

“The Things Which Are” (Rev 2:1-3:22)
The Seven Churches in Asia
Part 2 – The Church at Pergamum & Thyatira

Text: Revelation 2:12-29

Main Idea: Christ speaks to the churches of Pergamum & Thyatira warning them to repent of compromising with the world, & tolerating godlessness in the Church.

1. **The Church of Pergamum:** The ____*compromising*____ Church. (2:12-17, 1 Jn 2:15-17)
 - **Title of Jesus:** The One who has the sharp two-edged sword (Word of God). (v. 12b, Heb 4:12, Eph 6:17)
 - **Commendation:** Despite the difficult circumstances, the believers courageously maintained their __*faith*__ in Jesus Christ. (v. 13)

4 Views of Satan’s Throne:

- 1) Pergamum was the seat of the worship of Asklepios, a Greek god portrayed by the image of a snake.
- 2) The great altar of Zeus, which rose to a height of 40 feet was located on the acropolis of Pergamum. Since Zeus was considered the king of the gods, this could have singled out Pergamum as “Satan’s throne.”
- 3) Pergamum was filled with the temples and idols of many gods: Asklepios, Zeus, Athena, Dionysius, and Demeter. This city may have been the most outwardly pagan of the ones mentioned in Rev 2-3.
- 4) Emperor worship was prominent in Pergamum. It was the official center of the imperial cult.
 - **Concern:** Some in the Church held to false teaching that lead to idolatry & sexual __*immorality*__. (v. 14-15)
 - 1) Some were following the teaching of __*Balaam*__, being in union with the world of idolatry & *immorality*. (Num 22-25, 2 Pet 2:15-16, Jm 4:4)
 - 2) Others were following the teachings of the *Nicolaitans*_ leading to sexual *immorality* & idolatry.
 - **Exhortation:** ____*Repent*____ or I will make war against you. (v. 16, 1 Cor 5:6-7)

- **Promise:** Those who overcome (believers) will be fed by God, given _____*entrance*_____ into the celebration of heaven with a new name.

2. **The Church of Thyatira:** The *corrupt* Church. (2:18-29)

- **Title of Jesus:** The Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze. (v. 18, 1 Pet 4:17)
- **Commendation:** The church had great works of *faith*, love, service, & perseverance. (v. 19)
- **Concern:** The Church tolerated a godless woman (Jezebel) and her teaching that led many into *sexual* sin and idolatry. (1 Kings 16-21)
- **Exhortation:** To the rest who did not hold to the teaching, *hold* fast till I come. (v. 24-25)
- **Promise:** Those who continue in faithful deeds to the end will be given 1) ruling authority over the nations in the _____*millennial*_____ *earthly* kingdom, & 2) the morning star which is Christ Himself. (v. 26-29, *Ps 2:7-9*, Rev 22:16, 1 Cor 13:12)

[illegible]

THE CHART IS AN ATTEMPT TO COMPARE THE MESSAGES TO THE "SEVEN CHURCHES" OF ASIA MINOR, WITH 19 CENTURIES OF CHURCH HISTORY, TO SEE IF THERE IS ANY CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THEM, AND THUS PROVE THAT THE MESSAGES TO THE "SEVEN CHURCHES" ARE PROPHETIC OF SEVEN PERIODS OF CHURCH HISTORY THAT WERE TO FOLLOW EACH OTHER IN REGULAR ORDER. A CAREFUL STUDY OF THE CHART WILL SHOW A WONDERFUL CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE TWO. THIS IS BROUGHT OUT IN THE CHAPTER ON- THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES:

THE CHART SHOWS THE CHURCH OF THE 'FIRST-BORN' IN ITS COURSE DOWN THE CENTURIES AND FINALLY TAKEN OUT, LEAVING THE REMAINDER OF THE PROFESSING CHURCH TO PASS INTO THE 'SEA OF APOSTASY' AND BE SWALLOWED UP BY THE REVIVED PAPAL CHURCH. THIS IS SEEN IN THE INCREASING BLACKNESS OF THE STREAM AS THE TIME APPROACHES FOR THE EXIT OF THE CHURCH. THE RELATION OF THE JEWS AND MOHAMMEDANS, AND VARIOUS RELIGIOUS CULTS TO THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE AGE IS ALSO SHOWN ON THE CHART.

