



WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL
Volume 19 Number 2
March 27, 2024

Jesus' Letters to Seven Asian Churches - Revelation 2:1-3:22
Part 4 of 7: Thyatira - Revelation 2:18-29

By Tal Davis

In this seven part series we are analyzing the seven letters dictated to the Apostle John by the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in the book of Revelation chapters two and three. Previously we looked at the first three letters written by the risen Jesus to churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum. Now, speaking to the exiled Apostle John, He dictates the fourth, and longest, in the series of seven. He addresses it to the church in Thyatira – a bustling business and trade center in the Roman province of Asia. The Lord commands the church to deal with a festering moral problem threatening to destroy its spiritual health.

To read Parts One through Three click on these links:

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2024/02/jesus-letters-to-seven-asian-churches-part-1-ephesus-tal-davis/>

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2024/02/jesus-letters-to-seven-asian-churches-part-2-smyrna-tal-davis/>

<http://www.marketfaith.org/2024/02/jesus-letters-to-seven-asian-churches-part-3-pergamum-tal-davis/>

The city of Thyatira was located about 45 miles inland in Asia Minor, east of Pergamum on the Lycus River. Though not as great a city as Ephesus, Smyrna, or Pergamum, it was famous for its trade guilds. Ancient trade guilds functioned something like modern trade unions to represent and protect the skilled workers in the various industries in the city. Thyatira was known for its

quality manufacturing of wool, linen, dyed cloth, leather, pottery, and bronze. Thus, the guilds rendered great influence in the community, both politically and religiously. Each guild had its own patron god or goddess. Worship of these deities included regular festivals, feasts, and sexual rituals.

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze, says this: 19 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith, and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with plague, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them - I place no other burden on you. 25 Nevertheless what you have, hold firmly until I come. 26 The one who overcomes, and the one who keeps My deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE SHATTERED, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 The one who

Permission to Reprint

If you wish to reprint this article in your own print or electronic newsletter, please include the following text:

*Reprinted from **Worldview Made Practical**; a free e-zine produced by **MarketFaith Ministries** featuring practical teaching and life tools to help Christians become more effective in their faith life. Discover **MarketFaith Ministries** at www.marketfaith.org.*

Speaking Schedule

If you are interested in having Freddy Davis or Tal Davis present one of our **Worldview Seminars** or to share about worldview and its practical implications at your church or organization, please contact **MarketFaith Ministries** to schedule your event. All contact information is at the bottom of this e-zine.

Worldview Resources

It is one of the primary purposes of **MarketFaith Ministries** to provide resources to help Christians understand the practical implications of worldview. You can find many free resources that will help you in your quest at <http://www.marketfaith.org>.

has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 2:18-29 (NASB)

One notable daughter of Thyatira was Lydia, a business woman and seller of purple dyed cloth. While working in Philippi in Macedonia, she and group of God-fearing women went out one Sabbath day by a river to pray. There they were met by Paul and Silas who told them about Jesus. Lydia believed their message and was baptized (along with her household), being the first convert to Christ on the European continent (Acts 16:11-15). Very likely, she was a member of the Thyatiran dyers' trade guild. The fact she was female is evidence that women were full participants in commerce in that time and region.

As usual, in verse 18, the Lord commands his scribe, the Apostle John, to address this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. Jesus gave the same command for writing each of the seven letters. We have already established the probability that the "angel" (messenger) refers to each church's pastor. Most people in those days were not literate, so he was responsible for reading the letter aloud to his congregation.

Next, as in each case, the Lord uniquely reveals His identity to the church. Here he says, first, that He is "The Son of God." The title attests to His majesty and deity, similar to the designation of "Son of Man." But it may have a deeper significance. Two of the preeminent pagan deities honored by the Thyatirans was Apollo, the sun god, and Diana the goddess of fertility. Apollo was the mythical son of Zeus, king of the gods. So it may be that Jesus' title for Himself (this is the only time it is used in Revelation) was to establish a stark contrast between Himself as the Son of

the Living God and Apollo, whose "father" was only a lifeless idol.

