

Thyatira – The Tolerant, Undiscerning, and Corrupt Church –

Part II

Revelation 2:20-29

Last time, we started looking at the church of Thyatira; now we'll pick up in verse twenty and work our way to the end. Remember this church, although a literal one, prophetically represents what we know as the Dark Ages or the age of the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. Just like the other churches and periods, the Lord begins by pointing out what they were doing right before discussing what they were doing wrong.

We shared what they were doing right in the previous study; here, we will see what they are doing wrong. When we look at this church being tolerant and undiscerning, it is a warning for us to examine ourselves and make sure we are not following the same footsteps.

Beginning in verse twenty, we see that they were allowing *that woman Jezebel* to corrupt the church. What was He talking about? No doubt it was a woman within the fellowship the Lord was addressing, but we do not know if her name was really Jezebel or if the Lord was simply making a point to the spirit with which she was operating. Either way it was not good. Who was Jezebel? She was a self-proclaimed spiritual leader without the backing of God. She calls herself a prophetess, not God. Within Biblical context, Jezebel was the daughter of a false priest to the goddess Ashtart, (a sex goddess), and a devout worshipper of the false god Baal (the god of nature), and the wife of the ungodly Northern Israel King Ahab. She came from a spiritual background, but it was a false spiritual background. She, as queen of Israel, sought out all the true prophets of God to put them to death. This reminds me of the Dark Ages when the official church was putting to death anyone who stood firmly on God's Word. It was also Jezebel and Ahab that Elijah faced off with when he challenged and killed the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. When Elijah killed them, she sought to kill him, but he fled. So, she was very domineering, and between the two royals, she was actually the most feared! Elijah stood up to Ahab but ran from Jezebel when she threatened him.

As we look at God's comparison of this Thyatiran woman to Jezebel, we need to understand that this was not an indictment against women with strong leadership abilities within the church. It was what she was doing and the way she was doing it. She was out of order concerning God's ordained structure, and the church was allowing or tolerating it. There is nothing wrong with strong women in a fellowship. As a matter of fact, this is what we want! But it must stay within the proper guidelines of Scripture. Any woman or man who begins usurping God's ordained authority structure will lead the fellowship in an ungodly direction. This is what was happening in Thyatira.

Here is where much of the church is still in error today, allowing or tolerating women pastors rather than making a clear stand on God's Word. There are a growing number of churches that approve of female pastors, but God's Word is clear that this is a role reserved solely for men. Paul addressing this in 1 Timothy 2:12, *And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man but to be in silence.* It is impossible to be a pastor and not have authority over a man. Hence the position or role as pastor for a woman is forbidden. Paul goes on in verses 13-14 to explain why, *For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, fell into transgression.* Which means it had nothing to do with her simply being a woman or any lesser than Adam. But there are specific reasons mentioned here and that is because Adam was formed first, and that she was deceived by Satan. We need balance with all things in scripture; this does not mean a woman cannot speak in church at all. In context this is only referring to a woman speaking in a pastoral role of authority. Does this mean that a woman cannot be a leader or a teacher within the church? Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, God commands the older women to train up the younger. The only limitation is the pastoral role or authority over a man. What about women like Anne Graham Lotz who holds outreaches to men and women? There is no Biblical prohibition because she is not operating as a pastor but as an evangelist. We see a precedent set for this with the woman at the well in Samaria. When she came to know Jesus, it says she ran into the city and told all the men about the Lord. Not only did Jesus not rebuke her for this, but many were saved because of her testimony!

Notice now what this Jezebel did. She taught and seduced them into committing sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols (which is interesting in light of this church period and the church beginning to use idols in worship and many still do today). She was also influencing sexual immorality - sexual activity outside of God-

ordained marriage, or even who can truly be married. That is an issue within parts of the church today as homosexual marriage is now being accepted by some. But God says it is wrong and never acceptable or excusable under any circumstances. Furthermore, she was encouraging the eating of food sacrificed to idols. She was encouraging a lower standard of holiness and influencing the church to make light of the sacrifices to the false gods.