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the REVELATION of JESUS CHRIST

Session 5 - Revelation 2:12-17

Pergamum - The church married to the world

(2: 12a) “To the angel (messenger) of the church in Pergamum write:”

Πέργαμος Pergamos = Πέρ per “Mixed” ργάμος gamos “Marriage”

the city “of the serpent”

There is no written evidence of Pergamum until 399 BC when the city emerged as a power during the struggle for territorial control following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC. In 301 BC, Lysimachus, one of Alexander's successors, took control of western Asia Minor. He entrusted his officer Philetaerus with control of Pergamum giving him a large amount of wealth to manage the development of Pergamum.

In 282 BC Philetaerus deserted Lysimachus siding with his rival, Seleucus. After Lysimachus was killed in battle by Seleucus and Seleucus was murdered, Philetaerus named himself king of Pergamum. The city became one of the principal centers of Greek (Hellenistic) civilization under the influence of Philetaerus and his successors, Attalus I (269-197 BC) and his son Eumenes II (197-159 BC).

Over time, the rulers of Pergamum formed an alliance with Rome, severing ties with the Greeks. Eventually the Attalid dynasty came to an end with the death of Attalus III Philometer, the last of Pergamum's kings, who died in 133 BC without an heir. Per his will the Romans assumed control of the once independent kingdom and in 129 BC, they established the Roman province of Asia by combining Ionia and the former Kingdom of Pergamum. The outcome was far from profitable for the city. The tremendous wealth accumulated by Pergamum's kings was sent to Rome. But the Romans respected the city's past as a religious and cultural center. They designated Pergamum the capital of Asia, but eventually it was supplanted by Ephesus at the time of Augustus and the birth of Jesus.

Pergamum was located 70 miles north of Smyrna and towered 1,300 feet above the plain of the Caicus River Valley. It's library consisted of some 200,000 handwritten volumes and was second only to the Alexandrian library. Parchment was invented in Pergamum after relations with Egypt had soured and papyrus became increasingly difficult to obtain. The Pergamenes saw themselves as promoters of the Greek culture and the city was known as a great cultural and learning center.

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The acropolis rises 1300 feet above the lower city located on the plain of the Caicus River.



The theater in Pergamum is the steepest in Turkey and had a seating capacity of about 10,000.



The temple of Trajan was just one of three temples built in honor of Caesar worship.



The Aesclepium (health institution) was originally constructed in the 4th century B.C. to the Greek god Aesclepius.



A model of the acropolis (upper city) of Pergamum.



The reconstructed throne of Zeus at Pergamum in Germany.

In all of Asia Minor this city was the most fanatical about Caesar worship. Caesar worship began under Augustus and the first temple built honoring this cult was in Pergamum in 27 BC. Two other temples were built honoring Trajan and Septimus Severus. Here Christians were in danger of severe persecution year round as a result of their refusal to participate in Caesar worship. As the primary religious center of Asia Minor, Pergamum also worshiped the usual pantheon of Greek gods and had temples dedicated to Athena, Asklepios, Dionysus and Zeus. In fact, Zeus is said to have been born there. The great altar stood on a foundation 125 ft by 115 ft, over 50 ft high, set in a colonnaded enclosure.

Prior to the scientific forms of medicine brought about by Hippocrates, the mystical type of medicine that was built on worship of pagan gods was in practice for eight centuries in this region. These forms of cultic healing were based on the worship of Aesculapius, the Greek god of healing. He was commonly called “savior” and was believed to have power to avert death. Originally seen as a serpent by the Anatolians, he was adopted by the Greeks as holding the staff of Hermes, the Greek god of commerce. Of course all of these legends are actually derivatives of the real account of the staff of the bronze serpent held up by Moses in Numbers.



The staff of Aesculapius - god of medicine. This symbol is most commonly used in professional medical institutions.



