal” which is incorporated in her father’s name. Her sinful mission in life appeared to be founded in the leading of the nation of Israel away from the worship of God and into sexual sin and idol worship; and actively persecuting and seeking to kill prophets of God (see 1 Kings 18:1-4) and personally threatening the prophet Elijah, (1 Kings 19:2).

Much like her predecessor, this “Jezebel’s” appeal was to lead the members of the church in Thyatira away from worshipping God. She used her charismatic gifts to come across as prophetic to introduce, seduce, and lure the members of the church into Satanic rituals and practices. These sins included sexual immorality as well as the practice of offering of sacrifices to idols.

The correctional warning message here to the church at Thyatira begins with God informing us that He had given this woman an opportunity to repent of her sinful practices and turn back to God, but she chose not to do so (see vs 21). It is in verses 22-23 that the Lord states “**I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation... and I will strike her children dead.**” God’s punishment was imminent and would be severe not only to her but also for all those who followed her. This was to serve as a warning to all who followed her practices. Jesus’ rebuke of the Church at Thyatira is for “tolerating” Jezebel. The Greek word translated tolerate means “to put up with.” The accusation stated here is for putting up with Jezebel and her teachings. We must note that God says that he will not always strive with man (Psalm 103:9).

The Grace of God is always seen in that He does provide warning and allows time for men to repent of sin before He reverts to His hand of Judgement. The works of one who draws another away from the worship of God needs to be confronted and repented of if they are present.

**What can we take from this caveat to help us serve Jesus using 4W Life principles?**

*(\*Reflection questions on next page)*

WORSHIP

Does your daily walk exhort you to praise God and to turn away from a yearning of the ways of the world?  
Do you understand that a tolerance of sin is distasteful to the Lord?

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WALK

Can we truly seek and serve Christ and the church if we tolerate sin? We must lovingly choose confrontation over tolerance are you prepared to do so? Does your walk with Christ affirm your tolerance of sin?

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WORK

How should this warning encourage all believers who want to live obediently to Christ? Can you see the danger to the church and other believers if we tolerate of sin? As a steward of the truth, are you ready to present the Gospel when called?

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WITNESS

How should God's warning of tolerance reflect how we interact with others? How should we respond to others especially those who are openly practicing sin? God calls all believers to compassionately confront those who are living a sinful life. Are you willing to obey that call?

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## DAY 3

### HEED MY WARNING!

Though this church had been praised for the good works that they had done, the Lord follows that up with a warning against their turning a blind eye to the sin that was being practiced within the church. The sin that was taking root in this church was corrupting the good works and the people of the church. So, the continuing lesson for us to learn here is as we mentioned in the previous devotional: “If we turn a blind eye to sin and sinful practices, they will take over the good in the church.”

Today, we would like to start with a view of verses 24-25 which says, **“Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, (23) And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.”** In the last devotional we noted that the problem that was called out against the Church of Thyatira was two-fold, first is a woman in the church (called) Jezebel was calling herself a prophetess and was leading believers away from Christ and secondly that the believers were tolerating this woman’s sinful practices in the church. (We will be discussing the second half in this devotion.) These verses should ring loudly to the church as it is always in danger of facing a spirit of Jezebel. The enemy is always lurking about trying to disrupt the work of the church. (A good place for further study on this is Jesus’ parable regarding the weeds and the wheat in Matthew 13:24-30.)

As this church matured it sadly began to give way to sin by accepting worldly practices that were being introduced into and taking over their worship of Christ. Sadly, its members began to accept the practice of sexual immorality and idolatry as part of their worship practice. These sinful deviations gave way the sin of apostasy which was filtering through the church unhindered and unchecked possibly resembling the church at Pergamum. It is because of their tolerating these sinful practices that Jesus rebukes the church. They were not just simply aware of these sinful abominations in the church. Their sin is that they continued to overlook, tolerate, and practice it. God is very patient but to a point especially when it comes to His **“putting up with”** false teachings and sin within the churches. The Grace of God is always seen in that He does provide warning and allows time for men to repent of sin before He reverts to His hand of Judgement.