This comparison may be born out by how He describes Himself further as one who has "eyes like a flame of fire." Unlike the flaming god Apollo who does not exist, the Lord's flaming eyes have the ability to perceive everything that is happening to the church in Thyatira and all the others. He is the omniscient God-Man who is completely aware of the good they are doing, but also the bad as He will indicate soon.

The Lord goes on to describe His feet as being "like burnished bronze." Bronze is an alloy made of copper and tin, but stronger than both. It was used in biblical times for manufacturing armor (1 Sam. 17:5-6), shackles (2 Kings 25:7), cymbals (1 Chron. 15:19), gates (Psalms 107:16; Isa. 45:2), and idols (Rev. 9:20). Thyatira had a robust metallurgy industry and guild, so Christ's metaphorical imagery was clear in their minds. Having bronze feet symbolizes His divine omnipotence and strength. These powerful images testify to the Lord's claim to deity, the foundational theological fact of Christianity.

So the Lord moves forward in the letter to issue a commendation to the Thyatiran church. Because He is the all-knowing Son of God, He says in verse 19, "I know your deeds." "Deeds" or "works" are its positive accomplishments and godly spiritual characteristics. They are, indeed, impressive. He lists them in order of importance starting with "love." This is God's kind of love (*agape*). It is the kind of selfless love Paul describes as the prime quality Jesus desires in His people. Whatever good things believers may accomplish, they are useless if not motivated by love. Paul says, *"If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all myster-*

Subscription Information SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE:

A subscription to **Worldview Made Practical** is complementary for anyone interested in receiving it. If you received this email as a forward from a family member or a friend and wish to subscribe for yourself, you may do so at www.marketfaith.org. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, simply follow the instructions found at the bottom of each edition.

Contact Information

If you wish to contact us directly, you may do so by the following methods:

321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

E-mail:
info@marketfaith.org
Phone: 850-383-9756

You can order our products and examine our services at
<http://www.marketfaith.org>.

This issue of **Worldview Made Practical** is a production of **MarketFaith Ministries**, © 2024. All rights reserved.

ies and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Next, the Lord says He is also conscious of their "faith" (*pistis*). Faith is the authentic and sincere trust believers have in God and Christ to provide for their needs and to grant them salvation. It is more than just an intellectual assent to certain facts or doctrines. Paul lists it as one of the three key characteristics Christ wants from His followers. Only one quality is deemed greater. *"Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love - but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).*

He also commends their "service" (*diakonia*). These are selfless acts of doing good to those in the church fellowship and beyond. It is what we might call "deacon-like" acts. Several men who exemplified that kind attitude were the seven disciples in Jerusalem who were selected to care for the Greek speaking widows. *"So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch" (Acts 6:1-7).* Ironically, Stephen and Philip became successful evangelists (Acts 7-8; 21:8). His powerful preaching even cost Stephen his life (Acts 7:54-8:2).

Finally, the Lord praises them for their "perseverance" (*hypomonon*). This is the steadfast endurance they exhibited in the face of troubles as a result of their love for God and faith in Christ. Consequently, He remarks that He is aware that their deeds of late are greater than at first. That is quite an acclamation for Jesus to impart. The Thyatirans were actually making progress in their church life, something He could not say for some

of the other congregations. Some of them were actually regressing from when they began.

It should be the primary objective of every Christian church to grow. Not just to increase numerically, though that is a valid goal. It should continue to magnify the quality of its love and service demonstrated in house ministries, and making greater efforts to evangelize the lost. Any church not taking both of those responsibilities seriously does not reflect the kind of church God desires.

Yes, says the Lord in verse 20, He was proud of the progress shown by the Thyatiran church. And maybe, as the letter was being read, they would think they were really something in Jesus' eyes. Well, not so fast my friend. He did have a major complaint against them. Maybe they thought He would pass it over, but this was no small matter: "that you tolerate the woman Jezebel."