*The Caduceus - the staff of Hermes the god of commerce
This symbol is most often used by commercial institutions
such as hospitals and also by the military.*

The Church

Although Paul passed through Mysia which is the region where Pergamum was located (Acts 16:7-8), there is no record of the founding of the church at Pergamum in Acts. It was most likely founded as a result of the outreach from Ephesus (Acts 19:10) from where the gospel went out to all of Asia Minor. As noted later in the concern, this church had apparently adopted the teachings and practices of the Nicolaitans and began to merge in the pagan culture in Pergamum. Much of today's church, specifically in western culture, exhibit these same characteristics in a failure to teach on and adhere to many fundamentals of scripture such as:

- **Jesus Christ - the only way for salvation from our sin.**
- **Moral purity and holiness in the life of the believer.**
- **The coming judgement of Christ and eternal punishment.**

Such topics are often seen as too divisive for today's seeker-oriented and market-driven churches where man's accomplishments and goals are the ultimate source of fulfillment.

"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and {also} its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

In fact Paul's exhortation to believers is to not only be separate from the world in how we act, but in how we think:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Rom 12:1-2 (NASB)

Title of Christ

(2: 12b) **"The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:"**

This is the first time in the letters to the churches that the title Christ uses of Himself is used in a **negative** way. The sharp two-edged sword is symbolic of His word (Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17) and it is the standard by which all men will be judged. It is by His word that the true church is cut away from the world.

The Commendation

(2: 13) **"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."**

Christ is again comforting His sheep by making them aware of His intimate knowledge of all things, including the constant pressures from sinful surroundings. So much was the proliferation of wickedness in Pergamum, that Christ refers to the city as the place "where Satan dwells" and the location of "Satan's throne".

There are three main views to the use of these terms.

- **The altar or throne of Zeus** who was considered the supreme of the Greek gods. Pagan worship of "the gods" is nothing more than demon worship and Satan is the highest ranking of the fallen angels and demons. Every pagan system of false god worship can be traced back to Babel and even Genesis 6. These pagan ritualistic systems of religion are all based on the lie that man can become a god through communing with the gods, no matter what it takes to get there.
- **Aesculapius** who was often depicted as a snake. Part of the ritual worship included laying down on the temple floor amongst the roaming snakes. It was believed that if a snake brushed up against any participants, they would be cleansed of sickness. Under the reign of Diocletian, refusal to carve images of the serpent meant execution.
- **Emperor worship** denied that Christ is Lord and such devotion to a mere created, fallen man is the ultimate blasphemy in the eyes of God who knows that Satan is the driving force behind this great deception.

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In any case Pergamum represented all of the deception and wickedness that is constantly a part of this world's system headed up by Satan:

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” 2 Cor 4:4 (NASB)

The most important thing is to understand that Satan is our **very real adversary**, not a figure of speech. While we need not devote any time to Satan, we cannot have a proper spiritual preparation for battle without the understanding that we indeed face this very real foe and the multitudes of dark spiritual forces that work with him. Still we are told that we will have victory over his attempts to lead us astray:

“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7 (NASB)

The Names of the Adversary Found in Scripture			
The Accuser of the Brethren	Revelation 12:10	Lucifer	Isaiah 14:12
The Adversary	I Peter 5:8	That Old Serpent	Rev 12:9 and 20:2
Angel of Light	2 Corinthians 11:14	Power of Darkness	Colossians 1:13
Beelzebub	Mat 12:24 Mk 3:22 Lk 11:15	Prince of the Power of the Air	Ephesians 2:2
Belial	II Corinthians 6:15	prince of Tyrus	Ezekiel 28:2
the Devil	Matt. 4:1, 5, 9; Eph. 4:27; Rev. 12:9; 20:2	Prince of this world	John 12:31
Dragon	Revelation 12:9 and 20:2	The Proud One	Isaiah 14:12-14
the Enemy	Matthew 13:39	Satan	Job 1:6-9; Matt. 4:10
the Evil One	John 17:15; 1 John 5:9	Serpent	Genesis 3:1; Rev. 12:9
Father of All Lies	John 8:44	the Tempter	Mat 4:3; 1 Thes. 3:5
god of this world	II Corinthians 4:4	the Wicked One	Mat 13:19
King of Babylon	Isaiah 14:4		
King of Tyrus	Ezekiel 28:12		

