

Revelations 2:18-29 The Church at Thyatira

Some twenty miles east of Pergamum on the road to Sardis was Thyatira, a name which means "castle of Thya," and which is probably retained in the modern *Ak-Hissar* (white castle), a Turkish town on a fertile plain, being the center of the cotton industry, and a relatively important town. In New Testament times, the dye industry was important, Lydia (cf: Acts 16:4) was from Thyatira. It was also the home of many influential trade guilds, each having their own gods, temples, and guild halls, where feasts, tending to obscenity, and all kinds of immoralities were practices ... Christians could not be members of these unions or guilds and it would have been difficult to make a living without participation in one of them. Politically, Thyatira was a kind of buffer state between Pergamum on the west and Seleucus (Syria) on the east, evidently changing hands a number of times between the two states in pre-Christian history.

Revelation 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira (thy-a-TIE-ra) write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

Apollo the sun god was in mythology was the son of Zeus. He was the principal deity of this city leading to the reference to the Jesus the real Son of God and the morning star used as a contrast to paganism.

Revelation 2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Such a glowing tribute as this verse leads one to wonder what could be wrong with a church like that. But despite their faith, love and works ... there was a cancer gnawing away at the vitals of the congregation, and that problem would lead to the burden of the letter to this Church.

Revelation 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest (or allow) that woman Jezebel, which calleth

herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

That woman Jezebel ... This verse is one of the most interesting in the New Testament, because here was an example of female leadership usurping the authority of the eldership of the Church. Not only that but it was accepted by a first century church of Christ.

How long does it take a Church to go bad? Not long as we have seen.

In spite of the “modernist” and the “change movement” within the Churches of Christ the role of women in the Church is taught in scripture cf:

I Timothy 2:12-14 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 13. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

“To teach ...” refers to public teaching in the worship of the Church. Nute said: As we will see, above this prohibition in no way contradicts Titus 2:2-5 which deals with older women teaching younger women. This prohibition relates to teaching in the church in the presence of men and to the fact that authority and leadership in the church is not committed to women ... except in women to women & women to children role ...

I Timothy 2:12-14 “For Adam was first formed, then Eve ...” This verse takes us back to the creation order to understand how God wants “Worship.” Of Himself to be conducted. Adam was created out of the dirt and Eve was created from Adam’s rib ... Women are to teach cf:

Titus 2:3-5 The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Every entity must have a head, and the headship of man over the family and in the Church is by God's own Divine appointment.

I Corinthians 14:34-35 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. 35. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Upon the occasion of the creation and fall, God said to Eve, "... thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Genesis 3:16. Thus, from the very beginning the authority of the family was vested in the man.

McGarvey declared, "... while the gospel freed and emancipated woman, (Galatians 3:26-29) it did not change her natural relation" in the hierarchy of God's instruction to the family.

The issue is not women's rights or equality but does God have the right and authority to be worshipped in the way He wants? For His own reason God appointed a court of the women separate from where men worshipped in the Temple. Also a further distinction was where male Israelites worshipped and where Gentiles worshipped. (Hebrew: *Ezrat HaNashim* or *Ezrat Nashim*) The Women's Court existed in the Second Temple, and there are sources which say it existed even in the ancient Tabernacle at Shiloh and in the First Temple. II Chronicles 20:5 states that King Jehoshaphat stood" ... in the house of the Lord before the new court." a court identified by the Talmud as the Court of the Women. In today's synagogues, this Hebrew term is used for the area allocated to women for the purpose of prayer.

After clear New Testament teaching forbidding women from being evangelists, preachers, teachers ... or the Eldership the very fact of this female character's having been allowed to (KJV) "teach", with the approval (KJV) says "sufferest" of the whole church, and of her also claiming the gift of (KJV) "prophecy" strongly suggest the

eldership had approved of her actions. New Testament Prophecy was more teaching "forth telling" than "future telling" so this woman claimed to be "a teacher" plus a "prophetess" cf:

I Corinthians 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

The prominence which Lydia no doubt had in bringing the gospel to that city could have created a favorable atmosphere for the development of a woman preacher or teacher. Here is a clear case of a wicked woman, given over to sexual debauchery, dissolute in all her ways who usurped the God given authority of a congregation of the Churches of Christ.

