

Smn D&R06 Thyatira

Daniel and Revelation Series

Sermon 6

Thyatira

(The Tolerant Church)

Text: [Rev 2:18-29](#)

In our last sermon on Revelation we looked at Pergamos, the church that emerged out of the time of persecution to compromise itself with Roman paganism and gradually to become the established religion of the world as the Roman Empire collapsed around it. This was the compromising church that allowed error to infiltrate its purity in order to survive.

We saw that it commenced when persecution against Christians ceased as the Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity around 323 AD, and ended at the time when the power of the Christian church was fully established out of the ruins of the Roman Empire around 538 AD.

As we consider Thyatira we shall see that it describes a time of great apostasy and tolerance of evil in the church, and the time that the church sunk to its lowest depths. This is the tolerating Church!

Let's read verses 18-29.

Introduction: From 1:14, 15. Ever had someone look at you with eyes that are blazing? If the boss looks at you like that, you know you had better look for another job. Its over! Guys, if your wife looks at you like that you better watch out. But to have Jesus look at us like that is fearsome. Notice, here that if there was ever any doubt about who is described in chapter one, He is here identified as the Son of God. So once again we can rely on the Scriptures to interpret the Scriptures.

Commendation: They did good works. Even amidst the wrongs of this church Jesus finds some good. What an encouragement that is for when all seems so wrong.

Rebuke: Most of this letter is rebuke. Jezebel. Who is Jezebel? We first find her in [1Kings 16:30-33](#). Jezebel was responsible for introducing rank paganism into Israel. She introduced the Babylonian system of worship among the children of Israel. It was this same Babylonian system of worship that was introduced into the Christian Church during the Dark Ages. Jezebel introduced it into Israel, and during the days of Thyatira it was introduced again with all its idols, relics, elaborate clothing, candles, and pomp and ceremony. For this reason Jezebel is used to describe the phenomena that occurred in the church at this time.

For this reason the adultery referred to here is not literal adultery, but spiritual. We will find later on that the church of God is described as a pure woman. We find it in [Chapter 12:1](#). In [Jeremiah 6:2](#) Jerusalem is likened to a beautiful and delicate woman.

In contrast the false church is described as a corrupt and adulterous woman. We find her described in [Chapter 17:3-6](#). This is not a literal woman, it is the apostate church. Spiritual adultery is simply idolatry –the worship of idols and images along with all the practices that went with it.

Again we find in [Chapter 14:3, 4](#) that the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth were those who did not defile themselves with women, and kept themselves pure. The reference to women is not literal or we might be led to believe that only men can be saved. These women represent false religion.

This is what Jesus finds in the church of Thyatira. Yet notice that even now He gives opportunity for repentance, verse 22. Verse 21 says that Jezebel herself refuses to repent, but Jesus says those who commit adultery with her can still be forgiven if they repent. In other words the false religious system that has been set up will never change. We should never expect it to change. It is Satan's counterfeit system set up to challenge the truth of God. It will never change until the day when Christ destroys it.

In verse 24 Jesus describes this system as one that teaches the so-called deep secrets of Satan. These "deep secrets" started back in the days soon after the flood. We find the story frustratingly briefly told in [Gen. 10:8-10](#). There is a lesson for us in that which we shall look at later.

The Admonition: To those who have resisted this system – and there are a few in Thyatira who rejected this false system and clung to the simple Gospel truths. Those faithful inhabitants of the Piedmont and Waldensian Valleys of northern Italy bravely clung to the simple teaching of the Scriptures and suffered terrible persecution for it – To those people Jesus has a special message; it is found in verse 25, where He says, “*Only hold on to what you have until I come*”.

This is important because it is the first reference by Jesus to the fact that he will come back. What beautiful words to those who suffer for His namesake.

The Promise: Those who have been faithful to God during this period have been trodden on by feet of iron and dashed like pieces of pottery down the steep mountainsides of the Piedmont valleys. Hence it is fitting that Jesus promises these faithful ones that when He returns in all His glory He will, as it says in verse 27, give them authority over the nations and will rule with an iron sceptre and dash the wicked like pieces of pottery.

By the way, when you read a reference to “The Nations”, or “The peoples of the world”, it almost always refers to the wicked. It is not the righteous that the faithful will rule/judge with a rod of iron, but the wicked.

A second promise is given in verse 28. Morning Star! What is that? Are there any allusions or other references? Firstly look at [Chapter 22:16](#). Here Jesus

describes Himself as the Morning Star. And so he is. But those of you who use the NIV will find it somewhere else, and this presents a small problem. Turn to [Isa 14:12](#). The KJV has the familiar “Lucifer”, but the NIV refers to the evil one as the morning star. Confusing eh?

In fact the expression “morning star” refers to the star that is sometimes seen in the sky shortly before the dawn. Those of you who have studied astronomy will know that the planet Venus is fairly close to the sun, and therefore is often seen to rise just before the sun rises. Therefore people seeing Venus rise know that the dawn will soon break. The fact that Lucifer gave himself that name does not detract from the true meaning of the expression Morning Star.

In the context of Thyatira, Jesus is reminding the faithful of Thyatira that the dawn is soon coming; that this period of darkness is soon to end. Thus it was during the period of Thyatira that the light of the Gospel was shed abroad by faithful men such as John Wycliffe, Martin Tyndale and of course, Martin Luther. These men God used to break the power of darkness and terror by bringing the Word of God into the languages of the common people so that they could understand for themselves the Gospel of Christ. The reference to the Morning Star was a sign to the persecuted believers of the Dark Ages that time would be when Christ would come back and put an end to their struggles.

So what time period shall we give to Thyatira? It commenced at the time when the Christian Church

emerged out of the ashes of the Roman Empire and continued until the time of the Reformation. It was in 538AD that the Church secured its political power, and about 1000 years later that the Reformation began. It is hard to establish an exact date for this, and the SDA Commentary suggests the date 1798 when the Pope finally lost his political power. If that date is correct, that marks a period of 1260 years for Thyatira. The time period 1260 years is a significant one and we shall run into it several times in our study of Revelation.

What lessons are there for us here?

1. Even amidst the wrongs of this church Jesus finds some good. That encourages me, because I see only the bad. We have a tendency to see others' faults, but in the worst of us God finds some good. We need to look for the good in people and to praise them for it.
2. Notice from verse 22 that even at this stage of degradation God gives opportunity for repentance. It seems it is almost never too late to repent and to be saved. We often think we are too bad, and resist believing because we think there is no hope. But this passage tells us that while we have life we have hope, and can be saved.
3. The third lesson comes from that frustratingly brief passage about Nimrod. Why is so little detail given? Because we don't need to know it! If you read a book like "The Great Controversy", you will find the author describes only truth, and give no time to

describing what is erroneous. I have heard speakers give whole series of lectures describing error. They explain the inner workings of the Illuminati, the Masonic system, the Papacy – all that stuff. It tickles the ears, but we don't need knowledge of error, we need knowledge of truth. Jesus never discussed error; he simply presented truth, and by doing so enabled his hearers to recognise the error by the absence of truth.

This church then is one that describes the lowest point in our Christian experience, but one that provides hope. It shows that even at our worst we can be forgiven, and that the promise of Christ's return is always there.

That we will know truth is my prayer for you today.