



Overview

Author: John

Date: c 95 AD

Purpose: John writes these letters to continue the pastoral care to the congregations established by St. Paul. He writes to bring the words of His vision of the exalted Jesus Christ to the churches.

Outline:

A. Vision of the Exalted Christ (Revelation 1:9-20)

B. Letters to the Seven Churches

Letter to Ephesus (2:1-7)

Letter to Smyrna (2:8-11)

Letter to Pergamum

(2:12-17)

Letter to Thyatira (2:18-28)

Letter to Sardis (3:1-6)

Letter to Philadelphia

(3:7-13)

Letter to Laodicea

(3:14-22)

Key Terms: the exalted Christ, epistle, one literal sense, 'One like a Son of Man', first love, Nicolaitan heresy, libertine, legalist, antinomian, syncretism

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Around the Word Bible Study

Trinity, 2015

The 7 Churches of the Revelation Revelation 2:18–29

Opening: Psalm 2

¹Why do the | nations rage*
and the peoples | plot in vain?

²**The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel to- | gether,*
against the LORD and against his anointed, |
saying,**

³"Let us burst their | bonds apart*
and cast away their | cords from us."

⁴**He who sits in the | heavens laughs;*
the Lord holds them in de- | rision.**

⁵Then he will speak to them | in his wrath,*
and terrify them in his fury, | saying,

⁶**"As for me, I have | set my King*
on Zion, my | holy hill."**

⁷I will tell of | the decree:*
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have be- | gotten you.

⁸**Ask of me, and I will make the nations your |
heritage,*
and the ends of the earth your pos- | session.**

⁹You shall break them with a | rod of iron*
and dash them in pieces like a potter's | vessel."

¹⁰**Now therefore, O | kings, be wise;*
be warned, O rulers | of the earth.**

¹¹Serve the | LORD with fear,*
and rejoice with | trembling.

¹²**Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly | kindled.*
Blessed are all who take ref- | uge in him.
Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

*Prayer: Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scrip-
tures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may
so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest
them that, by the patience and comfort of Your holy
Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed
hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son,
our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

**Letter Four: To the Church in Thyatira
"The Lord Sets His Sights on Thyatira"**

Read Revelation 2:18–29

**The Speaker to the Church of Thyatira
v. 19 "Thyatira"**

Thyatira was a city twenty miles southeast of Perga-

mum (today's Akhisar). This was the home of Lydia, the seller of purple (Acts 16:14), one of the early converts to Christianity. Lydia helped Paul in Philippi.

Thyatira was known for its trade-guilds. The city had a dye industry. "The art of dyeing was very anciently practiced in Lydia..." (Hemer, *The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*, 109). The dye "was obtained from the madder root, so-called "Turkey red"; the water also was good for dyeing at Thyatira (Hemer, 109).

Thyatira suffered from as a frequently conquered city in history. It was an outpost on the frontlines of battles. It was the first city to be taken in battles. This led to the power changing many times in Thyatira. Roman rule finally was good for the city. It created more stability. The Thyatira to which John wrote was a "growing church in a growing city" (Hemer, 107). Thyatira thus had a racially-mixed local flavor (Hemer, 110). The racial mixing probably contributed to the desire for tolerance and syncretism in worship (Hemer, 110). The temples of Artemis and Apollo were present, as well as the imperial cult, yet their significance in the city is less able to be known than Ephesus or Pergamum. The problem of Thyatira is easier to figure out. The clarity of the word of the ascended Lord pierces through all of history's shadows.

v. 18 "The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are burnished bronze."

The risen and ascended Lord casts His gaze over the church of Thyatira. He is indeed the "Son of God." This reference to Jesus as the Son of God occurs only here in Revelation.

Brighton comments:

"The victorious, exalted Son of Man, who rules everything on behalf of the Father as Lord of lords and King of kings (19:16), is not a created angel nor only a human being, but rather the Son of God, eternally of the same essence as the Father, truly God with the Father. The Son of God...is also the "Son of Man," identified by the flaming eyes and bronze-like feet (Rev 1:13-15). He is the Savior and, as true God and man, the stand-in and representative of the human race before his heavenly Father. He is also the judge (the one who bears the sword, 2:12), the one to whom all authority has been given by the Father" (*Revelation*, 81).

+Do any Christian groups object to this glorious confession that Jesus is the "Son of God"? What Gospel

comfort do they lose if they deny the deity of Jesus of Nazareth?

Jesus' words are the words that make a church. John returns the minds of the reader to the opening vision of the reigning Christ on His throne. His righteous wrath stares down the enemies of His truth. The letter to the church in Thyatira is the longest of the seven letters. There is a leaven in the loaf that must be purged.