As the usurper of Adam's domain, he has **temporal authority** (all within the sovereignty of God) over this world or “age”:

“We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” 1 John 5:19 (NASB)

The believers in Pergamum held fast to their faith even in the midst of being martyred such as in the case of Antipas. According to tradition he was shut up in a brass bull and roasted alive. Christ gives Antipas the title "My witness, My faithful one" which is also how Christ is titled (Rev 1:5; 3:14) and again comforts the believer through His reminding them of His own ministry and suffering.

The concern

(2: 14-15) “ ‘But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit {acts of} immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.’ ”

Even though the true believers in Pergamum were commended for their faithfulness, they were rebuked for what they **permitted** by false teachers in that same church who were causing believers and unbelievers to engage in sinfulness.

Balaam and Balak

Balaam was not a Jewish profit, but was a gentile “diviner” (Josh 13:22) from Pethor of Mesopotamia (Deu 23:4-5) and apparently had some sort of regular communication with the Lord as he identifies Him that way (Num 22:8, 13, 18, 19). Balak, king of the Moabites, attempted to hire Balaam to come and curse the nation of Israel and on several occasions in which God told Balaam to refuse. Finally, God allowed Balaam to go after he continued to ask if he could go, but God was angry about it (Num 22:22). It was on the way to Balak that God lets Balaam know of His anger. After his donkey stops moving three times, Balaam beats the donkey and gets an interesting response:



“ And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now." The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground. The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me. "But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live." Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back." Num 22: 28-34 (NASB)

Balaam proclaims to Balak that he has no power of his own to speak any curse on the nation of Israel (Num 23:28). Three times he is exhorted by Balak to speak against Israel and three times he ends up blessing Israel instead. After Balaam returns home, the next chapter of Numbers reveals that the Israelites began to mingle with the Moabites, the men being enticed by the Moabite woman and they began to worship Baal (Num 25:1-3). God's wrath resulted in 24,000 Israelites being executed (Num 25:4-10). Apparently all of this took place as a result of the council of Balaam:

"Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD." Num 31:16 (NASB)

It is in chapter 31 that the account of the destruction of not just the Moabites, but all of the Midianites is recorded. Balaam was also slain (v.8). This council of Balaam is presented three ways in scripture:

- The "**Doctrine** of Balaam" Rev 2:14
 - Spiritually unchaste; marriage with the world.
- The "**Way** of Balaam" 2 Pet 2:15
 - Hireling = making a "market" for his gift.
- The "**Error** of Balaam" Jude 11
 - Sacrificing eternal riches for temporal gain.

Here the "teaching of the Nicolaitans" is included with the teaching of Balaam concerning how to make Israel stumble. Because the text states that these teachings both led to idolatry, sexual immorality and all kinds of pagan rituals, it confirms what Nicolaitinism is. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, points out the foolishness of believers mingling with the world:

"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you."
2 Cor 6: 14-17 (NASB)

The act of participating in any form of idolatry and sexual immorality under the liberty of grace was forbidden by the early church council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:29). Peter also warned believers who are "aliens" to "abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11).

The exhortation

(2: 16) **“ Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. ”**

Repentance is the only remedy for such offenses in the eyes of God. “You” and “them” includes both the perpetrators of evil and those who, although they were faithful, tolerated the sin of others who professed to be Christian’s. This is a compelling admonition for the individual believer to repent and for a church to lovingly admonish those Christian’s who are engaging in open sin. Tolerating evil for the sake of unity is never acceptable such as in the case of the believers at Corinth who were perfectly willing to let the open sin of a man persist:

"Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump {of dough?} Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are {in fact} unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Cor 5: 6-8 (NASB)

The promise to the overcomer

(2: 17) **“ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give {some} of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”**

Manna was the bread provided by God supernaturally. It was what sustained them in the wilderness. It was an obvious foreshadow of Jesus Christ, the “**bread of Life**” (John 6:48-51). And is “hidden” from those who do not know Him.