We must stand up for the truth and expose any beginnings of error. One thing that I have learned over the years is that nobody, for the most part, likes confrontation. Unfortunately, when practices or procedures within any system starts to shift from the truth, especially within the church, they are often sadly ignored, overlooked, or

brushed aside. The underlying desire of men to avoid confrontation has often allowed the sins of others to be passed over or pushed to the wayside. Unfortunately, once these practices start to shift, they may appear minor in the beginning, but they rapidly escalate into full out sinful practices. The enemy always works in subtle ways that start out with seemingly small changes often questioning or twisting truth. That is how our enemy works. (We can go back to the Garden in Genesis 3:1 and ask Eve.) If someone wants to practice deception, they do not go blatantly forward, they do so subtly. Jezebel “called herself a prophetess” and those in the church accepted her as such. Did they investigate her abilities? Did they at the least try to discern whether her practices aligned with that which is called out in the Word of God? The Apostle Paul addresses this very clearly in Galatians 5:7-9 especially verse 9 which says, “**A little leaven leavens the whole lump.**” (Also see Matthew 13:33). It is far too often that we except things without confrontation because we do not want to be wrong, or either come across as harmful or aggressive to others. But if we do not stand up for the truth, we will fall at the first lie. It is no wonder Jesus cries out to the church, “**Only hold fast what you have until I come.**” Rev. 2:25.

**What can we take from this warning to help us serve Jesus using 4W Life principles?**

WORSHIP

Does your heart cry out after seeing the Lord’s righteous judgement of sin? Does God’s patience with sin cause you to cry out and worship Him more? Does the Holy Spirits revealing of the Lord’s compassion bring you to humble praise?

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WALK

Knowing the subtleties of the enemy, are you walking close enough with Christ keep you from falling like Thyatira? How would your fellowship with Christ hold up under this warning of tolerance?

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Does this warning challenge you to reevaluate how you interact with others? The temptations of the enemy are subtle are you ready to face them? Are you prepared to confront the sins of others to keep others from falling?

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If we are to truly serve those around us for Christ, can we lovingly tolerate sin? Can we represent the sinless one with obvious sin in our lives? How can we share the Gospel without a distaste for sin and love for the sinner?

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## DAY 4

“The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, (27) and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. (28) And I will give him the morning star.” Rev. 2:26-28. Jesus concludes this letter with a few blessings, and he takes time to deliver some promising news to believers who endure and stay true to Christ. One of the promises He includes is an authority over the nations. He promises victory over all enemies. And He promises that He will give them the morning star. All of these are promised to those who “**Hold fast,**” -- to all believers who overcome until He comes. To this church and all who read this letter He reassures them of who He is by stating that He is “**The one who conquers...**” Jesus is letting the faithful believers in Thyatira know that those who remain faithful to Christ and His Word will receive the blessings of the conqueror. I do believe that this is in a reference to an earthly rule of Christ, giving reference to the Millennial rule and reign of Christ in the earthly kingdom when the saints will share a reign with Christ.

Verse 27 is a quotation from Psalm 2:9, it is a promise of reigning with Christ, not in the new heavens and the new earth, but in a period marked by the type of rule where there will be some form of unrest, Jesus says, “He will rule



them with a rod of iron or scepter.” This statement tells us that this rule will include some form of judgment in this period of unrest. “He will dash them to pieces like potter’s vessels” (Psalms 2:9 KJV). Jesus is letting them know that this combination will break up the evil in that day. This millennial kingdom will not only see Christ as the conqueror arrive with authority over the nations, but we will also witness Him fulfilling all His promises as He and the saints will be victorious over all enemies.

Finally, He says, “And I will give him the morning star” (Revelation 2:28) this morning star is none other than Jesus Himself, as we see this revealed in Revelation 22:16. Jesus will give Himself fully and completely to His church, and the church will be able to purely fellowship together with Christ for forever. That is His most precious gift to the church, He gives himself physically to the church. The morning star arises when it is darkest just before the dawn. Malachi’s predicts this “Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2 KJV). At that time the Lord Jesus will return in power and great glory. He will be like the sun appearing in the darkness of this world’s night. But before the sun rises, the morning star appears. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus says of himself: “I am the bright and morning star.” So, what I believe He is saying here, is that He will be appearing before His own people before He comes in power and glory, visible to the world.

Finally, the Lord says, Listen, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 2:29) There will be times when we are to take a stand and not fall. It is not that they could not fall, but if they do, repent, and turn back to him. That is the sign that our faith is real that is it genuine. True faith holds on to the end. It is not that we could not fall, but if we do, we must repent, and turn back to Jesus because He will overcome.

**What comfort do we gain from these promises in reference to the 4W Life principles?**

WORSHIP

Do these promises call you to praise the Lord for His assurance of overcoming? What plans to praise Him do you have in place now? What needs to change to make more time available for you to do so?