Verse twenty-one displays God's graciousness. He gave a warning and time to repent, but she refused. When we refuse to repent of evil there is nothing else that God can do but bring judgment. Although God gave her time, she still did not repent. Today much of the church has not repented of these false teachings.

It is not just the corrupt leader that will face God's judgment, but all those connected to her, as our next verse states. This should be a warning for us as well. There is a push for unity among the churches today, but unity for the sake of unity is not wise if it leads the church into improper alliances. The results of unrepentant sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols are a sickbed and great tribulation or troubles. Is that not exactly what we see with sexual immorality today? For those who refuse to repent we have syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, and even AIDS. The consequences to a believer are often worse because they know better! For those who practice sexual immorality, the bed intended for pleasure becomes a bed of sickness.

He goes on to say in verse twenty-four, if you are not a partaker of their sin, I will put no other burden on you. Just keep yourself separate from them and their sin! As far as the *depths of Satan*, we do not know what the Lord is talking about. Some believe this was referring to a group called the Ophites who were serpent worshippers - appropriate in light of Satan.

In the next verse, notice to those who are not doing this or have repented, He says to hold fast what you are doing and stay faithful. If you do here is your reward. If those doing right will hold fast to what they have in the Lord and not let go until the end, they will rule and reign with Jesus when He returns to the earth and do so with a rod of iron. Even as the Lord will have authority to crush sin and rebellion, so will you! In 1 Corinthians 6:2, Paul tells the believers, *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?* Who is a scriptural saint? Anyone who is saved!

I will give him the Morning Star, in verse twenty-eight, refers to Jesus as seen in Revelation 22:16. In essence He will give us Himself. That is all we truly need and all we should want. Just give me Jesus! There is nothing greater to possess!

Again, He ends this chapter with *he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*.

Although specifically addressing the Catholic Church period of church history, it applies to any of us who have allowed false teaching into our lives and have become corrupt. The question is: is that any of us? It is easy to point the finger as we see God addressing problems in other movements, but it is also important to look at ourselves and make sure we are not guilty of the same thing. What about Calvary Chapel? Have we become tolerant and inclusive of false teaching in the name of unity or any other reason? Yes, we must be loving and forgiving, but we must never be tolerant of anything that God declares is sin. There is to be no unity with any group directly contrary to God's Word, or we will be no better than the church of Thyatira. We will have the same rebuke in the end from the Lord. Let's examine our hearts and make sure we are standing on the Lord and His Word alone to be our guide in life and teaching. And if not, it is time to get it right. Do you want Jesus today? I would! Is having Him enough? He is really all I want!

Group Study and Personal Application Questions:

1. What is the Jezebel of the Old Testament known for?
2. False prophets will always try to undermine God's Word. What else do they try to attack?
3. What did the *Jezebel* in Thyatira do to lead the church astray?
4. Women make up an integral part of the church, but what is taking place in the church that goes beyond God's intended role of the women? What Scripture shows the guideline for a woman's role?
5. Name some of the ministries women can and should be serving in within the body of Christ?
6. Sexual immorality is a growing problem in the church. For those involved, what does that say about their relationship with the Lord?
7. V21 – How was God gracious toward Jezebel?
8. V22 – How has God brought judgment on those who refuse to repent?
9. V23 – There is a strong push for unity in the church today, but what is often sacrificed for this unity, that brings a judgment from God?
10. Do you have family members, co-workers, or friends who have compromised the Word of God for the sake of unity? How have you approached them on this matter?
11. What spiritual principle comes into play when John wrote, "I will give to each one of you according to your works".
12. V24 – Many in Thyatira did not give into false practices and kept themselves separate. Are you finding it harder and harder to keep yourself separate? Explain.
13. V25 – What Scriptures come to mind that give you strength to hold fast?
14. V27 – Ruling with a "rod of iron" shows there will be no _____ for sin in the Millennial Kingdom. It's the one thing people are crying for today so they can continue in their sinful lifestyles.

No one is immune, including young people, from being under great pressures to give into the values of the world especially when it comes to sexual immorality.

- Because TV promotes so many illicit things, what can be done within the home to neutralize its effects?