

The Letter to the Church of Thyatira (**Revelation 2:18-29**)

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- I. From: “The Son of God”** not “John of Patmos.” To Thyatira, The church that tolerated false prophets. **Note:** The longest letter is written to the least significant church location with the biggest threat.
- II. Revelation 2:18** The words of the **Son of God**, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.
- A. The image of Jesus echoes **Revelation 1:14-15** & **Daniel 10:6**; The divine judgment.
- B. The History of Emperor Worship:** Julius Caesar & Augustus.
1. **Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* 88:** "During the very first of these games a comet shone for seven days in succession, rising about the eleventh hour, and was believed to be the soul of Caesar who had been taken to the gods; and for this reason, a star is set upon the crown of his head in his statue."
 2. **Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* 90:** At the Games of the Victory of Caesar, held in 42 BC, two years after the death of Julius Caesar, Augustus added to his name that of *divi filius* (son of the deified one) and held games in his honor."
 3. To use words like **“king”** or **“son of god”** in the Roman empire were seen as open rebellion against Rome and resulted in execution or military invasion.
 4. A letter from Augustus to Ephesus begins this way: *“Emperor Caesar, son of the god Julius”*¹
- III. Revelation 2:19** “I know your works, your **love** and **faith** and **service** and **patient endurance**, and that your latter works exceed the first. [Your recent behavior is better than before].”² **Fitness program progress.**
- A. **Works Defined in Four Words:**
1. **Love:** ἀγάπη Unconditional love focused on the value of what’s loved, not the benefit.
 2. **Faith:** πίστις means dependability, faithfulness.
 3. **Service:** διακονία has the basic meaning of speaking or acting on behalf of others.³
 4. **Patient Endurance:** ὑπομονή **“endurance,”** appear elsewhere in the book they almost always refer to persevering witness.⁴ It is preserving a witness in the midst of suffering.
- C. **Works**
1. **Your latter works exceed the first.** Doing more is not always the problem with our relationship with Jesus, it can be stopping, standing or striving against what perverts the Gospel.
 2. **James 2:14-17** **“...You have faith and I have works.”**
 - a. James is trying to show us faith is **NOT** merely belief, it’s belief in action; “faithfulness”.
 - b. **Sherlock Holmes and Watson go camping:**
 - c. Sometimes we can be distracted by the big picture. Thyatira had a lot of works but it distracted them from a serious problem that was about to destroy them.
 - d. Revelation shows works are important, but so is calling out destructive teaching & people.
 - e. **Here is a warning.** A church which is crowded with people and which is a hive of energy is not necessarily a real church. It is possible for a church to be crowded to be soothed instead of confronted with the fact of sin and the offer of salvation; it may be a highly successful Christian club rather than a real Christian congregation. the Church would have can become a kind of pleasant paganism⁵
- IV. Revelation 2:20-25** ²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

¹ David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1997), 202.

² Aune, 202.

³ Aune, 202.

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 260.

⁵ William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., vol. 1, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 114.

1. **Thyatira and Ephesus have opposite problems and serve as a contrast:**

- a. **Ephesus** “Cannot bear evil... Tested those who call themselves apostles and are not and found them to be false (Rev 2:2). They were said to have “abandoned the love you had at first” (Rev. 2:4) and are called to “repent, and do the works” they “did at first (Rev. 2:5)
- b. **Thyatira:** Is told “I know your works... your latter works exceed the first.” However, they had the opposite problem of Ephesus and “Tolerate that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. (Rev. 2:19-20).
- a. **Pergamum** “had” false teacher among them but **Thyatira** “tolerated” them.

2. **Jezebel of Thyatira and the Old Testament:**

- a. We have no idea who the Thyatira Jezebel was, but we can trace the kind of person that she was based on the Jezebel of the Old Testament in **1 Kings 16:29–32; 2 Kings 9:22**.⁶
- b. Jezebel at Thyatira claimed to be a prophetess, yet taught sexual immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols & seduced the church into it. She’s bad news.
- c. **Maybe:** She was a Patroness like Lydia or hostess of a house church
- d. **Syncretism & the perils of compromise.**

3. **Sexual Immorality and Food Sacrificed to Idols**

- a. **The Question is if these issues are metaphorical or literal.**
- b. Unfaithfulness to God is often equated to fornication or adultery against God (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:20; 2 Corinthians 11:1–2; Ephesians 5:24–8; Deuteronomy 31:16; cf. Exodus 34:15–16; Hosea 9:1; Matthew 12:39, 16:4; Mark 8:38).
- c. It’s also possible Jezebel was teaching that Christians ought to accommodate themselves to the world; urging on the Church a spiritual infidelity resulting in physical adultery⁷
- d. **Trade Guilds:** Thyatira had extensive trade guilds that shared in common meals. To avoid them was commercial suicide. Jezebel is to be counted among those to whom the claims of commercial success speak more loudly than the claims of Christ.⁸
- e. **The teaching of Jezebel** may have been Christians did not need to be so exclusive in their worship of Jesus Christ and, above all, that there was no need for them to refuse to say: ‘Caesar is Lord’, and to burn their pinch of incense⁹

3. **The power of passivity.**

- a. **Adrift:** In November 2012 José Salvador Alvarenga and Ezequiel Córdoba left Mexico 1yr
- b. Thyatira allowed someone to exercise a dangerous ministry in their midst but did nothing.¹⁰
- c. **I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.**
 - i. It’s one thing to feel conviction for a besetting sin. It’s another to “refuse to repent.”
 - ii. **Unless they repent of her works,** they will share in her fate.
 - iii. The whore of Babylon who “wipes her mouth and says; ‘I’ve done nothing wrong.’”

V. Revelation 2: 24-25 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come.

A. The real Christian knows what Paul called the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10); what Jezebel and her company know are the deep things of Satan.¹¹

VI. Revelation 2:26-29 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

VI. Conclusion

⁶ William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated., vol. 1, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 116.

⁷ Barclay, 120.

⁸ Barclay, 118.

⁹ Barclay, 119.

¹⁰ George R. Beasley-Murray, “Revelation.” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1430.

¹¹ Barclay, 120.