

**DATE of MESSAGE:** February 21<sup>st</sup> 2016

**MESSAGE TITLE:** An Open Letter to a Far-Too-Tolerant Church

**SCRIPTURE:** Revelation 2:18-29

### **GETTING STARTED**

The letter to the church at Thyatira teaches us that a tolerance for false teaching will ultimately lead to a life of unholy living. Thyatira was a politically and culturally marginalized city, finding its identity economically, with guilds dealing in metals and fabric. Guilds celebrated their patron deities in periodic festivals, so believers may have experienced temptation to adopt the message of a 'prophetess' who advocated participation in illicit sex and food sacrificed to idols, both staples of the social scene. Archaeological soundings at modern A-Hissar have yielded evidence of a few ancient architectural elements from Thyatira. Coins point to the ongoing NT-era worship of Apollo, who had been assimilated with the Lydian sun-god Tyrinnos. The believers in the church of Thyatira allowed false teaching to flourish which led to immoral behavior. Jesus had given 'Jezebel' time to repent but she had not. He expressed disappointment that the believers in this church had allowed her teaching to continue to corrupt many in the church.

### **OBSERVATION**

*What two parts of Jesus' body does this passage describe and how does John describe them? What message might this image of Jesus communicate to the believers in Thyatira?*

*What did Jesus find commendable among the believers of this church? Of those characteristics He commends, which catches your attention the most?*

*What does the symbolic name 'Jezebel' (2 Kings 9:7-37) reveal about the character of the woman Jesus calls out in this church? How did this woman lead people astray?*

*What did Jesus promise to do to Jezebel? To her followers?*

*What according to verse 23 does Jesus want the churches to realize as a result of His punishment of Jezebel?*

*How is the nature of the temptation here in Thyatira like and unlike the temptation the believers in Pergamum faced?*

*Jesus indicated that a host of people in the church rejected the influence of Jezebel in the church. What message did Jesus have for these believers?*

*What does Jesus promise to those who overcome the cultural influences of their day that were pressing in on the church?*

### **APPLICATION**

*The name 'Jezebel' was likely a nickname for an actual person who led people astray through false doctrine. Who or what has played the part of Jezebel in your own life? How did the Lord free you from that influence? What can believers do to resist the charms of people like the Jezebel described in this passage?*

*One of our early church fathers, Tertullian remarked, "We were born for nothing but repentance" How has the patience of Jesus led you to repentance? Have you ever wrongly assumed that God's patience over sin meant that He somehow condoned sin?*

### **PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, please keep us close to your word. We cling to you (Psalm 63:18)! We don't want to give in to false doctrine that will lead us astray. Help us resist the subtle hints and nudges of the enemy who seeks a foothold in our lives. Keep us in the purity of your word by the power of the Holy Spirit so we may live in a manner worthy of the calling we have received (Phil. 1:27).*

### **SHARE POINT**

Read Revelation 2:18-29 and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

### **COMMENTARY NOTES**

2:18 The image of Jesus this passage portrays evoke images familiar to Thyatiran metalworkers, as well as echoing OT visions of God's glory. With fiery eyes, Jesus 'searches mind and hearts' and his feet will crush his enemies.

2:19-20 Thyatira's strengths and weaknesses are the inverse of those at Ephesus. This church is strong in love evidenced in works; but it lacks discernment and tolerates heresy. The self-proclaimed prophetess who endorses idolatry and immorality resembles Jezebel of Tyer, who married Israel's King Ahab and violently imposed Baal worship on the northern kingdom. Many scholars think 'Jezebel' represented an actual woman 'prophetess' who was

leading people astray in the church of Thyatira. In any case, she symbolizes the prostitute Babylon, who seduces through pleasure and luxury as well as ruthless violence.

2:21-23 The Lord has given the 'prophetess' time to repent, or the church time to bring her to discipline. Neither has occurred, and she proliferates lovers and children – spiritual offspring who exhibit her influence and will share in her great tribulation, unless they repent.

2:24-25 Jesus' eyes distinguish sincere believers from those who abandon God's Word to search elsewhere for the deep things of Satan, deceptive promises of secret spiritual knowledge through false religions. Those content with the gospel have nothing to fear and no other burden, as long as they hold fast.

2:26-28 The Son of God will share with the one who conquers his own authority to rule the nations. The morning star is Christ himself. Israel's ruler and rescuer, who was foreseen by Balaam, the unwilling seer. Premillennialists see her a reference to reigning with Christ in the millennium.

### **SOURCES CONSULTED**

The ESV Study Bible

The HCSB Study Bible

Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study