A V.I.P. PASS from Christ

There is a significant meaning of the white stone in it’s actual historical setting. Those athletes who were winners in the games at the arena’s, were given a special white stone with their name inscribed in it. This stone was essentially a V.I.P. pass for the athletes to attend a special awards banquet held at the end of the event. He would also receive a loaf of bread. In much the same way, the overcomers have their names written down in the lambs book of life which grants them a place in the wedding feast in heaven.

The “new name” is new in a qualitative sense not in a time sense. Other than the fact that we cannot know what that name is now, we do see that it is unique to the individual and given personally by Christ Himself. This speaks of the close, personal love that Christ has for every single one of the redeemed.

The prophetic profile

It was Nimrod who founded the original Babylonian religion; virtually identical to Phaethon—or Aesculapius—eventually developing into the worship of his widow Semiramis and his posthumous son:

Semiramis & Tammuz of Babylon
Ashtoreth & Tammus of Phoenicia
Isis & Horus of Egypt
Aphrodite & Eros of Greece
Venus & Cupid of Rome

— Alexander Hislop

When Cyrus conquered Babylon, they founded a new center at Pergamos and that king became Pontifex Maximus, the high priest of that pagan system. [Pember] Subsequent transfer of the cult from Pergamos to Rome, would lead to the appointment of successive Caesars as high priest. By 378 A.D., Damasus, the Bishop of Rome, completed the absorption of Babylonianism into the Roman Church. [Hislop & Pember]

The Roman Empire

753 B.C. Rome founded,
343-272 B.C. Subdued Italy,
264-146 B.C. Conquered Carthage,
215-146 B.C. Greece, Asia Minor,
133- 31 B.C. Spain, Gaul, Briton, Teutons,
63 B.C. Conquered Judea.

Its rise

- 46-44 B.C. Julius Caesar
- 31-14 A.D. Augustus - Christ was born in his reign.
- 12-37 Tiberius - Christ crucified in his reign.
- 37-41 Caligula - Unsuccessful attempt at desecration of the Temple.
- 41-54 Claudius
- 54-68 Nero - Blamed his burning of Rome on Christians; executed Paul.
- 68-69 Galba, Otho, Vitellius
- 69-79 Vespasian - Titus destroyed Jerusalem (70)
- 79-81 Titus
- 81-96 Domitian - Most violent; thousands slain; John banished to Patmos.
- 98-117 Trajan - Sought to uphold the laws; Christianity regarded illegal.
- 117-138 Hadrian
- 138-161 Antoninus Pius Bar Kochba revolt; Aelia Capitolina replaces Jerusalem.
- 161-180 Marcus Aurelius Severest since Nero. Peak of Roman power.

Its decline and fall

- 180-192 Commodus
- 192-284 Barrack Emperors Appointed by army. Civil War.
- 193-211 Septimius Severus - Killed Iranaeus.
- 218-222 Caracalla - Tolerated Christianity.
- 218-222 Elagabalus - Tolerated Christianity.
- 222-235 Alexander Severus - Favorable to Christianity.
- 235-238 Maximinus - Killed Ursula and Hippolytus.
- 244-249 Phillips - Very favorable to Christianity.
- 249-251 Decius - Persecuted Christians furiously.
- 253-260 Valerian - Killed Origen.
- 260-268 Galienus - Favored Christians.
- 270-275 Aurelian
- 284-305 Diocletian Persecuted Christians most furiously. Systematically attempted to abolish all by tortuous death.

