

# Letter to the Church at Thyatira

## “The Corrupt Church”

Revelation 2:18-26

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### INTRODUCTION:

A. **Revelation 2:18-26** - "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

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

22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

23 I will kill her children with death, 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.

24 "Now 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.

25 But hold fast what you have till I come.

26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.”

B. By way of review.

1. Fourth of the seven letters.

2. While the letter to the church at **Smyrna is the shortest** of the seven, the letter to the church at **Thyatira is the longest**.

3. The first three cities, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos, were all near the sea coast.

a. Thyatira was some distance inland on the highway between Pergamos and Sardis.

b. Thyatira was 27 miles from Pergamos.

C. Thyatira.

1. Thyatira was the home of Lydia, the first convert to Christ in Philippi.

a. She was a seller of purple.

b. Paul's first convert in Europe.

2. Commercially Thyatira was known and noted as the place where dyes were manufactured. The people were widely known for their skills in dying purple.
    - a. Thyatira had a woolen industry.
    - b. It was also known for its dyes.
    - c. This dye came from the throat of the cell fish called Nurex.
    - d. It was also extracted from the madder root.
    - e. It was extremely expensive. It cost \$200 a pound.
  3. Thyatira was also known for its guilds or trade unions.
  4. Apollo was considered the god of this city. There was also a temple for Artemis.
  5. Sambathe, who was a female oracle, lived in Thyatira. She was really nothing more than a fortune teller.
- D. We have no information about the church at Thyatira found anywhere else in the New Testament. It would seem proper to assume that the congregation in Thyatira, like many of those in Asia Minor, was established during Paul's ministry in Ephesus. (Acts 19-20)

## LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

### A. Verse 18 — Introduction and Salutation.

1. The Son of God is speaking.
  - a. Apollo — “sun god”.
  - b. Jesus Christ — “Son of God”.
    1. **Psalms 2:7** – “I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”
    2. **John 3:16** – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
    3. **Hebrews 1:1-2** – “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”
    4. **1 John 4:15** – “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”
    5. **John 5:22-23** – “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”
2. His “eyes are like a flame of fire”. That means that Christ is omniscient. **Hebrews 4:13** – “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

3. His “feet are like fine brass.” This description refers to His omnipotence. (Revelation 1:8)

**B. Verse 19 — Commendation.**

1. Jesus knew their works.
2. Jesus saw five excellent qualities in the church at Thyatira.
  - a. First, He saw their love — Their love for God . . . and their love for man.
    1. Love manifests itself in obedience and service.
    2. They loved one another. John 13:34-35
    3. They were motivated by love. I Corinthians 13:1—3
  - b. Second, He saw their service (ministry) would include religious as well as moral duties. Love and faith in the heart finds expression in life.
    1. Christ came to minister. Matthew 20:28
    2. And minister He did!
    3. Christians must minister or serve.
      - a. **1 Corinthians 16:15** – “I urge you, brethren -- you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”
      - b. **Ephesians 4:12** – “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
      - c. **Galatians 6:10** – “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”
      - d. **Titus 3:1, 8, 14** – “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good works
        - (8) This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.
        - (14) And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.”
  - c. Third, He saw their faith. Faith ties man to his maker. Faith in Christ and faithful to His cause.
    1. This word could also mean “faithfulness”.
    2. Faith gives substance to our hopes and includes believing in that which we cannot perceive with the senses. **Hebrews 11:1** – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
    3. **James 2:24.26** - “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.
      - Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also “

4. **Hebrews 11:6** – “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

- d. Fourth, He saw their patience — they were constant and steadfast in their devotion.
  1. The patience of these brethren impressed our Lord.
  2. Paul and James teach us that patience is developed by tribulation or trial.
    - a. **Romans 5:3** – “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, tribulation produces perseverance”
    - b. **James 1:2-3** - My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.
- e. Fifth, He saw their works (progress) — they had not grown weary in well doing. They had increased, rather than diminished, in their noble deeds.
  1. The last was better than the first. This is evidence of growth.
  2. Is you last better than the first? . . . or, is your first better than your last?
  3. The church at Ephesus had fallen from its first love.
    - a. The brethren at Thyatira had increased in good deeds.
    - b. They had what Ephesus lacked.
    - c. Which direction are we going?

### C. **Verse 20** — **Condemnation.**

1. It is interesting, that the Lord frequently used Old Testament historical events to describe the situation in some of these Asia Minor congregations.
  - a. He offered to the Ephesians “to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,” if they overcame evil. **Revelation 2:7**
  - b. The church at Smyrna was rebuked because some there held the “doctrine of Balaam”. **Revelation 2:14**
  - c. Those who overcame evil in Pergamos were promised “to eat of the hidden manna.” **Revelation 2:17**
  - d, Some of the saints in Thyatira had been seduced by “that woman Jezebel”. **Revelation 2:20**
2. In **Ephesus there was sound doctrine but no love**. In **Thyatira there was love but no sound doctrine**.
3. Who was this Jezebel? (There are varying interpretations).
  - a. Certainly she was not the Old Testament Jezebel.
    1. That Jezebel was the daughter of a the king of Sidon.

