

A SERIES ON REVELATION: is this the end?

Week 6 – The Danger of Tolerance

Transition:

We have now covered three of the letters that Jesus had sent to three churches in Asia Minor (western modern-day Turkey). Each church received their own unique letter that was suited just for them. Ephesus was doing very well in living for the Lord with one exception: they had lost their first love. In response, Jesus told them to repent and return to their first love. The next church, Smyrna, had suffered much and was going to suffer even more. Jesus encouraged them to remain strong despite their pain. Last week, we saw that the church at Pergamum did many things well. Yet, Jesus had one major issue with them...they had compromised their faith by blending false beliefs with the truth of God. Jesus encouraged them to repent (as He did with Ephesus), or He would come war against them.

Context: The fourth city that received a letter was Thyatira. Thyatira was well-known for a few things. First, they were a blue-collar, working class town. Two of the most significant industries, for example, were the textile and metal-working trades. (Lydia, who met Paul in Philippi, was a seller of purple goods from Thyatira. See Acts 16:11-15.) Eventually, these trades became organized and formed guilds. Guilds were similar to modern-day unions, but even more powerful in controlling the lives of its members. Thyatira was also proud of their housing a temple to the god Apollo, who was called the son of god. He was the patron god of the military post in the city as well of all the guilds. Therefore, it was normal for a guild to have celebrations in the temple where all kinds of debauchery happened. Christians who were artisans in one of these guilds were therefore thrown into a quandary...how do I show unity with the guild while not joining in the debauchery?

Scripture: Revelation 2:18-29

Discipleship Questions:

- Give an example of when you have tolerated someone or something. What did you tolerate? Why did you tolerate it? What (if anything) did you learn in/from the process?
- How do you define tolerance (in your own words)? When (if ever) is it appropriate? Give an example if you can. When is it not appropriate? What is the difference between tolerance and compromise?
- How does Jesus identify Himself to this church? Why do you think He uses this term? Suppose He said it to you personally...how does it make you feel?
- What does Jesus say in commending this church? What is similar and what is different to what He has said before? What are your thoughts about this commendation? What do you think Jesus would say to commend you?
- Jesus gives a stern and severe warning to Jezebel and her followers. Why do you think He calls her Jezebel?
- Suppose you were a member of this church and you were thrown into the situation where you were expected to join the guild at Apollo's temple and therefore participate in things that God opposes. What would you do and why?
- What will Jesus do if Jezebel and her followers do not repent? What does Jesus' discipline of Jezebel and her followers reveal? Share a time when you were disciplined. What did you learn?
- What does Jesus say at the end of the letter to encourage this church? If you were a member of this church, would it motivate you? Why?
- What has the Lord taught you through studying/discussing the church at Thyatira?