The prophetic profile of Smyrna marked out the specifically harsh persecution of Christian's over a period of two and a half centuries, under which the spread of true Christianity flourished. However the letter to the church at Pergamum opens up the door to an about face in the history of the church. What Satan cannot accomplish by way of outright attack, he accomplishes through deception and lure.

the marriage of the church to the world

- In 312 A.D. Constantine sets out to defeat his rival - Maxentius. He reportedly saw a vision of a cross with the words "in this sign thou shalt conquer". Upon the defeat of Maxentius, he declares his conversion to Christianity.
- In 325 A.D. Constantine issues his Edict of Toleration which established the freedom of religion, favored Christians in court, exempted ministers from taxes and encouraged all citizens to become Christians.
- In 330 A.D. Constantine, fed up with the pagan idolatry in Rome, moved the capital of the empire to Byzantium and renamed it Constantinople.

Under his rule he:

- Ceased gladiator fights.
- Reduced the killing of unwanted children.
- Abolished crucifixion as a form of execution.
- Advanced Christians to high offices.
- Reduced slavery.
- Declared Sunday a day of worship.
- Assumed headship of the church.

the unholy consumation

- 361-363 Julian, “The Apostate” sought to restore paganism.
- 363-364 Jovian reestablished the Christian religion.
- 378-395 Theodosius made Christianity the state religion and forced conversions filled the churches with unregenerates. Ambition to rule, heathenism, and pomp emerge in the world church
- Heathenism was Christianized; pagan temples became Christian churches; heathen festivals were converted into Christian ones.
- Pagan priests slipped into office as Christian priests.
- Change was mostly nomenclature

the REVELATION of JESUS CHRIST

Session 6 - Revelation 2:18-29

Thyatira - The corrupt church

(2: 18a) “To the angel (messenger) of the church in Thyatira write:”

Thyatira (thygater) meaning daughter.

Named so by Seleucus I Nicator after being informed of his daughter's birth.

the city

Thyatira lay at the junction of three main roads leading to Pergamos, Sardis, and Smyrna and was therefore an important military outpost. It had been conquered by many including the Persians and Alexander the Great. After Alexander's death it was under the control of Lysimachus and in 301 BC. Lysimachus was defeated by his rival Seleucus I (Nicator) and Thyatira became part of Syria. It was finally conquered by Rome in 190 BC.

The city became a well-known center for trade guilds which became the primary hub of society there. They were the “trade unions” of the time. In much the same way as Caesar worship, guild members had to pay homage to and worship the patron deity of the guild to which they belonged. Its main industry was the production of wool and purple dye and they were the leaders of the indigo trade. More guilds were known in Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Roman province of Asia with trades such as: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths. Lydia (Acts 16:14,15), who lived in Philippi, was from Thyatira and was a dealer in the indigo trade.

Thyatira worshipped (along with Apollo) Ashtoreth who, by the Greeks, was believed to be a virgin and a protector of young maidens in addition to a goddess of childbirth. Hislop also connects this goddess with the Babylonian Semiramis, and through her, to a religion of Mother goddess/Child-god worship that was almost universal throughout the ancient world. Its Satanic influences had saturated the sinful idolatry of the ancient Jews and is what Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah warned the Israelites about (Ezek. 8:14 “weeping for Tammuz”; Jer. 7:18 offering cakes to the “queen of heaven”; Jer. 44:25 to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to her). *for further study @ <http://www.barr-family.com/godsword/queen.htm>*



The triple gate of Thyatira.



Church ruins

the church

There is not much mentioned about the founding of the church in Thyatira and it is presumed that it too was founded as a result of the ministry of Paul at Ephesus. During Paul's ministry at Philippi, Lydia was converted and as a result the members of her household were too (Acts 16:14,15). It is probable that she and her family were involved at the church there.

The title of Christ

(2: 18b) **"The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:"**

Here Christ is speaking to **His ultimate authority** as our holy God. This is the only place in Revelation where Christ refers to Himself as "the Son of God" and is not one of the titles given in chapter 1. His eyes of fire are able to discern the righteous from the unrighteous. Although our Lord is merciful and gracious, He desires for us to be holy as He is holy (Mt 5:48; 1Pe 1:15,16) and the seriousness that is to be extended toward the holiness of God is displayed in no greater way than when He uses the sin of Ananias and Sapphira as an example to the early church to set the tone (Acts 5:1-11).

