

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Chapter 2:12-17

“*THYATIRA: The Church of the Dark Ages*”

> The seven churches and their historical reference:

(2:1-7) *Ephesus*- The Apostolic Church (1st Century)

(2:8-11) *Smyrna*- The Martyr Church (A.D. 100 – A.D. 314)

(2:12-17) *Pergamum* - The Worldly Church (A.D. 314 – A.D. 590)

(2:18-29) *Thyatira*- Church of the Dark Ages, “Romanism” (A.D. 590–1517; continues today)

(3:1-6) *Sardis*- The Protestant Church, “Reformation” (A.D. 1517 – A.D. 1800)

(3:7-13) *Philadelphia*- The Revived Church (A.D. 1800 to Rapture)

(3:14-22) *Laodicea*- The Apostate Church (Last Days & into the Great Tribulation)

> Thyatira, the City - Thyatira was a wealthy town in the northern part of Lydia of the Roman province of Asia, on the river Lycus. It stood so near to the borders of Mysia, that some of the early writers have regarded it as belonging to that country. Its early history is not well known, for until it was refounded by Seleucus Nicator (301 BC - 281 BC) it was a small, insignificant town. It stood on none of the Greek trade routes, but upon the lesser road between Pergamos and Sardis, and derived its wealth from the Lycus valley in which it rapidly became a commercial center, but never a metropolis. The name "Thyatira" means "the castle of Thya." Other names which it has borne are Pelopia and Semiramis. Before the time of Nicator the place was regarded as a holy city, for there stood the temple of the ancient Lydian sun-god, Tyrinnos; about it games were held in his honor. Upon the early coins of Thyatira this Asiatic god is represented as a horseman, bearing a double-headed battle-ax, similar to those represented on the sculptures of the Hittites. A goddess associated with him was Boreatene, a deity of less importance. Another temple at Thyatira was dedicated to Sambethe, and at this shrine was a prophetess, by some supposed to represent the Jezebel of Rev 2:20, who uttered the sayings which this deity would impart to the worshippers.

Thyatira was specially noted for the trade guilds which were probably more completely organized there than in any other ancient city. Every artisan belonged to a guild, and every guild, which was an incorporated organization, possessed property in its own name, made contracts for great constructions, and wielded a wide influence. Powerful among them was the guild of coppersmiths; another was the guild of the dyers, who, it is believed, made use of the madder-root instead of shell-fish for making the purple dyestuffs. A member of this guild seems to have been Lydia of Thyatira, who, according to Acts 16:14, sold her dyes in Philippi. The color obtained by the use of this dye is now called Turkish red. The guilds were closely connected with the Asiatic religion of the place. Pagan feasts, with which immoral practices were associated, were held, and therefore the nature of the guilds was such that they were opposed to Christianity. According to Acts 19:10, Paul may have preached there while he was living at Ephesus, but this is uncertain; yet Christianity reached there at an early time. It was taught by many of the early church that no Christian might belong to one of the guilds, and thus the greatest opposition to Christianity was presented.

Thyatira is now represented by the modern town of Ak-Hissar on a branch line of the Manisa-Soma Railroad, and on the old Rom road 9 hours from Sardis. Ak-Hissar is Turkish for "white castle," and near the modern town may be seen the ruins of the castle from which the name was derived. The village is of considerable size; most of the houses are of mud, but several of the buildings erected by Caracalla are still standing, yet none of them are perfect. In the higher part of the town are the ruins of one of the pagan temples, and in the walls of the houses are broken columns and sarcophagi and inscribed stones. The population of 20,000 is largely Greek and Armenian, yet a few Jews live among them. Before the town is a large marsh, fever-laden, and especially unhealthful in the summer time, formed by the Lycus, which the Turks now call Geurdeuk Chai. The chief modern industry is rug-making. (From International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia)

- **How the gospel may have reached Thyatira: Acts 16:11-15**

> **FOUR POINTS FOR THYATIRA:**

#1 – JESUS, THE SON OF GOD (v18-19)

(v18-19) ***“The Son of God”*** - Jesus affirms His deity with the term ***“Son of God”***: **John 1:1-** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* **Heb 1:8-** *But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom."* **Matt 1:23-** *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, “God with us.”* **John 20:28-29-** *And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* **Rom 9:5-** *“of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen”.* **Titus 2:13-** *“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”* **1 John 5:20-** *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*

- ***“eyes like a flame of fire”***- His laser vision seeing all things with the purpose to uncover and destroy that which will harm His church.

- ***“His feet like fine brass”***- Brass is symbolic of judgment. He walks amongst the church to judge what is wrong and to bring us to repentance and the full blessing of God!

#2 – SIX COMMENDATIONS FOR THYATIRA (v19)

(v19) **Six commendations for the church at Thyatira: (1) Works (2) Love (3) Service (4) Faith (5) Patience (6) Good works increasing through time.**

#3 – LEAVE THE SEDUCTION OF JEZEBEL (v20-23)

(v20-23) ***“Seduce”*** means ***a fundamental departure from the truth***, according to Vincent. Jezebel stands in sharp contrast to Lydia, who came from Thyatira. ***Jezebel*** is merely a forerunner of the apostate church, found in Rev. 17.

