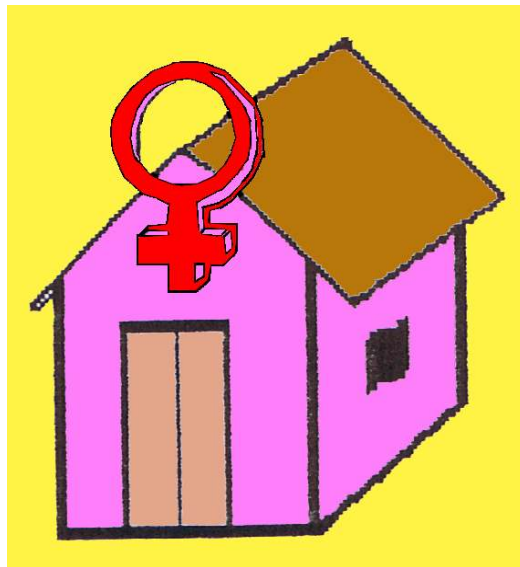


The Seven Churches of Asia

Thyatira



The REVELATION
PART ONE
The Seven Churches of Asia

Thyatira



The second church we will study is the Church at Thyatira.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

ATTENDANCE:

The required minimum attendance for the course overall is 10 weeks.

The required minimum attendance for this lesson is 1 week.

You may take more than 1 week for each lesson should you choose to do so; without any penalty. In fact, some lessons probably will take more than a week to complete for some students. However, though you can take more than the minimum required attendance for each lesson, under no circumstances are you to take less than 1 week for each lesson.

TESTS:

Lesson tests must be taken not less than one week apart.

If you fail a test you may not retake that test on the same day that you failed it.

You must wait at least one day before retaking the test. Use that time to restudy the material and find all of the correct answers to every question missed on the test. The copy of the test automatically sent to you has all of the correct answers on it. Use that copy to make sure you have found all of the correct answers in the study materials.

SCRIPTURES:

Each scripture referenced in this lesson must be looked up and read in your KJV. Reading the scriptures in the lesson, even if they are fully quoted in the lesson, will not fulfill this requirement. They must be looked up and read in your KJV.

LESSONS:

Each lesson is followed by a test. You will find a link to the course main page at the end of each lesson. When you click that link you will be returned to the course main page where you will find a list of tests. There will be instructions concerning whether a particular test is open book or closed book.

If a test is open book you will not need a password to access that test. Click the link for it and it will open and you can then take the test. Your next lesson attendance begins the day after you pass the current lesson test.

If a test is closed book, then you will be instructed to submit a Closed Book Test Contract form. When we receive that form, then you will be sent the password that you will need to access that test. In answer to your request, the password will be sent in 1-2 days, not including weekends when the college offices are closed.. Your next lesson attendance begins the day after you pass the current lesson test.

You may now proceed to the next page to begin the study of the Church at Thyatira.

THYATIRA



The City: Re-built in the early part of the third century B.C. by Seleucus Nicator, a former general of Alexander the Great. Thyatira is first mentioned in the New Testament in Acts 16:14-15.

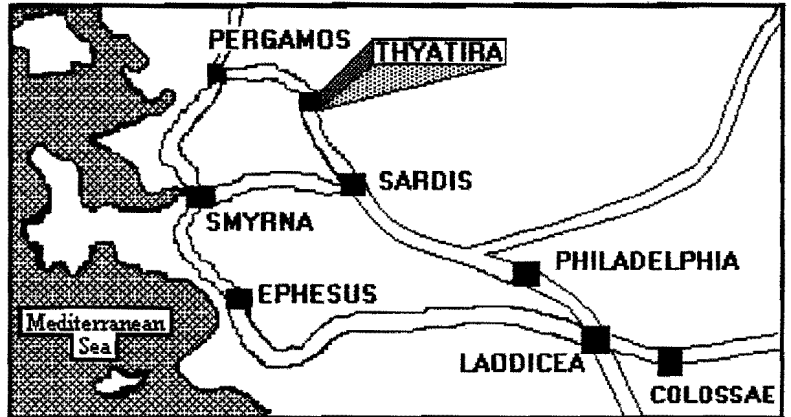
Situated on a branch of the main East-West Roman highway known as, "the Old Way,"

Thyatira was well fortified to defend its strategic position. As a garrison town it must have looked rather severe when compared to its neighbors, Ephesus, Pergamos, etc.