Fire also speaks of **purity**, but the progression of impurity seems to have reached a pinnacle here in Thyatira. Smyrna had faced persecution from the "synagogue of Satan"(2:9), Pergamum compromised with "Satan's throne" (2:13) and had tolerated those who taught evil things and now in Thyatira a great part of the church itself has known the "deep things of Satan"(2:24). This is in stark contrast to what Christ's intention is for His church as laid out in Ephesians:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
Eph 5: 25-27 (NASB)

His feet of burnished bronze are symbolic of His purity and righteousness as the **foundation** on which believers stand and that under which iniquity is trampled:

"From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty."
Rev 19:15 (NASB)

Just as this letter would have been a sobering wake up call to the church in Thyatira, it should be a warning to all believers. No Christian is exempt from Christ's **discipline**:

"OR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. " It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom {his} father does not discipline?" Heb 12: 6-7 (NASB)

"For {it is} time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if {it} {begins} with us first, what {will be} the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"
1 Pet 4:17 (NASB)

The commendation

(2: 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.”

Unlike Ephesus, the love of the faithful at Thyatira was commended. This was a genuine love for God as it manifested itself in faith (Pistis meaning fidelity), service and perseverance and it seemed to be growing in consistency.

The concern

(2: 20-23) “ 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 {acts of} immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. '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. And I will kill her children with pestilence, 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.”

The danger mounted up against this church is from within as it failed to purge out of her midst the idolatrous teachings of a particular woman “Jezebel” (probably named so by the Lord comparing her to Jezebel in the Old Testament) and those who followed her. Like in the warnings to the other churches, these false teachings led many in the congregation to practice such depravity that they were submersing themselves in “the deep things of Satan” (v.24).

This woman was probably much like an astrologer of today as she called herself a prophetess. She was clearly not a believer as she is not addressed as one of the “bond-servants” that she was “leading astray”. Her sin had been addressed previously as she had been given “space to repent”, but did not. Scripture gives specific warning to those who are particularly responsible for leading others astray:

"but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. "Woe to the world because of {its} stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!" Mat 18:6-7 (NASB)

The use of the word “behold” is indicative of the fact that judgment on the woman is now passed because she did not want to repent. Therefore she would be thrown on a “bed of sickness” which in the original was simply “thrown on a bed” which most likely represents death and hell. “Those who commit adultery with her” will be purged by severe distress or trouble, sent by the Lord Himself, unless they “repent of their deeds”.

The “children” of Jezebel were spiritual offspring, not physical and were promoting the same false doctrines as she was. But they were apparently not at the point of receiving final judgment yet as they were being deceived, but they would face severe chastening if they did not repent of “her deeds”. In other words they needed to reject her teaching in the church and what she was teaching them; it was false teaching.

Why the comparrison to Jezebel?

Jezebel in the OT

Jezebel was the daughter of Eth-Baal, King of Sidon, Priest of Astarte. He was the murderer of his predecessor, Pheles, whom he killed to seize the throne. She married King Ahab to seal a profitable trade alliance between Israel and Phoenicia. Jezebel sought to exterminate prophets of YHWH (1 Kgs 18:13). The queen is running things; of all the women seen in the Old Testament, none was more cunning or more daring or more unscrupulous...she obtained lands through "inquisition." The incident of Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kgs 21) is a vivid picture of the medieval church for a thousand-year period, including the Dark Ages. Worshippers of Baal and Astarte (originated in Babylon), she and King Ahab ushered in the worst period in OT (1 Kgs 16:30,33) - Chuck Missler Revelation commentary

a summary of Naboth's vineyard

- King Ahab **lusts after** Naboth's vineyard (something not his own).
- Queen Jezebel arranges an **Inquisition** (false witnesses; condemnation, and execution).
- Naboth's vineyard **seized** for the king.
- Naboth's **heirs** also slain.

Jezebels destruction can also be found in 1 Kgs 21.

Christ knows where our affections lie as He "searches the minds and hearts". This is a direct reference to the deity of Christ as these were familiar OT terms given to the Father (1Chr 28:9; Ps 7:9; Prov 24:12; Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12).

