

7 Churches of Asia: Thyatira

1. Review:

- a. **Ephesus:** The church who was doctrinally sound, but their deeds were no longer motivated by love for Christ and the brethren
- b. **Smyrna:** The church who held fast against the synagogue of Satan: Physically poor but spiritually rich
- c. **Pergamum:** The church who held the name of Jesus in an idol saturated city; however there was a spirit of compromise and justification among some
 - i. **Read:** 2: 18-29

2. Historical Background:

- a. **In a strange way**, the most interesting aspect of the church in Thyatira is how thoroughly “uninteresting” it is:
 - i. In contrast to Ephesus and Smyrna, which both competed for illustrious titles that signified their importance as economic powerhouses, and even Pergamum which was so well known for its many temples, Thyatira was by comparison, an unimportant city.
 - ii. We know less about it than we do the other churches in chapters two and three, and yet in spite of its seeming insignificance, it is the longest of any of the letters.
- b. **There are some facts** that we do know that might prove helpful in relating to the brethren in Thyatira:
 - i. There were a couple of things that the city was known for:
 - 1. The First, was that it was a **Garrison town**; It’s location was fairly advantageous to act as a sort of trade crossroads, but geographically it was at a disadvantage: There were no natural fortifications at its location and as such it had to **be heavily fortified to protect itself**: Additionally it would have hosted many well trained soldiers of Rome’s army. *“It was a weak town which had to be and act strong!”- McGuiggan*

- a. Some of that construction can be seen in the few ruins that still remain where **Thyatira was located.** (3 SLIDES)
 2. The second point of distinction for the city was that it was known for its numerous trade guilds: Unions of craftsman of all different kinds thrived in the city: Bakers, weavers, tanners, potters, as well as others: But out of all of those guilds there are two that stand out as having some significance to the Bible story:
- ii. **First, Thyatira was home to** Lydia, the seller of Purple: Lydia was one of those women who had been meeting to pray down by the riverside at Phillipi in Acts 16. We remember her for the zeal that she showed following her conversion and the way she insisted that Paul, Silas, and Luke stay at her home and allow her to show them hospitality: *If you have judged me to be faithful, come into my house and stay Acts 16:15* Luke says that she prevailed on them:
 1. **Lydia would have** been a member of one of the trade guilds who produced cloth goods made from this very expensive type of purple dye:
 2. **You can see in** the photos that it was **quite a bit** different from the color we normally think of but was still considered a **very valuable** commodity.
- iii. **The Second guild of importance for the** biblical text were the bronze working guilds of Thyatira: I say it is of importance to the text because it is probably no coincidence that the aspect from chapter one that Jesus chooses to emphasize in His opening remarks here are the eyes of flaming fire and the feet of burnished bronze: Here like in other letters, John is instructed to write down a contrast, using an example of something physical that the people might have trusted in, and then use it as a way of drawing the reader's attention to Jesus;
 1. We will especially see this in the letter to Laodicea later on

c. One of the challenges that the brethren faced here is something very similar to the three previous churches, the social pressure to be places and take part in activities that would have caused them to violate their faith:

i. Here, the various trade guilds would have held frequent feasts in honor of the god that was associated with that particular guild; As a part of this there would have been meat sacrificed to idols and immoral fertility rites were common place: Like Ephesus, Pergamum, and Smyrna, the temptation to conform to those around them would have been great.

ii. And sadly Thyatira was not immune to those influences: **Later on** an early church writer named Tertullian would speak out through his writings against those Christians who were members of these guilds and compromised their principles:

1. There was a saying that became common among those who violated their consciences to save their lives: After they went to one of these dinners or something of the sort, they would say “A Man must Live!”

2. Tertullian would write a piece of poetry addressing this idea, and also named it, “A Man Must Live”.

a. Tertullian would ask them right back: Must you live?

Where exactly did Jesus say that it was part of being faithful that you must live: Imagine the soldier, who is supposed to defend freedom, walking away from the battle saying, ‘a man must live.’” Imagine a man must live as a rallying cry for entering in to battle!

b. Tertullian thought very little of those who justified their actions out of self preservation

3. Comments on the Text:

a. V 19: What a wonderful commendation: The areas that Jesus is able to say that they have excelled in are all foundational principles of Christianity: They are very similar to Paul’s list in 1 Cor. 13, of Faith, Hope and Love; as well as what Paul

commended the Thessolonian brethren for: *We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ – 1 Thess. 1:3*

i. The Charity or Love that these brethren showed is the central command of the law; while the service that they were willing to show to others was a tangible demonstration of their love:

1. Their faith and only continued to increase which would have implied continued obedience, and their patience would have been vital in getting through the different trials they faced:

ii. But **some have wondered** if perhaps the brethren in Thyatira were a bit too loving and patient; at least with some in their assembly:

b. v 20:

i. **They tolerated** the woman Jezebel: It would seem that in the midst of the saints there, a woman was leading many away:

1. **The name Jezebel is** chosen because of the connotations: 1 Kings 21:25 says that Jezebel stirred King Ahab to wickedness; and that was exactly what was happening here:

2. **Presumably**, she was teaching something very similar to the doctrine of Balaam; that it was okay to compromise and give over to selfish desires: You could join in and participate with one of the Guilds because these idols are really nothing at all:

3. **Paul went to great lengths to warn in three separate chapters** in 1 Corinthians about the foolishness of this way of thinking:

ii. One difference between this congregation and Pergamum is that Thyatira is said to have tolerated this woman: Pergamum had those among them that held to that doctrine, but maybe some spoke out against it: In Thyatira it would appear that there were none who spoke out against it: That would seem to be the idea behind tolerating or suffering:

c. **God had** given her time to repent, but it was clear that she had no desire whatsoever to actual do so:

i. Perhaps part of the reason that she showed no desire is that the brethren there had failed to use the time God had given her to try and urge her to do so:

1. This certainly goes against what they would have been taught: Paul says in Eph. 5:11 that we are to have no fellowship with darkness, and in in 2 Thess. 3 and Romans 16 that were are to withdraw and avoid from those who cause divisive problems in the Church:
2. Yet they had made no effort to restrain her wickedness:

d. Vs 22-23:

i. **God expected holiness and purity** to be defining characteristics of His people. She was ensuring the opposite, and she was going to reap what she had sown:

1. **The judgment** that is called on her should sound familiar to us: It is essentially what God said He would do to the original Jezebel: He would punish her and her children for their wickedness:

e. Vs 24-25

- i. **Again there** is reference made to the idea of proudly and arrogantly coming to know wickedness: This is very remincent of brethren who think that you have to get down and get your hands dirty so that you can relate better to the world: Jesus said that real spiritual strength came from resisting the urge to do so:
- ii. **In the end**, when the true power came; those who were found faithful would receive a reward where others would be shattered;
- iii. **22:16 Jesus is the morning star**