

## Revelation 2:18-28

### Letter to Thyatira

### The End Times

In my last post, we examined the letter to the **Messianic Community at Pergamum**. In this post, Yeshua's letter to the **Messianic Community at Thyatira** will be examined.

### Historical Setting <sup>1</sup>



**Ancient Thyatira**

(Pictures Courtesy of Google)

**Thyatira** was perhaps the least illustrious of the seven cities of Revelation. Its history was uneventful, and it is scarcely mentioned by ancient writers. Coinage suggests that, lying as it did on a great highway linking two river valleys, Thyatira was a garrison town for many centuries.

The city was a center of commerce, and the records preserve references to more trade guilds than those listed for any other Asian city. Lydia, whom Sha'ul met in Philippi, was a Thyatiran seller of "turkey red," a purple dye for which **Thyatira** was famous (Acts 16:14). **Thyatira** was built as a military outpost designed to protect **Pergamum**. The city still exists today, and is known by its modern name, Akhiser.

Necessity for guild membership in a trading community must have strengthened the temptation to compromise. Thus, it is appropriate to find a woman, named (or nicknamed?) after **Jezebel**, the princess who by marrying Ahab sealed his trading partnership with the Phoenicians, leading a party of compromise in the **Thyatiran** church (Revelation 2:20-21). Some here remained faithful, and there is an interesting contrast with **Ephesus** in that its current works are better than the first! **Thyatira** played no significant part in the later history of the church.

The people have some good qualities. They are noted for **your love, trust, service and perseverance**. They are growing in zeal, **you are doing more now than before**. (v. 19) - just the opposite of Ephesus, which had **lost the love you had at first** (2:4).

But, like **Pergamum**, they were tolerant of false teachers, only worse - they tolerated **Jezebel** in their midst.

<sup>18</sup> **To the angel of the Messianic Community in Thyatira, write: 'Here is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like burnished brass: <sup>19</sup> I know what you are doing, your love, trust, service and perseverance. And I know that you are doing more now than before. <sup>20</sup> But I have this against you: you continue to tolerate that Izevel [Jezebel] woman, the one who claims to be a prophet, but is teaching and deceiving my servants to commit sexual sin and eat food that has been sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> I gave her time to turn from her sin, but she doesn't want to repent of her immorality. <sup>22</sup> So I am throwing her into a sickbed; and those who commit adultery with**

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<sup>1</sup> Halley's Bible Handbook: Deluxe Edition

*her I am throwing into great trouble, unless they turn from the sins connected with what she does;<sup>23</sup> and I will strike her children dead! Then all the Messianic communities will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and that I will give to each of you what your deeds deserve. <sup>24</sup> But to the rest of you in Thyatira, to those who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some people call the 'deep things' of the Adversary, I say this: I am not loading you up with another burden; <sup>25</sup> only hold fast to what you have until I come. <sup>26</sup> To him who wins the victory and does what I want until the goal is reached, I will give him authority over the nations; <sup>27</sup> he will rule them with a staff of iron and dash them to pieces like pottery, <sup>28</sup> just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup> Those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the Messianic communities. ”* ~ Revelation 2:18-29 (CJB)

***"Whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like burnished brass.*** It is interesting that while Yeshua, in Revelation 1:13, refers to Himself as the **Son of Man**, in this verse He refers to Himself as the **Son of God!** In the first chapter, Yeshua is among the churches and His relationship with mankind is signified, whereas in this verse, His relationship to the heavenly Father is manifested in His **eyes are like a fiery flame** ever searching, always piercing, considering the very heart of the **Thyatiran** church. Judgment was at the door and Yeshua was about to pronounce it. The Lord's feet are pictured as **burnished bronze** which is a symbol of judgment; thus, the Lord Yeshua, who knows all about us, whose judgment is based upon absolute truth, is the spokesperson of judgment.

***I know what you are doing, your love, trust, service and perseverance. And I know that you are doing more now than before.*** It appears that everything said in this verse is positive, and it may well be. Yochanan begins the list of praise with works (**doing**) and adds **your love, trust, service and perseverance** and then their works again. Does the second mention of works indicate good, healthy growth within the body, or is He concentrating on a different kind of works? If the second mention of works was good, positive, and constructive, then this church was to be commended as the second mention of works was **more now than before**. Notwithstanding, we know that during this time in church history there developed a false doctrine of salvation based on works instead of grace. This could conceivably be an explanation of the second works listed in this verse.

***But I have this against you: you continue to tolerate that Jezebel [Jezebel] woman, the one who claims to be a prophet, but is teaching and deceiving my servants to commit sexual sin and eat food that has been sacrificed to idols.*** Historically, **Jezebel** was the wife of Ahab, one of Israel's most wicked kings (see 1 Kings 16). Through **Jezebel**, a host of heathen gods was introduced to the children of Israel. In addition to Jezebel's idolatrous way she practiced sexual immorality and perversion. The name **Jezebel** was no doubt given to the one who was leading Messianics astray in **Thyatira**, the same as Ahab's wife in the Old Testament led the children of Israel astray. .