Jezebel was the infamous wife of King Ahab of Israel (874-853 BC) and daughter of King Ethbaal, the pagan king of Sidon (1 Kings 16:31). When she married Ahab, she brought with her false prophets from her country who infused Baal worship into Israel. The name Jezebel means "Where is the Prince?" As wife of Ahab, she conspired to obliterate the authentic prophets of Yahweh (the Lord God of Israel) and install Baal and Asherah as the official gods of the royal household.

Baal was the Canaanite fertility god whose worship included deviant sexual acts. Jezebel wanted to incorporate these abominations into Israel's spiritual life. The battle of the gods eventually reached a climax on Mount Carmel when the Prophet Elijah called down fire from heaven and defeated the Baal prophets (1 Kings 18). When Ahab died, Jezebel continued her evil crusade with her son,

Joram. Eventually Jezebel, Joram, and their minions were overthrown and Jehu became king of Israel. She was finally killed when Jehu ran over her with his horse (2 Kings 9:30-37).

Obviously, the Lord is not saying that the original Jezebel had returned to life and was disturbing the church in Thyatira. It is also unlikely that there was actually a woman in the church by that name. No Jewish father would have even considered branding his daughter with such a detestable name. Jesus uses her name to signify someone in Thyatira, apparently a woman in the church, who was advocating ungodly beliefs and acts.

Whoever she was, she audaciously calls herself a prophetess. There were certainly women in the New Testament who received the genuine spiritual gift of prophecy (Luke 2:36; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor. 11:5). Prophets spoke divinely inspired utterances to teach truths and, occasionally, to predict the future (Acts 11:27-28). Paul said it was a gift superior to speaking in tongues since everyone present could understand the words and benefit (1 Cor. 14:4-6). In the case of Thyatira's Jezebel, the Lord accuses her of two major transgressions. She taught falsehoods and deceived the believers, His servants, into committing sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols.

So, just like the church in Smyrna had tolerated those sins in violation of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), the Thyatirans turned a blind eye to the same wickedness. It was a struggle for some folks to avoid exposure to those sinful proclivities. They were required to join the trade guilds to make a living. Immoral pagan traditions were integral aspects of the guilds' banquets and feasts.

Despite Jezebel's evil doing, the merciful Christ, in verse 21, asserts He had given her "time to repent." She had ample opportunity to reverse her course and cease her immoral conduct. Repentance (*metanoeo*), as we discussed with the Ephesian church, is the sincere change of a person's mind and heart, with an earnest desire to go in a different direction in life (Rev. 2:5). Not her! The Lord says she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality, and apparently continued her disobedience.

Because of her intransigence, Jezebel will have to pay a price. So in verse 22, the Lord calls for everyone's attention, "Behold!" He was about to deliver His verdict on the wicked lady and her followers. He will quickly dispense two acts of judgment. First, He will throw her on a "bed of sickness." The bed was where she committed her sins, so the bed is where she will pay for them. Sin has a way of deteriorating people's physical and mental health. The Lord may have just allowed the consequence of her sins, and those who commit adultery with her, to run its course. Second, the Lord says, unless they "repent of her deeds" (yes, they still had time), they will be responsible for an even worse fate.

What worse fate can any parent experience than the death of their child. The Lord warns Jezebel in verse 23, "I will kill her children!" Now the Lord is obviously not threatening literally to kill small children. He made it clear that "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Luke 18:16). Jezebel's "children," in this instance, applies to those who were her spiritual offspring and, like her, refused to repent. They were definitely worthy of the Lord's wrath.

But why the harsh punishment? So all the churches will see that nothing escapes the eyes of God. They will know that "I am He who searches the minds and hearts." "Minds" (literally "kidneys"), in this Near Eastern context, is human beings' total range of emotions. It represents their inner psychological life. "Hearts" refer to the intellectual aspect of human consciousness and its moral center. Christ's omniscient vision penetrates to the core of their personalities. He promises He will recompense each of them in accordance with their deeds. Faithfulness and repentance will bring forgiveness and blessings. Unfaithfulness and obstinacy will bring greater judgment.

