

CHAPTER 2

Jesus' Evaluation of Ministry: Message to the Seven Churches

The Church Tolerating Apostasy: A Message to the Church at Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-29

Why was Jesus so intolerant? How dear He state that, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me." Why would Jesus make such an exclusive claim? What is Jesus saying that the Father is not tolerant of any other religion other than Christianity? How dear Jesus make such an intolerant statement. How could He so easily dismiss Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Baha I Faith, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Daoism, Jainism, and Judaism? By our standards today Jesus would be one of the most intolerant people on the planet. Listen to what He said, "he that believe on Me is not condemned but he who does not believe is condemned already because he did not believe in Me." In other words Jesus did not believe that all religions were equal and stated as matter of fact that there is really only one way and He is that way. What would Jesus say about homosexuality, adultery, fornication or any immoral act? We don't have to guest because we already know what He said. Today we are going to witness how the cancer of toleration metastasizes into apostasy.

WHAT IS APOSTASY?

APOSTASY is the act of rebelling against, forsaking, abandoning, or falling away from what one has believed. In the case of the Christian it is the abandonment or falling away from the teachings and works of Jesus.

Jeremiah 2:19

"Your own wickedness will correct you, and your apostasies will reprove you; know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God, and the dread of Me is not in you," declares the Lord GOD of hosts."

Jeremiah 5:6

"Therefore a lion from the forest will slay them, a wolf of the deserts will destroy them, a leopard is watching their cities. Everyone who goes out of them will be torn in pieces, because their transgressions are many, their apostasies are numerous."

Jeremiah 8:5

"Why then has this people, Jerusalem, turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to

deceit, they refuse to return.”

Jeremiah 14:7 (NASB95)

“Although our iniquities testify against us, O Lord, act for Your name’s sake! Truly our apostasies have been many, we have sinned against You.”

2 Thessalonians 2:3

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

Please note that it is not the thing that is outside of a man that defiles him, but the thing which comes from within. The church at Thyatira stands as a warning to all in the church who would compromise on the word of truth and tolerate immorality under the pretense of love, faith or service.

Before we begin the evaluation process let first have a brief look at the historical background.

Thyatira, 40 miles southeast of Pergamum, was a much smaller city. It was situated in an area noted for its abundant crops and the manufacture of purple dye. It was established as a Macedonian colony by Alexander the Great after the destruction of the Persian Empire. This is the only mention of Thyatira outside of Acts 16:14-15 where Lydia the seller of purple fabrics and a worshiper of God was listening to Paul preach and the Lord opened up her heart to respond to the things that were spoken by Paul. The presentation of the gospel move her and her entire house to be baptized. This most likely was the starting point for the church at Thyatira. Though Lydia was most likely dead by this time the fruit of her witness remained. The church was small, but it was singled out for this penetrating letter of rebuke.

Five Factors in Christ evaluation of the church at Thyatira

1. **Christ credentials**
2. **Christ Commendation**
3. **Christ Indictment**
4. **Christ Exhortation**
5. **Christ Invitation and promise**

1. Christ credentials – “The Son of God” (v. 18)

18 *“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:*

In keeping with His evaluation motif Christ introduces Himself as the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. His description of Himself is similar to that in 1:14–15 where He was called the Son of Man, but here He is called the Son of God. The term Son of God is used as a reminder of His deity, Jesus is the Son of God He Himself being God. In 1:14 it states, “and His eyes were like a flame of fire,” here it reiterates the same

idea of His eyes being like fire; this passage also reiterates what was stated in 1:15 the point of His feet being like burnished bronze.

According to Walvoord the eyes and feet are representations of His “indignation and righteous judgment of their sins.” Thyatira was tolerating a departure from the true worship of Christ that was so serious that He responded with burning indignation and purifying judgement.

2. Christ Commendation – “Love, Faith, Service and Perseverance” (v. 19)

Note the consistency of Christ evaluation process. After He introduces Himself there is always a commendation for work that was done. His commendation in this case was based on love, faith, service and perseverance (cf. 2:2). This church was displaying authentic Christian fruit and were doing more as time went on (in contrast to the Ephesus church which did less). In the two churches prior (Smyrna and Pergamum) there were no mention of their works, but here the works of Thyatira is highlighted. The remnant members of this church demonstrated a genuine love for each other and their faith, service and perseverance brought them recognition from Christ Himself. Realize that this commendation was not given to the entire church, but rather the remnant that remained faithful to the love, faith, service and perseverance of Christ. Notice that God always allow the goats to hang with the sheep until His time; He Himself is the one who will separate the tares from the wheat; but until then they all remain together.