Economically: Economically, bronze-making and dying seem to have been its mainstays. The latter was given a passing mention in the book of Acts. (Acts 16:14) This particular dye,

later known as "Turkey Red," which was made from madder root, was originally more of a crimson color, deep red with just a touch of purple, rather than a mixture of red and blue as it is today. (Inscriptions from that time make frequent mention of Thyatira's dying business.) In addition to those two mainstays, it also boasted of many other indigenous crafts. Its wider economic base, however, was as a commercial town, strategically located; and extant records mention the presence of more trade-guilds there than in any other city in Asia. (More on this later.)

Socially: Thyatira's favorite pastime seems to have been excessive drinking, which is not unusual in army towns even today. Also, the presence of the trade guilds and their practice of common meals that included heavy drinking, and the number of people involved with those guilds, exacerbated the already serious problem to even further heights.



History: Throughout the years, Thyatira suffered repeated attacks by the Turks. Each time the city was destroyed it was rebuilt upon the ruins. This makes archaeological research very difficult as the new construction replaces the old. At the present time the Turkish city of Akhisar stands on the site, with a population of 50,000. The recurring cycles of attack, destruction, and reconstruction on the same site has effectively obliterated most of the history of the old city.

Religion: Polytheism, inherited from Babylon, probably came to Thyatira through Pergamum and the Chaldean school there. The main local deity was called Tyrimnos who eventually was identified with the sun-god Apollo, brother of Diana, who was the god of youth, manly beauty, music, song and prophecy.



Thyatira was most famous, however, for its magnificent temple to Artemis (another name for Diana) and the ever-present staff of female prostitutes. Also, as a commercial center with the largest number of trade-guilds of any other city in Asia, the presence of the guilds promoted an increase in the practice of idolatry as each guild brought its own religious practices with it to the city. In most of the guilds this would include common meals, eaten by members of the guild, where the meat served would, many times, be meat that had been sacrificed to idols; maybe even meat sacrificed to the patron god of the guild. Most of these dinners culminated in licentious partying, (drunkenness, whoring, etc.) which only served to increase the general debauchery associated with the city. This obviously caused problems for Christians who had to belong to the guilds in order to do business in the city. Whether they took part in the feast of meats or not they would be accused: either of being legalistic or of laying stumblingblocks in the way of other Christians. Either way it would hurt them. On the one side it would hurt in their business dealings with the idolaters, or, on the other side, it would hurt in the matter of offending a Christian brother's weak conscience.

I Cor 8:7 "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled."

I Cor 8:10 "For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;"

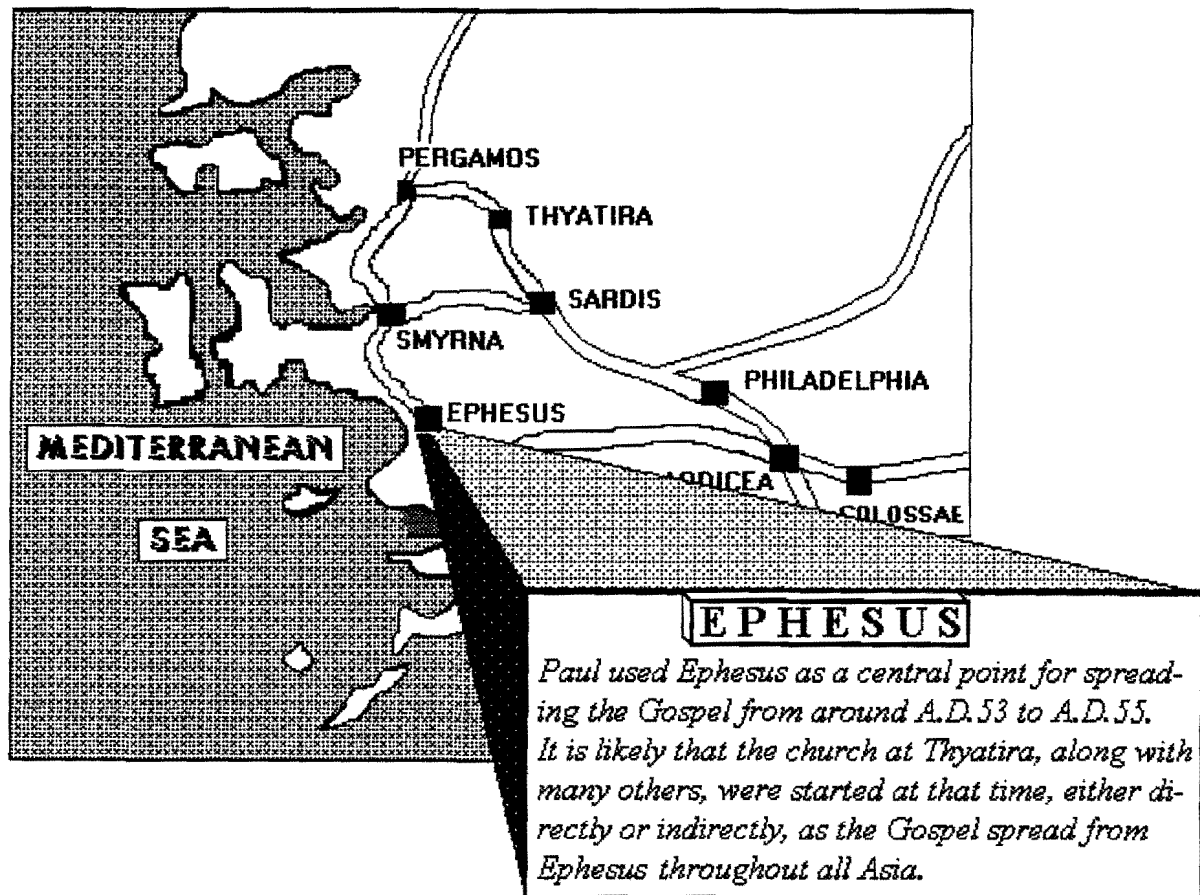
I Cor 8:12 "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."