2. She married Ahab.
3. She introduced idolatry to Israel by bringing in Baal and Astarte.
4. She was responsible for the murder of Naboth and the theft of his vineyard.
5. She, of course, met with a tragic end as is recorded in 2 Kings 9:30-37.
- b. Some think it refers to a woman at Thyatira whose actual name was Jezebel.
- c. Some translators render the word. “woman” as “your wife”. Plus, some think that she was the wife of the preacher or one of the elders.
- d. Others think she was Lydia.
  1. Many think that Lydia started the church in Thyatira.
  2. She was a very rich and powerful business woman.
  3. Her influence may have been great.
  4. But it does not seem reasonable to think that Lydia is the one referred name of Jezebel.
  - e. Many suggest that Sanbathe the oracle of Thyatira entered into the church and was the woman Jezebel.
  - f. Some think she was a real person whose wicked influence was so similar to the Jezebel of old that she was called by that name rather than her own name. That would certainly make sense.
  - g. Others think the name refers to a faction or party in the church that taught and practiced as did the Old Testament Jezebel.
  - h. Whether Jezebel means a real person or represents a faction, the lesson would be the same. Namely, an imitation of the ancient Jezebel idolatry and licentiousness were taught.
  - i. It would appear that this Jezebel was an evil sister in the church at Thyatira.
    1. Perhaps her actual name was not Jezebel, but she acted like the Jezebel of the Old Testament. She may have been involved in the guilds.
    2. These guilds had idols.
      - a. Part of the meetings of the guilds included meals and offerings to these idolatrous gods.
      - b. She may have convinced -the brethren at Thyatira that, “you have got to go along, if you are going to get along”.
    3. Certainly there were many economy pressures applied to God’s people in the days in which the Revelation letter was written.
4. The church at Thyatira seemed to be trouble free from the outside.
  - a. There was little threat from idolatry.
  - b. There was no Caesar worship there.

- c. The real trouble for this church came from within. Many times today, unfortunately, the problems of the church come from within rather than from without.
- 5. Christ gave Jezebel and her followers a chance to repent. However, like many people today, she refused to repent.

#### D. Verse 21

1. Christ gave Jezebel and her followers a chance and ample time in which to repent.
2. Repentance is a part of both of God's laws of pardon.
  - a. To the alien sinner. **Luke 13: 3 & 5** – “I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you will all likewise perish.  
I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you will all likewise perish.”
  - b. To the Christian who sins. **Acts 8:22** – “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.”
  - c. **2 Peter 3:9 & 15** – “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.  
(15) And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation -- as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.”
  - d. **Romans 2:4** - Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

#### E. Verse 22

1. This verse indicates that Jezebel was herself guilty of fornication whether it was natural or spiritual.
  - a. All churches were to know of her punishment just as they knew of her sins.
  - b. Casting “into a bed” means affliction or punishment.
    1. The work “bed” here is used to describe “a bed of sickness.”
    2. It is even used to refer to a “banquet couch.” Plus, Jezebel and her followers may have been struck down while feasting.
  - c. Those led into such sinful practices will have to suffer tribulation and punishment along with their false teachers.  
These disastrous results can be avoided only by timely repentance.
2. The only escape was through repentance.

#### F. Verse 23

1. “Children” here means those influenced to practice her false doctrines —

her adherence.

2. “With death” means thoroughly destroyed.
3. Such drastic measures serve to make others fear.
4. Christ said he would “kill them.” He would send “death.” People did lose their lives in bible times. An example would be Acts 5:1—11. Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead at the feet of the apostle Peter, after having lied to the Holy Spirit. They will certainly die spiritually, if they do not repent.
  - a. **Ezekiel 18:20** — “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”
  - b. **Romans 6:23** — “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
  - c. **James 1:15** — “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”
5. Christ said He would do this “so that all the churches would know.” He wanted the church universal to see and learn an important lesson.
6. Christ wanted them to know that He “searches” literally, “He keeps on searching, following up, or tracking down.” He searches two things:
  - a. The “reins” stand for the kidneys. According to Hebrew psychology this is where the “emotions” dwell.
  - b. Those led into such sinful practices will have to suffer tribulation and punishment along with their false teachers. These disastrous results can be avoided only by timely repentance.
7. The only escape was through repentance.

#### F. **Verse 23**

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  - a. Nadab & Abihu - Leviticus 10
  - b. The Young Prophet - 1 Kings 13
  - c. Ananias and Sapphira - Acts 5:1-11
  - d. **Ezekiel 18:20** – “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”



- e. **Romans 6:23** – “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
  - f. **James 1:15** - Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.
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    - a. The “reins” stand for the kidneys. According to Hebrew psychology this is where the “emotions” dwell.
    - b. Christ also searches the “heart” he looks then at the “intellect.”
      1. God then is very concerned with what is going on in the inner man.
      2. **1 Samuel 16:7** – “But the LORD said to Samuel, Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”  
This was the occasion when Samuel was sent to anoint David as the new king.
      3. **Proverbs 4:23** – “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”
      4. **Proverbs 23:7** – “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, But his heart is not with you.“
  7. Christ then said that He would “give to each one of you according to your works.”
    - a. **Galatians 6:7 & 8** - “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.  
For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”
    - b. **Hosea 8:7** — “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.”
    - c. **2 Corinthians 5:10** — “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in this body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”
    - d. **Proverbs 22:8** — “He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.”
- G. **Verse 24** — Encouragement for the church.
1. He addresses “the rest.” He is of course speaking to those who do not follow Jezebel.
  2. He describes them as those “who do not, know the depths of satan.”
    - a. In Smyrna there was a “synagogue of satan.” Verse 9.