All people are rewarded "according to their deeds". The sum total of the deeds of a person flow from his/her **identity**:

"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn {bushes} nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Mat 7:16-19 (NASB)

"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS." Mat 16:27 (NASB)

The exhortation

(2: 24-25) **" 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. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come."**

Session 6 - Revelation 2:18-29

Christ is mocking the religion of Satan when He says “the deep things of Satan, as they call them”. The so called “deep things” of Satan are more shallow than a thin sheet of paper when compared to the deep things of God:

"but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND {which} HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." For to us God revealed {them} through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." 1 Cor 2:9-10 (NASB)

The true believers in Thyatira were commanded to “hold fast” to that which they “have” - that is **genuine faith** as it produced the fruit in them that they were commended for.

The promise to the overcomer

(2: 26-29) **“ He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received {authority} from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'”**

Satan is called the “god of this world”(2 Cor 4:4) and his agents are in place globally from demons to men (Dan 10; Rev 9:14; 16:12). **They are the source** of constant attack on the true church. This promise calls attention to the justice of God as He will exalt His Anointed One along with those who are in Him. This will literally be accomplished when He “rules them” (the nations) with a rod of iron (Ps 2). The most important truth of all is not what the overcomers will be given, but Who. The overcomer is promised the “morning star” **which is Jesus** (22:16).

"More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from {the} Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which {comes} from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained {it} or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of {it} yet; but one thing {I do:} forgetting what {lies} behind and reaching forward to what {lies} ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Phil 3:8-14 (NASB)

The prophecy of Thyatira

The history of Thaitira and the conditions of the church there portrays the medieval papacy from 600 to 1500 A.D. The lust for power, wealth and rule on the part of the Roman state church defined the Middle Ages. The Chaldean priest who interpreted the esoteric doctrines of the Babylonian mysteries was called Peter (i.e. “the interpreter”). He wore an insignia of the two keys of Janus and Cybele, which still appear on the Papal arms as symbols of spiritual authority.

Session 6 - Revelation 2:18-29

A contemporary author, Dave Hunt does an excellent job profiling the history of the Roman-ized Catholic, state church in his book “A woman rides the beast”. In a nutshell, the many offices, institutions, doctrines, symbols and practices of the Catholic church have their origin in the ancient Babylonian system of worship. This is the church that is truly corrupt (like Thyatira) as history reveals and one Pope in one day killed more Christians than all of the Roman Caesars put together. She indeed was the daughter of an unholy marriage.

Innocent III (1198-1216) was the most powerful of all the Popes. He claimed to be “Vicar of Christ,” “Vicar of God,” “Supreme Sovereign over the Church and the World” and claimed that “All things on earth and in heaven and in hell are subject to the Vicar of Christ.” The kings of Germany, France, England, and practically all the monarchs in Europe obeyed his will, including those of the Byzantine Empire. Never in history has any one man exerted more power.

He ordered two crusades; decreed transubstantiation, confirmed auricular confession, declared papal infallibility, condemned the Magna Carta, forbade the reading of the Bible in the vernacular, instituted the Inquisition, ordered the extermination of heretics, etc. More blood was shed under his direction and that of his immediate successors than in any other period of church history (except in the Papacy’s effort to crush the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries).

The Inquisition

Called “The Holy Office,” it was instituted by Pope Innocent III and perfected by Pope Gregory IX. Under it everyone was required to inform against heretics. Anyone suspect was liable to torture, without knowing the name of his accuser. The proceedings were secret. The Inquisitor pronounced sentence and the victim was turned over to civil authorities to be imprisoned for life or to be burned. The victim’s property was confiscated and divided between the church and the state. The Inquisition claimed vast multitudes of victims in Spain, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands and did its most deadly work against the Albigenses.

- Chuck Missler Revelation commentary

The vast reaches of the affects of the church mingling with the “depths of Satan” are most consistently seen in the history of the middle ages and serve as an incredible reminder of the reality of this letter to the church at Thyatira, and the admonition to believers to remain chaste from the world and from any corrupt religious structure that uses “the church” as a disguise for corrupt and idolatrous acts.