3. Christ Indictment – “Spiritual Wickedness” (vv. 20-23)

In spite of its commendation of love, faith, service and perseverance the church at Thyatira received a very stern rebuke. In evaluating both the church at Ephesus and Pergamum indictments (rebukes) were given. It appears a pattern for a church to be strong in teaching and keeping the faith in Christ Jesus yet to lose the love for Him (Ephesus) and condone (tolerate) false teaching which places a stumbling block before the people of God leading them to commit acts of immorality (Pergamum). The judgment on this church is not coming against the entire church. Christ is going to call out those specific individuals who are following a false teacher and holding fast to her false teaching.

In Thyatira there appear to have been three distinct groups comprising the church.

1. **Those practicing love, faithfulness, service and perseverance;**
2. **Those who stood for tolerance; and the**
3. **Those of Jezebel and friends.**

(Clint Eastwood, the good, the bad, and the ugly)

The main focus of this rebuke appears to be the woman Jezebel, who claimed to be a prophetess and taught believers to take part in the sexual immorality that accompanied pagan religion and to eat food sacrificed to idols. Remember Jezebel in the O.T. how she lead her husband Ahab in the worship of Baal? In like manner this woman called Jezebel (not likely her real name) is operating like the wife of King Ahab (1 Kings 16:31-33), in that she is leading the people of God into sexual immorality. Ahab is known throughout history for his rebellion against God because of Jezebel.

v. 20 **“But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel.”** Realize the danger of false teaching. The church tolerated Jezebel’s teaching which lead true followers of Christ astray. V. 20 **“She teaches and leads My bondservants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.”**

In the church of God open acceptance under the disguise of tolerance and participation in immorality will always bring forth the judgment of God. When a church is biblical illiterate it follows the path of Israel who rebel against the word of God and conformed itself to the pattern of this world. Notice in v. 21 that she was given opportunity to repent but she did not want to. This self-proclaimed prophetess was called out by Christ as participating in adultery and causing others to do the same. Note the church is called to repent. God is calling this nation to repent; He is calling His church to repent. We could choose to play politics and word games, but the reality is God does not compromise with morality. He does not believe in a lesser of two evils; He does not accept the sinner and their sin, but rather He accepts the sinner in their sin. The goal is transformation not acceptance.

Christ promised sudden and immediate judgment, called her sin adultery and promised that all who followed her would suffer intensely. He also promised, I will strike her children dead, meaning that suffering would extend also to her followers. The judgment would be so dramatic that all the churches would know that Christ is the One who searches hearts and minds.

Proverbs 14:12

12. There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 16:18

18. Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.

4. Christ Exhortation – “To the Godly Remnant” (vv. 24-25)

Though this church had many who were following the false prophetess there were still in the church a godly remnant who did not follow her teaching which Christ called “the teachings of Satan.”

Revelation 2:24–25

24 **‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you.**

25 **‘Nevertheless what you have, HOLD FAST UNTIL I COME** (main point).

5. Christ Invitation and promise (vv. 26-29)

2 Timothy 2:11–12

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

Revelation 2:26–27

‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority

over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father;

Christ promises believers who are faithful that they will join Him in His millennial rule. The word in verse 27 translated “rule” means “to shepherd,” indicating that they will not simply be administering justice but will also, like a shepherd using his rod, be dealing with his sheep and protecting them as well. Though Psalm 2:9 refers to Christ’s rule, John’s quotation of it here relates the ruling (shepherding) to the believer who overcomes. Believers will have authority just as Christ does.

Psalm 2:8–9

‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’ ”

1 Corinthians 6:2–3

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

2:29. The letter to Thyatira closes with the familiar exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Unlike the earlier letters, this exhortation follows rather than precedes the promise to overcome, and this order is followed in the letters to the last three church

Revelation 2:28–29

28 and I will give him the morning star.

29 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Revelation 20:4–6 (NASB95)

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Application

- (a) **Know the real and you will know the fake**
- (b) **God standards of holiness have not change**

