

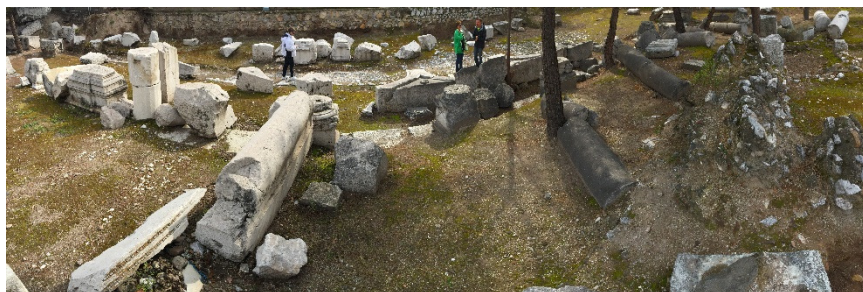
Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia

By Doug Hamilton

IV) The Church at Thyatira (2:18-29)

Rev 2:18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

The letter to the church in Thyatira is the longest of the seven; however the city itself would have been considered the least significant. It was a small military base town located on the road that connected Sardis to Pergamum, making it a heavily traveled location. Not much remains of the ancient city today. Evidence of a garrison, part of the main street and many pillars.



Because of its garrison status, the residing soldiers were there simply to guard the road to the capital city of Pergamum. They were a sort of buffer for any invaders from the east.



All southeastern traffic to the capital of the province passed through Thyatira, it became an ideal place for commercial businesses. Archaeology has turned up many ancient coins, indicating there was a thriving commercial system. Inscriptions confirm numerous types of workers in wool, linen, leather and bronze, potters, tanners, bakers, slave workers and dyers of purple.



The streets would have been lined with merchants, selling their goods and offering their services. Acts 16:14 informs us that there was a "...woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics..." who was a convert of Paul in Philippi. Purple in the ancient world was a sign of high rank and upper class because of the cost of production. The rich and noble would come from miles around to this city to buy purple cloth to array their homes and wardrobe.

Since Thyatira had commercial status, there were many trade guilds (a type of union). Each industry had its specific association and would have been closely tied to idolatrous practices. The primary guild in this city was the metal guild, which would have probably been the one which would have given the Christians the most trouble. The metal union riot in Ephesus is a good example of what could happen to Christians of the first century (Acts 19:23-40).

This is likely why Jesus was presented as having "*eyes like a flame of fire*" and "*feet like burnished bronze*". Both the terms are metal-working language. The "*flame of fire*" eyes describes the fire used to purify metal and the "*burnished brass*" is the polished, completed product of refining. Jesus was communicating a message that He is the great metal-working Savior of the world. He is the One that will melt the earth with fervent heat! He is the One who will be coming back in flaming fire, taking vengeance on the rebels of the spiritual world! He is the one who will purify all situations



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for the Christian! He puts a polish shine on every condition for the saint! His base is refined and pure! It is to His guild we belong, not that of the world! This was the Jesus that the Thyatiran church needed to understand.

Rev 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.'

Notice they have works, love, faith, ministry, patience and personal growth in their walk. It sounded like the type of church family that every Christian should seek out. A deeper look into the text reveals a serious problem.

Rev 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.²¹ 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality.²² 'Behold, I will cast her upon 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 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.'

Who was Jezebel of Thyatira? One could not logically come to the conclusion there was actually a woman in the Thyatiran church named Jezebel. Obviously the name is a comparison for all that is detestable from the real Jezebel from the Old Testament. For better understanding it is necessary to go back to the Old Testament to make some comparisons to better understand the usage. The following is true of Queen Jezebel from 1 and 2 Kings.