The word Jezebel "is not a figurative term for a party or a movement; it designates an actual person no matter what her real name was ... called out here by the Lord who used this nickname for this woman. Her followers are distinguished from her. Whatever her actual name might have been, the Lord called her "Jezebel," because of the similarity of her influence upon the Church to that of the original Jezebel upon Israel. Her actions were exactly like the Old Testament "wicked queen of that name. Jezebel tried to establish an idolatrous cult in the place of the worship of the LORD God Yahweh and was herself accused of "whoredom and witchcraft" in II Kings 9:22. She apparently taught idolatrous practices were permissible, encouraged fornication and indulged in the same herself with members of the Church. This is similar to the "doctrine of Balaam," that Jesus spoke against at Pergamos in Revelation 2:14-15.

Some have sought to identify her with the Chaldean Sibyl, a pagan religious establishment outside the walls of Thyatira: Lenski said: "The woman of this letter cannot be such a sibyl; she is a pretending preacher, teacher, prophetess who operates right in middle of the Church of Christ at Thyatira as one of its members."

“To commit fornication ... eat things sacrificed to idols ...”

This identification of the very sins of Jezebel identifies her and her followers with the followers of Balaam and with the Nicolaitans, there being no difference in the sins previously cited. It is quite evident, therefore, that in the three churches of Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira, the sinful problem was the same ... that being a sexual kind of wickedness described here. and that the thrust of the message is the onward progression of this evil from: (1) the conduct of a few at Ephesus; to (2) the justification of it by a body of teaching at Pergamum; to (3) now the leadership of the church at Thyatira being thoroughly corrupted by a woman whom the Lord called “Jezebel”.

Revelation 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

I gave her space (time) ... The longsuffering of the Lord is great for He is full of mercy. The Saviour is not seeking some grounds for casting out His children, but overlooks their transgressions for a season, waiting for their repentance. For the willfully unrepentant, however, there remains a judicial hardening and the execution of judgment.

There is also the implication that Jezebel had been previously “warned.” Another necessary deduction is: True repentance is a repentance whereby we forsake sin for righteousness.

Fornication ... There is absolutely no justification to spiritualize this sin as “spiritual adultery.” The obscenities and debaucheries openly observed in the pagan culture were fleshly, sensual, carnal and reprobate ...

Revelation 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

I cast her into a bed ... into great tribulation ... This appears to be an immediate and summary judgment against the type of wicked error rampaging in Thyatira. It is hard not to see in these words exactly the

same kind of judgment referred to in Revelation 2:16; that is, a divine judgement similar to that which befell Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10) which cost them their lives. There even seems to be a distinction between "them that commit adultery with her," as in this verse, contrasted with "her children" suffering being the punishment here, and next death is the next coming judgement.

Except she repent ... Even yet, the gates of mercy had not closed, but this was the final warning.

Revelation 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

And all the churches shall know ... Note the appropriate nature of the threatened visitation of judgement: The bed of suffering was an appropriate reward for the bed of fornication and their judgment was to be as notorious in the Churches as their scandal had been.

I will kill her children with death ... Regarding the increased punishment of the fornicators from suffering in Revelation 2:22 compared with death for "her children" here ... Those who were to suffer were influenced by this doctrine of the woman called "Jezebel" to compromise their Christian loyalty, but those who are to be killed wholly embraced her doctrine. If such a terrible judgment was indeed executed upon them, the example would have had tremendous force in giving all the churches a backbone to stand against paganism.

Revelation 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, (thy-a-TIE-ra) as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

"The rest ..." For the first time in these epistles, we meet with those who are spoken of as "the rest" of the congregation ... the faithful remnant who are distinguished from the great body of professing believers from the pagan world who had penetrated the church.

“Who know not the deep things of Satan ...” There seems to be some doubt about what, exactly, is meant here.

Did they call their doctrine "deep things," like Gnosticism means hidden knowledge ... which the Lord here enlarges to "deep things of Satan," in order to declare its true nature? Or did they themselves call their knowledge "the deep things of Satan," which they so named in order to prove their mastery over them by the false teaching of "unlimited grace" to continue to willfully sin.

It could have been either. If the former, the Lord here exposed their "deep things" as really being of the devil; and, if the latter, the deviates were reasoning as some do even today, who say that in order to triumph over evil one must practice evil. To probe the depths of Satan, one must go down into these depths and wallow in the mire ... the folly and fallacy of such reasoning are obvious.

I cast upon you no other burden ... "The very language of the Jerusalem council is echoed in these words cf:

Acts 15:28-29 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

The words of Jesus here are surely an allusion to the Jerusalem decision of the early church which is recommended tacitly as a safe, wise rule of Christian conduct for every believer.

Revelation 2:25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

The church through history are told to hold fast Jesus' teaching until the second advent ... The coming here is not the Second Advent. "It was necessary to hold fast to the Christian profession until Christ came in visitation through the trials soon to confront the churches and for all time until the second advent.

