

Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.



Domitian, the Emperor during the writing of Revelation, considered himself to be a god. He was assassinated but was not deified by the senate like Augustus and Julius. Under his reign, Roman forces invaded Scotland.

“Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.”

Thyatira

The fourth church in our study is the church at Thyatira. In relation to the other cities, Thyatira was the least important to the Romans. It was not a major port, a military hub, or home to any major centers of government. However, the letter to Thyatira is the longest of the seven letters. From this, we can know that the message to Thyatira was of major importance to Christians.

Today, the ruins of the Biblical Thyatira are beneath the modern Turkish city of Akhisar, which means “white castle.” In our previous study of Acts, we saw that Lydia, founder of the church at Philippi, was from Thyatira and sold purple cloth that was made there. This is significant in our understanding of the letter.

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

In each letter so far, Jesus introduces himself with an identifying phrase from Revelation chapter 1. Read Rev. 1:12-19 for reference on this. What is unique about his introduction to Thyatira?

Emperor worship was part of the Roman culture. Each Emperor claimed to be the son of Zeus. Augustus was the first to be listed as an official “god” after his death - and was referred to as the son of god during his life. Domitian, the ruler during the time Revelation was written, also spoke of himself as the son of god and commanded citizens to worship him. How does Jesus’ intro hint at the problems in Thyatira?



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Thyatira is praised in the letter for actually growing spiritually. Their deeds were said to be greater than at first. However, like Pergamon, Jesus finds fault in the church there for tolerating the pagan activities in their midst. In Pergamon, they were compared to Nicolaitans but in Thyatira the comparison is to Jezebel.

Jezebel is the Anglicized transliteration of the Hebrew word *Izebel*, which is believed to mean “there is no husband.” Since Jezebel in 1st and 2nd Kings was married to King Ahab, this might imply that she lacked character or morals.

Compare the complaint against Thyatira with that of Pergamum. Both mention sexually immoral behavior. While this may be literally true, Jezebel (in the old testament) was accused of leading people into paganism - she was not accused of being promiscuous. Read Exodus 34:15-16; Deuteronomy 31:16; Jeremiah 3:6; Ezekiel 23:19; and Hosea 9:1. What is the deeper meaning of the “adultery” of Thyatira?

In other parts of Revelation, falling away from God is compared with sexual immorality. Give some examples of these and discuss how this applies to the church today.

Thyatira was a blue collar town. According to historical records, workers there were required to join “guilds” but the early church did not condone this and Christians were not supposed to join. In guild meetings, the workers ate meat sacrificed to Roman gods and then many other immoral acts became a part of the ritual. So, when Jesus spoke against the false prophetess at Thyatira, he may have meant a female church leader who was turning a blind eye to members of her congregation joining guilds.

Jesus promised the believers that they would be given authority over the nations and also be given the morning star. What is meant by the “morning star?” Are there other references in the Bible to this term and how does it fit in with the seven stars mentioned in chapter 1?

REFLECTION: In Thyatira, the people did more than merely tolerate false beliefs, they may have put business ahead of their faith in the sense that they joined these pagan guilds (unions) and ignored their beliefs for the sake of making a profit. Are there times when we find ourselves having to decide between secular things and spiritual growth? What are some examples we see in everyday life?