- She was the daughter of the king of Sidon and wife King Ahab of Israel (1Kings 16:31).
- She brought her own gods with her (Baalism).
- She killed the prophets of Jehovah and installed her Baal prophets (1Kings 18:13, 19).
- She did what she needed to get what she wanted (1Kings 21).
- She left behind her name for harlotries and sorceries (2Kings 9:22)

Her entire existence was dedicated to have the children of Israel tolerate the acceptance of false gods. Her name is so associated with evil that people do not even name their dog with her name. Apparently there was a so-called “Jezebel” who was also involved in the same type of teaching among the church. It appears there was a person or people who were leading some of the Christians to “...commit {acts of} immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols...”

This statement is a key to the understanding of the text. There were more trade guilds identified as existing in Thyatira than in any other Asian city of its time. In the guild's fellowship meals, food was first sacrificed to idols and, after the meals, orgies were a frequent occurrence. It was through participation in these events that commercial and financial security was assured. The dilemma that faced practicing Christian craftsmen would have been horrendous. Coming to Christ usually meant the loss of their livelihood and financial resources if they abstained from

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the communal feasts. If they refused, they would be considered scabs, hence be forced to live in the black market and or be killed. This is when it became hard on the Christians.

There was a common saying of the day and of that region, "A man must live." The slogan was spoken in regards to what one must do to make a living. If they ended up having to do something immoral, "A man must live!" Perhaps this Jezebel was leading Christians to compromise in their walk with Jesus by saying "A Christian must live!" We do not know for sure, but whatever she was doing led Christians to sin and developed followers in the process.

Jesus has given this "Jezebellian" teacher time to repent of her sin. This should be a lesson to us. Often times we want to go in a search and destroy mission when we see something like this going on. The Lord gives a little time for repentance. Did you know it is possible to spiritually kill someone before they have time to repent? Did you know that we can also spiritually kill someone who is on the road of repentance and drive them completely away from the Lord? Read 2 Corinthians 2:6-7 to refresh your memory. *Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was {inflicted by} the majority, ⁷ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort {him} lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.* Obviously we do not know her identity, but we do know her personality, her actions and the patience of the Lord as He waited for her to repent.

Rev 2:24-29 '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 fast until I come. ²⁶ 'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; ²⁷ 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; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Those in Thyatira who have not given into this teaching and know not the deep things of Satan have no other burden. They are told to hold fast and overcome in these trials. The rod of iron would bring special meaning to all those in Thyatira, for it was a great city of pottery makers and of the pottery guild. They potter would use a metal rod to break the pottery that did not turn out on the wheel or in the oven. The fields of shards and noise of shattering pottery would have been is would have been common sights and sounds of the city.

What a powerful Savior we have in Jesus! He is the potter and we are the clay. Do you hear the sounds of clay vessels being shattered? Do we not know that the Lord will shatter the lives of all those who harm His children, all those who do not walk in the light and all those who love the world?

- *Ps 2:6-9 Our Savior "shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware." (Ps 2:9; Revelation 12:5, 19:15)*

What about the "'Morning Star'? It is a name often used to describe the planet Venus. For part of each year Venus rises in the eastern sky, just before the sun. Since it is a very bright planet and at that time remains visible into the morning hours, it might be called a *morning* star

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even though it isn't really a star at all. During other parts of the year, Venus becomes an *evening* star, setting in the west, after the sun.



The fact that it is the morning star is important. The morning star is the last thing one can see from the heavens as the night begins to fade, ushering in the hope of a new day. This would be the rejuvenating factor for all the Christians going through trying times. It is what Peter recorded in *2 Pet 1:19* *And {so} we have the prophetic word {made} more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day*

dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

Brothers and sisters, it does not matter what you and I are going through in our lives if we are right with God. No matter how dark the nights, no matter how dark Satan has made it the situation and no matter if our hopes have been darkened through attacks of the world, **JESUS IS OUR MORNING STAR!** He is ushering a brand new day filled with the light of the glorious gospel of God!

Conclusion:

In a world where tolerance is the name of the game, the church needs to make sure they are not a tolerant church when it comes to sin. If we will not take the loving steps to cause men to repent from their sin, are we prepared to be shattered like the pottery that we are? If we will repent, Jesus will be that morning star ushering in the hope of the new day. We must not be tolerant for evil!