



## “8 Great Truths: Snapshots From Jesus in The Book of Revelation”



Teacher's Guide

### The Church @ Thyatira - Playing With Sin Always Gets You Burned Week 5 – July 4, 2010

#### *Opening Announcements and Prayer*

**Icebreaker:** Does God want us to look the other way when sin is among us? Isn't that being filled with Grace? What does sin in the church do to our witness in the community?

**Transition:** It is somewhat of a paradox. God expects His church to be both filled with grace, a hospital for the sinner, and yet be holy. Maybe the letter to the church in Thyatira can shed some light on this seemingly complex issue.

#### *Read Revelation Chapter 2:18-29*

- **City Tour** - Using information from Craig Koester's web tour to provide the following information:  
<http://www2.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/main.htm>
  - Culture and Government
    - 40Mi SE of Pergamum
    - In historic terms, a relatively new city founded by Seleucus I about 300BC
    - One of the earliest cities in the region to welcome Roman Control 190BC
    - Chief city of the Lycus Valley - not a highly defensible position
    - On the trade route to the East
  - Commerce and industry
    - Wealthy center of industry and trade
    - Heavy textile industry
      - Lydia, the "seller of purple" was from Thyatira
    - Strong presence of trade guilds
      - Guilds were closed shops
      - If you wanted to work in a trade you were required to be a guildsman and could not do business otherwise due to monopolistic practices
      - Guilds were all connected to a patron deity and participated in sacrificial meals and worship
      - Guilds also provided a quasi Social Security network, which included healthcare and payment for the funerals of guild members.
  - Religious practices
    - Worship of Apollo, the sun god and son of zeus, was the primary faith. Thus they believed him to be both the sun god and the "son of god."
    - Artemis was also prevalent
    - Sibylline Oracles
      - Fortunetellers or oracles to whom people would travel to divine the future and get answers to their questions
      - There is evidence of there being a Sambathe or sibyl in this area
    - No imperial temple, but emperors were still revered especially after Agustus extended low-interest loans to rebuild after an AD 17 earthquake severely damaged the city



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### • *Questions for discussion*

- What would it have been like to work if you were a Christian in Thyatira in view of the guilds?
- Has your workplace ever placed expectations on you that were contrary to Christian values?
- How would a Christian, claiming Jesus as the Son of God, be received in Thyatira?

### The Letter

- 2:18 - Picture the author
  - Son of God
    - This image is not in chapter one
    - Clearly sets Jesus in opposition to Apollo
  - One whose eyes are blazing like fire
  - Feet like burnished bronze
    - Burning and shining are attributes typically associated with Apollo
    - Additionally, this speaks to his glorious nature as in the radiance of God experienced by Moses on Sinai and purity and holiness
    - Also the burnished bronze would play off the bronze-working guilds and manufacturing as a finely crafted product
- 2:19 Archival image - What the church originally looked like
  - Love and Faith
  - Service
  - Patient endurance (perseverance NIV)
    - Loving, faithful, and patiently enduring the tribulations John shared in
    - We are to be known by love as Jesus' disciples.
    - We are to be faithful to the will of God
    - We must be prepared to suffer for Christ, taking up our cross daily.
- 2:20 - 23 Features of a Fuzzy church
  - Tolerate the woman Jezebel
    - Jezebel is probably not her real name. John wants the reader to remember OT Jezebel married king Ahab and led all Israel astray. Elijah conquered her prophets in intolerant fashion in 1 Kings 18.
    - This woman is claiming to speak for God, a prophetess.
      - She could be making herself out to be some sort of Christianized Sibyl and seeking fame in this.
      - She has built a following among believers in Thyatira
      - She seduces them to fornication, i.e. Spiritual Adultery
      - She seduces them to eat food sacrificed to idols
        - Here John might be referring to the guild meals in honor of the patron guild deities
      - She refuses to repent

- Jezebel and her followers will be thrown onto a bed of suffering
  - The term bed could also be a play on the idea of reclining at table for a guild meal
  - It could also simply be a contrasting image. One's bed is usually thought of as a place of rest, a bed of suffering is associated with the pain of illness and sometimes death. Additionally, the Bible often speaks of one's bed as pure or impure. Jezebel's bed is one of impurity that brings disgrace.
  - "Throughout Scripture beds reveal in various ways the intimate conditions and relationships of those to whom they belong. From the biblical perspective, what human beings do in their beds offers a telling picture of what they are doing with their lives: "
- Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000, c1998). *Dictionary of biblical imagery* (electronic ed.) (86). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Jezebel's children will be killed
  - Children in this usage means those who follow her teaching
  - Striking dead in this context means spiritual death like a lamp stand being removed, a loss of salvation.
- Jesus is he who searches hearts and minds and repays according to our deeds whether mental or physical
- A church that fails to exercise church discipline

**Question for discussion:**

- What does the fact that "Jezebel" refuses to repent tell you about her?
- If the content of her teaching, the "deep things of Satan" in v. 23, is some sort of Proto-Gnosticism or hidden knowledge teaching how does that differ from the teachings of Christ?
- Are you familiar with any instances where someone might set themselves up in this manner and teach "the deep things of Satan"?
- What sort of suffering might Jesus inflict on Jezebel and her cohorts?
- 2:24 - 25 - A call to refocus
  - To the rest of you I lay no other burden
    - The remaining faithful are to keep up their faith with only the standing requirements of the faith
  - Hold fast to what you have
    - As Christians they must hold fast to all they have been taught, i.e. they had the doctrine right, but they were not applying it properly in this sense
    - John is implying that to live as citizens of New Jerusalem in a Fallen Babylon World, the church at Thyatira must exercise discipline when false teaching is present.
- 2:26 - 29 - Picture the future - "To him who is conquering...""
  - Given Authority over the nations
    - This is authority derived from the King of Kings
    - There is no need to fear church bullies who are harming the church
  - Rule with an Iron scepter (a rod of iron)



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- A rod of iron was the most unchangeable item in the Roman world it was strong, unbending, and always the same, more than capable of smashing a clay pot
- We live and rule by the Word of God, immutable, unchangeable.
- The morning star
  - The term Morning star is an image used to signify the sun, consider Apollo and Jesus' superiority, i.e. he is the TRUE Morning Star.
  - This image also refers to the Son of David that will restore the kingdom and rule forever -- Jesus is saying I'll give you myself. This implies relationship with Christ for eternity.

### *Question for discussion:*

- Why does Jesus promise his authority, the power of his word, and a strong relationship to the Thyatirans?
- *Summary discussion*
  - Why don't churches often exercise Church discipline?
  - What makes biblical church discipline less effective in America than it should be?
  - How should church members be disciplined and which ones?
  - Do you think PPCC would handle church discipline well, why or why not?
- **Peering Deeper**
  - How does 2 Cor 10:3 - 6 relate to the idea of ruling with a rod of iron and breaking clay pots?
  - What does one's worldview have to do with how one exercises church discipline or responds to a Jezebel in their midst?
  - Where else in Revelation can you find Christians sharing authority with Christ?