What He Knows

v. 19 "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first."

Jesus commends this congregation for its fidelity in love, service, and enduring suffering. But one thing stands in the way of their fidelity. Their faith and love will be of no avail until they see the great sin in their midst.

v. 20 "you tolerate that woman Jezebel"

The name Jezebel recalls the Old Testament wife of King Ahab. Jezebel the Sidonian was the daughter of Phoenician King Ethbaal. Through her marriage to King Ahab, she brought the worship of Baal and its concomitant sexual immorality into the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jezebel was an evil foe to Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 16:29-33; 1 Kings 19; 21:1-16; 2 Kings 9:30-37).

The 'Jezebel' of Thyatira brings sin and shame upon her overly-tolerant congregation. Jezebel convinced those enchanted by her teaching that it was consistent with the Christian faith to practice sexual immorality and to eat the food sacrificed to idols. On the Lord's Day, the Christians worshiped the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. During the week, some of them compromised themselves with temple prostitutes and the temple meals. Jezebel's influence terribly undermined the life of the Church. Her position as "prophetess" must have caused people wonder as well. She "called herself a prophetess. God did not call her. Jesus did not send her. Yet she 'ran,' as prophets do. She taught a different Gospel than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This 'Jezebel' is probably the first female preacher. She used her gifts for deception.

Brighton says, "*Jezebel stands for and represents the sin of syncretism, a universalistic belief that all religions are of value and are able to be of benefit before God*" (Brighton, *Revelation*, 83; Italics original). The congregation had compromised the first commandment. They had comforted themselves with lies. In hope of appearing tolerant, they were denying the very Lord who had bought them.

+There is always a danger of compromising the Gospel with local influences. Christians feel like they want to fit in with their neighbors. Christians have had to stand against lodges, and even debated about the influence of different kinds of boys and girls groups. Jezebel was exhorting the Christians to sin sexually and against God. We must ask: what does this group confess about the Gospel? Do its emphases undermine the "Gospel spirit"?

+How does syncretism seep in to a congregation or church body?

Call to Repent

v. 21 "time to repent"

The Lord gave Jezebel time to repent. Yet she refused. God's righteous anger over sin will avenge her sin. Her bed of pleasures will become a sickbed. God will throw others into tribulation, unless they repent. The children of her false unions will die. This is God's retributive justice in action against the false prophetess.

Bible Study

The 7 Churches of the Revelation Revelation 2:18-29

v. 23 "I am He who searches mind and heart"

Jesus' piercing eyes look into the deepest recesses of everyone – the mind and heart. No one hides from His omniscient gaze. He knows our every work and intent of the heart.

v. 24 "the deep things of Satan"

Jezebel must have presented her teaching as "deeper" learning. Jesus calls it what it is: the deep things of Satan. When Christians reject the simple Gospel and truth of God's Word for something "deeper," we must be cautious. "Deep" doesn't always mean true. God's simple, clear Word is enough to guide Christians to be able to discern truth from falsehood.

+ What are some topics that might be described as "deep" in order to deceive young minds? Can a Christian be a life-long learner without despising God's Word?

v. 24 "any other burden"

The Thyatiran Church cannot increase in faith or works of love until the standstill with Jezebel is resolved. Once that happens, then future trials will face them.

Promises to the Faithful Christians in Thyatira

v. 26 "The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 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."

Christ promises that Christians will rule with Him and the Father forever. Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 2. Christ will give His Christian a rod of iron to rule with Him (Psalm 2:9). The exalted Lord has conquered the enemies of the Christian: sin, death, and the devil. The final victory over all the enemies of the flesh awaits His final judgment. He now has His enemies as His footstool (Psalm 110). Christ shows His love to His faithful in that He brings us to be coregents with Him in the age to come. For now, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

He "who keeps my works until the end" is the one who holds, or observes our Lord's clear and simple Word. Rather than the "deep things" the Christian is content with the clear and simple Word of God. The Word is a treasure that we hold fast in our heart and keep on our tongues.

v. 28 "And I will give him the morning star."

The 'morning star' was "the last star to fade away with the rising of the sun; it was the most brilliant of the heavenly stars. (It may have actually been a planet.) (Brighton, *Revelation*, 82). What is this promise? Revelation 22:16 answers this question for us. Jesus calls Himself "the bright morning star." He gives the gift of Himself. He forgives sin. He blesses us with the wisdom of His Word. His light shines in the darkness of sin and death. He rules for us as our exalted King. He holds out promises for His faithful.

Hymn: O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright (LSB, 395)

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