- b. In Pergamos, satan’s dwelling place. Verse 13.
  - c. Here in Thyatira, the depths of satan.
  - d. The wickedness in each of these places is in some sense attributed to satan.
3. Christ said that he would “put no other burden upon them.” Perhaps He meant the same thing as the apostles in Acts 15:28-29.
- a. They would put no other burden on the Gentile Christians, save to abstain from idols, blood, things strangled, and fornication.
  - b. Christ wanted these Christians to abstain from the evils of Jezebel and her followers.

#### H. Verse 25

- 1. They were to remain faithful unto death.
- 2. Then the Lord asked them “to hold fast” until I come. ” Literally, Christ commands them to hold on at all cost.

#### I. Verses 26 - 28

- 1. This reward will be given to those who:
  - a. “Keep on overcoming”
  - b. “Keep on working.”
- 2. In verses 24 through 28, three promises were pledged to those who had not yielded to the unholy influence.
  - a. First, immunity — no other burdens would be placed upon them.
  - b. Second, authority over the nations — over the evil powers that encircled them.
    - 1. The overcomer shall triumph over error and shatter the forces of immorality.
    - 2. Sainly men are powerful men.
    - 3. They rule by a mighty weapon — wholesome influence.
  - c. Third, the morning star — the dark cloud — the heathen element — shall disappear and the star of a dawning day shall shine.
    - 1. Reference to Christ. Fellowship with Him. **2 Peter 1:19** – “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”
    - 2. We sing “He’s the lily of the valley, the bright and morning star . . . ”
    - 3. The morning star is Venus, which is smaller than the earth. However, this is not meant literally.
    - 4. Some think He means that He will give us the victory over “Lucifer” which means, “the morning star.”
    - 5. Many think that this refers to Daniel 12:3, wherein we are

told that the righteous shall shine as the brightness of the firmament. Those who turn many to righteousness will shine as the stars forever.

6. The “morning star” refers to Jesus. **Revelation 22:16** says, “. . . I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

#### J. **Verse 29**

1. Willingness to hear.
2. Jesus told the apostles before His death that the Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 14:26), and declare things to come (John 16:13-15)
3. We know that the Spirit directed John in what to write, and through him was speaking to the churches.
4. This is how the Spirit speaks to man. Those not willing to listen and obey cannot be benefited by the Spirit’s work.

### **CONCLUSION:**

#### A. Lessons from the letter to the church at Thyatira.

1. That “the eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good.” **Proverbs 15:13**.
2. That Christ, the Son of God, discovers every virtue and every vice known unto Him even the deepest secrets of the soul.
3. That the aim of the Christian is to “**grow in the grace and knowledge**” of the Saviour. **2 Peter 3:18**.
4. It isn’t enough for a Christian to refrain from immorality and other sins . . . he must also actively oppose it.
5. The immoral life of one member of a congregation, especially a leader, can lead others to sin and be lost. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”
6. That if we become partakers of the sins of wicked leaders, we must also become partakers of their punishment. If we sin with them, we must also suffer with them.
7. That we learn “the deep things of Satan” by living in sin, but we learn to our shame and humiliation.
  - a. When a child, for the first time lays its hand on a hot stove, it learns a lesson . . . but it also learns its sorrows.
  - b. My personal example of patting the eyes of the stove.
8. Remaining faithful until the end will result in triumph.
9. The Lord commends a serving church. **Revelation 2:19**.
10. The Lord commends a growing church. Their last works were more than first.
11. Growth is the grand object of life, and where growth ends decay begins. **2 Peter 3:18**
12. Our biggest challenges will come from within. Such was the case with the fall of the Roman Empire.

13. We learn that God will not tolerate false doctrine.
14. Christians must actively oppose all false doctrine.
15. We learn again that Satan is our enemy. He is often mentioned in these letters.
16. We learn that God will not allow sin to go unpunished.
17. We learn that God is constantly concerned about our inner selves.
18. We learn even more about the eternal reward of the faithful.
19. We need motivation and have all that we need from God.
20. Heaven will be worth all the battles and sacrifices we have to go through.
21. When Jesus says, “I know thy works,” He is saying that there is nothing unknown their labors, or ours.

B. Application:

1. Let us not:

- a. Tolerate compromise with the world of our day. Revelation 2:20
- b. Fail to repent when we are convicted of sin. Revelation 2:21

2. Let us:

- a. Continue to practice love, service, an faith with patience so that we will grow spiritually so that our last works are found to be MORE than the first. Revelation 2:19
- b. Have nothing to do with the evil around us. Revelation 2:24

C. Grow and triumph with Christ.

D. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**