In verse 24, the Lord then turns His attention back to, "the rest who are in Thyatira." They were the remnant of faithful believers who do not hold this teaching, that is, "the secret" or "deep things of Satan." That ambiguous phrase may refer to how Jezebel lured her victims. They may have been misled to believe that to understand grace one needed to experience the depths of sin.

Whatever the exact nature of this esoteric doctrine, it was totally in opposition to the truth of God's Word. The gnostic heresies, which were just beginning to arise in the late first century, taught that secret knowledge was necessary to progress up the ladder of spiritual power. It promoted the dualistic philosophy that all matter is evil and the spirit is good. Thus, it does not matter what one does in the flesh, it has no bearing on the spirit. This may have been part of the root of this extreme heresy. Whatever it was, they were more interested in the deeper things of Satan than the deeper things of God.

In any case, Jesus praises "the rest of you" because they haven't experienced the evil "secrets." As a result He is placing "no other burden on you." He expected them to continue their good deeds outlined before: love, faithfulness, service, and endurance. But He was not going to burden them with more than they could bear.

He then, in verse 25, encourages the good Christians in Thyatira, to "what you have hold firmly." That was not an easy task. The pressure from the followers of Jezebel and those claiming the secrets of Satan was powerful. They were not to let those evil influences steal what they already had in Christ. Stand firm, He says, "until I come!" Here we see a reference to the primary theme of the Revelation: the Second Coming of Christ and the glory of a new restored world. All their burdens would then be gone (see Rev. 1:7).

In verses 26 and 27, once again, as in His other letters, Christ addresses "the one who overcomes." In this case He refers to the overcomer as "the one who keeps My deeds until the end," in contrast to Jezebel's works (v. 22). The Christian's life on earth requires tough perseverance, but faithful doers of God's will exercise "authority over the nations." They will be co-rulers with Jesus the Messiah over the whole earth. *"Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years"* (Rev. 20:6).

The Lord then cites Psalm 2:9, "HE SHALL RULE THEM." The word translated "rule" is literally "shepherd" or "pastor." It's a bit ironic that He will shepherd them "WITH A ROD OF IRON." We might think of a shepherd as kind and gentle, but the scepter, or rod, has an iron tip which gives the herdsman total control of His flock. Christ will use it like "VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE SHATTERED." The enemies of God will be like fragile ceramics in the day of the Lord, and His people will share in the final victory with Him. (see also Isa. 30:14; Jer. 19:11)

Finally, in verses 28 and 29, The Lord states, "I will give him the morning star." "Morning Star" is a reward Jesus promises to the ones who triumph and are faithful to the end. Jesus is Himself the "Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). It also symbolizes God's presence which they will enjoy forever in heaven. This phrase is linked to Christ's authority over the nations He received from the Father, and which He promises to share with the Thyatirans (v. 26). The ultimate confidence of those who are faithful to God and the gospel is eternal life in the presence of Christ and God. The Lord concludes this letter with His standard admonition for everyone to put on their ears and listen to the Holy Spirit!

In the next installment, Part Five, we will analyze Jesus' letter to the church at Sardis as recorded in Revelation 3:1-6.

Would You Consider Supporting Us?

Would you consider financial support for **MarketFaith Ministries**? I feel confident that what we are doing is consistent with your beliefs about spreading the gospel and equipping the saints for ministry. Would you let us be one element of your hands and feet in this process? **MarketFaith Ministries** is a 501 (c) (3) not for profit corporation, so your contributions are tax deductible. If you would consider this we would be very grateful. Also, if you would like to know more about the ministry, it would be my pleasure to share with you personally what we are working on and how you can plug in. I can be reached at 850-383-9756 or by e-mail at Freddy@marketfaith.org. As for any donations, they may be sent directly to **MarketFaith Ministries** at 321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312, or you can contribute through our secure website at www.marketfaith.org. Simply click on the "Donate" button at the bottom of the homepage. We are deeply grateful for your support of this ministry.

And, as always, if you have any thoughts, opinions or suggestions about how **MarketFaith Ministries** can help you, please feel free, at any time, to call (850-383-9756) or e-mail (info@marketfaith.org). We are here to serve you.