Revelation 2:26 And he that over cometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

He that overcometh ... Note that here we have a definition of "overcoming," which means "keeping the works" of Christ unto the end." What end is this? Every end, whether the end of difficulties, the end of life, or the end of the ages.

Authority over the nations ... There is an echo here of our Lord's great parable in Luke 20:13-17, wherein the faithful servants were promised ruler-ship over "five cities" and over "ten cities." The manner of the Christian's authority over nations does not appear in this promise, but it is evident subsequently in the prophecy

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and / *saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

The Church brethren are members of His Kingdom now upon the earth

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Daniel 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Acts 2:30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Revelation 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

As the last clause of this verse indicates, the authority Christians are to exercise is "as" the authority that the Father has given Christ.

They will "reign with him," not in the literal sense of enjoying earthly authority in human governments, but in the spiritual sense of sharing the holy blessings of his kingdom and of winning others through the gospel of Christ. The 12 apostles who are now, reigning with Christ:

Matthew 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

... and it is inconceivable that anything other than this is implied here. The bizarre notion that some eschatological revolution connected with a literal return of Christ to the earth will suddenly give the reins of human government into the hands of Christians is foreign to the New Testament. This is not a future millennium text. These words are plainly the imagery of the irresistible force of the gospel.

The rod of iron" and the shattering of the "potter's vessels" are merely expressions from the Great Messianic Psalm of Christ's Kingdom ... which is the Churches of Christ or all Christians now rule over the nations by the preaching of the Gospel.

Psalm 2:8-9 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Daniel 4:17-B ... to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

The meaning of “basest of men” is: a person or a person's actions or feelings who is without moral principles; prideful ignoble people with instincts of greed and selfishness as all earthly kingdoms are so ruled

Revelation 2:28 And I will give him the morning star.

This, like all similar promises in connection with these seven letters, is the promise of eternal life. This does not mean, to invest the overcomer with its glory, nor to give him possession of Christ Himself, but to make the dawn of salvation or of life eternal shine on him after his dark affliction.

The fulfillment of this promise of Christ having authority over the nations fulfilled today for the Churches of Christ is the Kingdom of God ...

The ruling with a rod of iron and shattering the potter's vessels refer to the smashing of paganism. Pagan resistance will indeed be smashed, but God will use no other iron bar than the Gospel to do it. That is the death of His Son, His burial and His resurrection.

The martyrdom of His saints while preaching the Gospel unto all the world is our World Conquest and how we rule over the nations.

Revelation 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Some think Moral compromise is the central danger in Christ's message to the church at Thyatira ... but there is more to it than that, although admittedly that is bad enough. There was an abdication of the eldership in that church. A vile woman had taken it over, and they had done nothing about it. Furthermore, there was the general

toleration of the teaching in which they rationalized support for and encouragement of the immorality. Aside from Sardis, the church next written, Thyatira was the worst of the seven addressed in this series.

The proud and domineering Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, (EHTH-baal) king of Tyre, was the wife of Ahab, king of Israel.

Recently Archaeologist found Jezebel richly ornamented Seal in Phoenician Script dated between the 9th and 8th century BC in Israel.

Jezebel made Baalism the official religion of the northern kingdom, hastening its decline and fall by the idolatry which she introduced.

"She was responsible in large measure for the collapse of the nation because of the evils which she introduced cf:

1 Kings 16:29-33 And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him. 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal (EHTH-baal) king of the Zidonians, (zi-DO-nee-ens- and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

If she who is called Jezebel in this letter to Thyatira had been permitted to continue without divine interference, the total collapse of Christianity under the encroachments of paganism might have followed. But there was divine intervention. Furthermore, it would appear that the church got the message; and that at no subsequent time is there any record of the eldership of a church of our Lord abandoning their authority to a woman ... although a woman masquerading as a man became a pope

The legitimate deduction from what is revealed in this message to Thyatira is that the eldership of a church should use the full authority of their position to countermand and eliminate every emergence of false teaching in their congregations. There could have been no excuse whatever for their dereliction in the instance of this so called Jezebel's wanton disregard of the teaching of Christ and her openly advocating the cause of sexual paganism in the congregation.

Sources: Mike Meyerhoffer's notes, George Faull, Gene West, Foy Wallace, Burton Coffman, B. W. Johnson Adam Clark, the Narrow Path, Bruce Gore Commentaries, Revelation 4 Views, KJV Bible, Wikipedia, theWord.com