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WALK

Does the understanding of His overcoming inspire you to a new closeness to Christ? Is there any sin in your life that holds you back from serving the Lord? What relationships do you need to add to your life to become more Christlike?

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WORK

Are you joyfully serving the body of Christ in the light of all His promises? What encouragement have you received from these verses to serve Christ? What encouragement have you received from these verses to serve others?

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WITNESS

Does the understanding that Jesus will overcome encourage you to share the Gospel? Have you completely surrendered yourself to Him? If not, what do you need to change to do so?

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## DAY 5

BE WARNED!

On our final day in this passage, I would like to go back to the description that is given of Christ in verse 18. He has eyes like a flame of fire. This symbolizes the penetrating power of His vision. We must understand that He sees the deepest part of our hearts. He sees right through us, right into us and He knows our deepest thoughts and our sins. We may occasionally fool those around us, but God knows. You cannot fool Him. His eyes penetrate even unto the heart. He knows every thought, every motive, and every attitude. Even though we may be saying words that make it sound like we are spiritual, God knows what is in our heart. He is the one who counts. So, this description emphasizes His omniscience, that He knows everything.

Revelation 2:18, “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.’” I have always been intrigued by the words **“His eyes are like a flame of fire.”** The eight words of this statement should make us all tremble, even more so as we see it repeated almost verbatim three times in the book of Revelation. There is something that God wanted the believers in Thyatira to know and to fear and that message is for us today as well. The first mention in this book is in Revelation 1:13-14 as John is confronted by the Risen Lord as He stands amid the lampstands. The second mention is here in chapter 2:18, in direct reference to the church of Thyatira. We find a third reference to this in chapter 19:11-12, regarding our returning Lord. Each of these specifically references Jesus Christ our Lord as having these eyes of fire. In addition to these three, there is an earlier reference found in Daniel 10:5-7. Though this is Old Testament and Jesus isn't mentioned, we see another reference to the introduction of the Son of God having these all-consuming eyes of flame.

There is a judgement coming. The Scriptures are clear on this. We must understand that, though He admonished the church at Thyatira for their good works, He also rebuked them for their tolerance of sin. The presence of sin means that there is a required judgement that must be meted out. We read in Revelation 2:23b **“...And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.”** The importance of the word “all” here is that He is speaking to believer's past, present and future.

The place of judgement for the believer is known as the judgement or “bema” seat of Christ. (Bema is the Greek word for judgement.) It is important to note that, for the believer, this is not a judgment for sin or eternal punishment. This is a judgment of reward. As believers in Christ, our sins have already been judged and the penalty has been paid because of His sacrificial work on Calvary. The unbeliever on the other hand will experience the Great White Throne judgment mentioned later in Revelation which deals with those who have not believed in Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, the Scripture gives reference to our earthly works and attributes them to little more than wood, hay, and stubble (or straw). All of these have short term and minimal value. All reference to work material and ultimately. All are very easily consumed by fire. We must be cautious in our work and walk with the Lord Jesus that we build upon the foundation that He has laid with eternally valued material as gold, silver and precious stone represent. The day is coming when we will all stand before Christ and all our work will be judged by the Lord. We will either suffer the loss of all perishable reward as they will be consumed by his flame eyes. Only those that have been built on the foundation of Christlikeness and selflessness will survive and for those we will receive a heavenly reward. (Reminder once more: This is about the quality of the work is being judged, not our salvation. Though the

possibility exists that our work may be burned up and we may face the loss of reward, the believer will still be saved.) This is a reminder to you and me that it is not enough just to do work for the Lord – we must build on the foundation of a heart motive to bring glory to God alone.

**With this warning, what changes should you make regarding the 4W Life principles?**

WORSHIP

How is your praise and esteem for the Lord changed in the light of the described passage? What is Jesus seeing when He looks into your heart? Does the idea of the bema seat bring you comfort or fear?

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WALK

Does the understanding of the impending judgment change your focus on how you live? Can you see the importance of surrendering your all to Christ? As a believer do you see that all our works will be judged in the light of Christ?

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WORK

Are you using the resources that God gives you please him or to please yourself? The Bema seat of Christ is a judgment of works and service will yours survive?

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WITNESS

Do you understand that the Bema seat is a place only for those who know Jesus? Have you been faithful in sharing the Gospel message to all who are in your life?

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