

Text: Rev 2.18-29

Last week we had the study, "I Don't Like Your Friends." This week, it's "I *Really* Don't Like Your Friends."

We are talking about another of the churches of Revelation where the Lord is qPauite hard on the church he is addressing, found in Thyatira.

Geographically, we are moving east, heading around the circle of churches in a clockwise fashion.

Dr. Neal says, "Thyatira was the smallest, youngest, and least important of the seven cities to which John wrote."¹

- Founded by Seleucus I, one of Alexander's generals, founder of the Seleucid dynasty that fought with the Ptolemies of Egypt over the Holy Land
- Served as an outpost for Pergamos, a "line of first defense" against enemies approaching from the east
- In the Roman times, it became a commercial center because of its location, a crossroads for trading caravans
- Paul's first convert in Europe, Lydia, came from Thyatira, she was a seller of purple dye, a product of Thyatira
- The commerce of Thyatira was governed by trade guilds, which controlled social and commercial life as well — you needed the right friends to get along

The message to Thyatira is more intense than the message to Pergamum but focuses on a similar problem. The Lord doesn't have much good to say about Thyatira.

I. Opening and commendation (18-19)

What part of the image of Christ appears in the opening statement? What does this image suggest? (18)

The eyes as a flame of fire, the brightly glowing feet, the name Son of God, imply authority and judgement

¹ Marshall Neal, *Seven Churches: God's Revelation to the Church Today* (Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones University Press, 1977), 53.

What credit does the Lord give to Thyatira? (19)

The Lord commends the works, especially most recently, “more than at the first”

II. Condemnation: the woman Jezebel (20-23)

What is condemned as the Lord opens the criticism of this church? (20)

Toleration of the woman Jezebel

“Like the Pergamenes, the Thyatiran Christians were harbouring an enemy of Christ, but their guilt seems to have been greater, since ἀφείς implies a tolerance of evil which is not suggested by ἐχέλς (v. 14); and their attitude was certainly the very opposite of that of the Ephesians toward the Nicolaitans.”²

What are the characteristics of this condemned woman? (20)

Calls herself a prophetess, teaches Christians to go astray into immorality and idolatry

Does the language sound like a particular woman is in view? Why is she called “Jezebel”?

Most likely a literal woman of bad influence troubled the church, influencing the church like Jezebel of old influenced Baal worship in Israel

Compare this criticism with the increasing good works mentioned in v. 19. What does this tell us about good works?

Good works are no gauge of God’s approval – they make false teaching more dangerous

“Many today would excuse a man for his errors in doctrine and practice because he is ‘doing so much good,’ but the ‘good’ only makes his teachings more dangerous.”³

² Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 1999 rpt. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1906), 41.

³ Neal, *Seven Churches*, 55.

The trade guilds of Thyatira may have been a source of trouble. To do business, you had to join a guild. Guild meetings were closely connected to idolatrous worship, beginning and ending with libations (drink offerings) to the god, eating food from idol sacrifices, often degenerating into drunken orgies. Christian excuses for involvement might include, "Well, I must live somehow." Tertullian famously responded to this justification, "*Must you live?*"⁴

How long had this situation gone on? (21)

Long enough for this prophetess to repent

What threat does the Lord make against this woman? (22)

He threatens sickness, both for the false prophetess and for those who follow her unless they repent

What further punishment is predicted in v. 23?

Death of her children, either literal or those Christians who followed her

III. The triumph of overcomers (24-29)

What about those who rejected the false teaching of Jezebel? What does the Lord require of them? (24-25)

To hold on to what they have, nothing more. Stay faithful

If their faithfulness prevented being involved in the guilds, how much wealth would they have?

Perhaps very little, but they would have faith

How long were they to hold on? (25b) What promise did the Lord give to them, and to all who overcome? (26-27)

Hold on until the Lord comes, when the faithful will rule the nations with the Son of God

Dan 7.18 'But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'

⁴ Neal, 56–57.

Dan 7.27 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

Mt 19.28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

1 Cor 6.3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

What other gift awaits the overcome? (28)

The morning star, *i.e.* Jesus himself

And finally, how does the message to Thyatira close? To whom is the Lord speaking in v. 29?

To all churches of all ages