The **Jezebel of Thyatira** was probably a self-acclaimed prophetess whom the church permitted to teach. She was doubtless teaching believers that they could be good Messianics and at the same time participate in the social organizations or other religious events which characterized the pagan lifestyle. Thus, paganism was being allowed into the church.

***I gave her time to turn from her sin, but she doesn't want to repent of her immorality.*** It is obvious that the Lord exercised patience, but to no avail. He gave the church opportunity to repent, which it refused to do. We see the procedure which always characterizes our Lord; He first extends grace before He exercises judgment.

***So I am throwing her into a sickbed; and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great trouble, unless they turn from the sins connected with what she does.*** Authentic teachings in a church will lead to stability, purity, growth, and spirituality; whereas, wrong teachings will lead to error, confusion, failure and, in this case, immorality.

**And I will strike her children dead! Then all the Messianic communities will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and that I will give to each of you what your deeds deserve.** M. R. DeHaan writes: <sup>2</sup>

*If you will remember that the church of Thyatira represents the church of the Dark Ages, you will see that no better figure than that of Jezebel could be used. It was during these years that the Vandals, the Huns and the Goths overran Europe and brought with them their own idolatrous pagan worship. The church, in a spirit of compromise, seeking to win them to professing Christianity, adopted part of the pagan idolatrous religion of these heathen, with the result that there emerged from this age a church that was partly Christian, partly Judaistic and partly pagan. There is an important lesson to be learned from this church. Although many churches throughout history have failed to discipline members who teach and practice false doctrine, God will not allow this sin to continue to go unpunished.*

**But to the rest of you in Thyatira, to those who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some people call the 'deep things' of the Adversary, I say this: I am not loading you up with another burden.** Note that the Yeshua refers to another group in this same church, **those who do not hold this teaching** or the false doctrine. The admonition to this group is to remain faithful until Yeshua comes.

Note, this is the third mention of the Adversary in the seven letters. In **Smyrna**, he directed the casting of Believers into prison (2:9-10). In **Pergamum**, he was persecuting the church and corrupting it from within by false teachings (2:13-14). Here in **Thyatira**, Jezebel's teachings were known as **the 'deep things' of the Adversary** (v. 24). Later he is mentioned as the enemy of the church in **Philadelphia** (3:9). God in all His great mercy has given those people who follow Jezebel's teaching **time to repent**. But they are unwilling. Their punishment will be suffering and the death of their children.

**To him who wins the victory and does what I want until the goal is reached, I will give him authority over the nations;** <sup>27</sup> **he will rule them with a staff of iron and dash them to pieces like pottery,** <sup>28</sup> **just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.** Observe the phrase **does what I want** in contrast with **what you are doing** in verse 19! There is a supernatural work that only God can do, and sometimes we step across that line and try doing the work of the Ruach. We can introduce people to Yeshua, but their salvation, like ours, is totally a product of His work. Again, there is the promise to the overcomers which will take place later during the millennial reign of Yeshua. We will reign with Yeshua Himself, the morning star. One of the earliest prophecies concerning the Messiah calls Him a "Star" (Numbers 24:17). Those who resist the Adversary will have no other burdens. These faithful Believers are instructed to hold on until Yeshua returns. By faithfulness, not by compromise, will the church attain true leadership.

**In the interest of being as brief, but thorough, as possible, I have attached a great summary of the lessons we should learn from Revelation 2 produced by the editors of the Focus Bible Commentary.** Click here for the PDF version.

### **Special Comparative Note on Chapters 2:18-28** <sup>3</sup>

Among **Historicist** and some **Futurists**, **Thyatira** represents the church of the period of papal triumph and persecution (606-1517). It's the middle church of the seven and likewise covers the Middle Ages. **Thyatira** 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. 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 "Queen of Heaven" in Jeremiah 44:17,18, 25), so the church in the Middle Ages introduced the worship of Mary.

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<sup>2</sup> A Layman's Commentary on Revelation by Don Jones.

<sup>3</sup> Material in this section is taken from "Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated" by Steve Gregg

Regarding the use of the name of Jezebel to label this false teaching and compromising lifestyle, Clarence Larkin has this to say: <sup>4</sup>

*There is no question that, whether Jezebel was a real person or not, she typified a "System" and that "System" was the "Papal Church." When the "Papal Church" introduced images and pictures into its churches for the people to bow down to, it became idolatrous. And when it set up its claim that the teaching of the church is superior to the Word of God, it assumed the role of "Prophetess." A careful study of the "Papal System" from 606 CE to the Reformation in 1520 CE, with its institution of the "Sacrifice of the Mass" and other Pagan rites, reveals in it the sway of "Jezebelism." It was also a period of 'Jezebelistic Persecution,' as seen in the wars of the Crusades, and the rise of the Inquisition.*

In my next post, we will look at the letter to the **Messianic Community in Sardis**.

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<sup>4</sup> A Layman's Commentary on Revelation by Don Jones.