> **Understanding Jezebel:**

(1) **In the Old Testament**, Jezebel the wife of Ahab, king of Israel, and mother of Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Athaliah (1 Kings 16:31). Jezebel was a tyrant who corrupted her husband, as well as the nation, by promoting pagan worship. She was reared in Sidon, a commercial city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, known for its idolatry and vice. When she married Ahab and moved to Jezreel, a city that served Jehovah, she decided to turn it into a city that worshiped BAAL, a Phoenician god. The wicked, idolatrous queen soon became the power behind the throne. Obedient to her wishes Ahab erected a sanctuary for Baal and supported hundreds of pagan prophets (1 Kings 18:19). When the prophets of Jehovah opposed Jezebel, she had them "massacred" (1 Kings 18:4,13). After Elijah defeated her prophets on Mount Carmel, she swore revenge. She was such a fearsome figure that the great prophet was afraid and "ran for his life" (1 Kings 19:3). After her husband Ahab was killed in battle, Jezebel reigned for 10 years through her sons Ahaziah and Joram (or Jehoram). These sons were killed by Jehu, who also disposed of Jezebel by having her thrown from the palace window. In fulfillment of the prediction of the prophet Elijah, Jezebel was trampled by the horses and eaten by the dogs (1 Kings 21:19). Only Jezebel's skull, feet, and the palms of her hands were left to bury when the dogs were finished (2 Kings 9:30-37). One truth which emerges from Jezebel's life is that God always balances the scales of justice. Wickedness may prevail for a season, but His righteousness will eventually triumph over the forces of evil.

(2) **In Revelation 2:20-23** we see Jezebel as a prophetess of Thyatira who enticed the Christians in that church ***"to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols"*** (Rev 2:20). John probably called this woman "Jezebel" because of her similarity to Ahab's idolatrous and wicked queen. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible)

(3) Historical view of Jezebel in Thyatira – Thyatira represents the church of the period of papal triumph and persecution 606 A.D. – 1517 A.D. The papacy was elevated to a place of secular power under Gregory I (A.D. 590), and later by Gregory VII, better known as Hildebrand, (A.D. 1073-1085). It is the middle church of the seven, and likewise covers the middle Ages. Concerning this historical period of the Dark Ages, which the church at Thyatira represents, pagan practices and idolatry were mingled with Christian works and worship. Thyatira (says Coringola) means, “to be ruled by a woman.” In this case, the woman is likened to Jezebel in the days of Ahab and Elijah. This woman made immorality and idolatry official policy for the society. Note two things that Jesus holds against this church “spiritual fornication and idolatry.” The first is the union of the church and the world, second is idolatry, which is the worship of images, and the Roman Catholic Church promotes both sins. Uriah Smith wrote: “A more striking figure could not have been used to denote the papal abominations.” As Jezebel caused Israel to worship the mother goddess Ashtaroth (called the **“Queen of Heaven”** in Jer. 44:17,18,25), so the church in the Middle Ages introduced the worship of Mary, “the Queen of Heaven.” Jesus threatens to **“to throw her into a sickbed . . . kill her children with death.”** Some say that refers to the terrible plagues, including the Black Death (beginning 1347), that decimated the European population in the Middle Ages.

The introduction of rituals and church doctrine supplanted personal faith in Jesus Christ. Worship of the Virgin and Child and the Mass were made a definite part of the church service. Purgatory became a positive doctrine, and Mass was said for the dead. The spurious documents labeled Donation of Constantine and Decretals of Isidore were circulated to give power and rulership to the pope. As Jezebel killed Naboth and persecuted God’s prophets, so the Roman church instituted the Inquisition during this period.

H.A. Ironside writes, “Since the 16th century she (the Roman Catholic church) has added to her blasphemies and errors the declaration of the absolute sinlessness of the Virgin Mary, lifting her to the position of a female God, and declared that she was caught up to heaven without dying and crowned queen of heaven. At the council of the Vatican approximately 150 years ago, the Church of Rome produced another of her wretched dogmas – the infallibility of her Popes (Vicar, [voice] of Christ).”

#4 – OVERCOME THROUGH JESUS CHRIST (v24-29)

(v24-26) To the overcomers – The **“overcomers”** have not known the depths of Satan, which is the practice of sexually immorality and spiritual adultery. Jesus exhorts them to **hold fast** until he comes, that will be the “rapture of the church” (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Corin. 15:51-53). Remember that those who don’t repent are **“thrown into great tribulation.”**

(v27a) This reference is from Psalm 2 regarding the Second Coming of Christ - ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’

(v27b) Jesus said, “as I also have received from My Father” – Not from the Pope who is referred to as “Holy Father” or “His Holiness”, this is blasphemous! Jesus said, in **Matthew 6:9-10; “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

(v28-29) Jesus said the “overcomers” will rule the nations in the Millennial Reign of Christ. The overcomers come out of the “Dark Ages” and receive the **“Bright and Morning star,”** that is the Lord Jesus Christ and GLORY FOREVER!!! **(Rev 22:12-17 - “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.)**