The matter of the drunkenness, for the Christians, is something else altogether. Even back then many probably fell into the same error as many Christians do today and try to excuse their sin with, "Well, business is business," or, "Surely God will understand, after all, He did say that I must take care of my family or I'm worse than an infidel!" Isn't it funny that excuses for sin haven't changed much in 2,000 years; nor has the human propensity for gullibility and self justification.

The Christian Church:

There is no record of when or by whom the church in Thyatira was started. No mention is made in the Bible that Paul or any of the other New Testament evangelists ever visited the city. A mention is made, however, of Lydia a "seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira," (a convert of Paul in Philippi, Acts 16:14-15), but there is no mention that she ever returned to Thyatira or was involved with the church there. Although the Bible makes no direct mention of the beginning of the Thyatiran church, the best guess is that the message of the gospel of Christ probably reached the city during Paul's two year stay in Ephesus and that the church there was started from that beginning. Of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, which is only 70 miles SW of Thyatira, the Bible tells us that, **"this continued by the space of two years; so that**

all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:10) This Ephesian ministry would have taken place around A.D. 53-55.



Then, from that time frame, we can go forward to the book of the Revelation where we find that some 40 years later there is still a thriving, zealous, working and growing church in Thyatira. (Rev 2:18-19)

THE LETTER TO THYATIRA

(Rev 2:18-29)

2:18 COMMISSION: The Pastor and the church at Thyatira.

Who from and who to? From Jesus Christ to the Pastor and the church at Thyatira.

2:18 CHARACTER:

A description of Christ as the Christ of judgment.

A. "... eyes like a flame of fire..."

Anticipates V:23, in which Christ sees and executes judgment.

B. "... and his feet are like fine brass;"

This anticipates V:27, in which Christ speaks of a rule of iron and breaking them like pottery.

2:19 COMMENDATION:

A. Works, and charity (selfless love), and service, and faith, and patience.

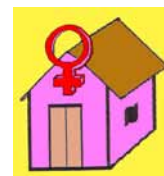
B. And more works, greater than the first. (Growing in zeal.)

2:20- CONDEMNATION:

:23 Like Pergamos, the problem at Thyatira was one of allowing false teachers and teachings.

A. Here at Thyatira, however, the false teacher was a woman and, in addition, she even claimed divine inspiration for her heresy.

("...prophetess..." V:20)



B. This self-proclaimed "prophetess," was, symbolically or actually, named "Jezebel."

In the OT, Jezebel was the wife of king Ahab. (I Ki 16:29-22:40; II Ki 9:ch)

1. He (Ahab) angered God more than, "**all the kings... before him.**" (I Ki 16:33)

2. Why? Because Jezebel, his wife, "**stirred [him] up.**" (I Ki 21:25)

She inspired him in his continuous angering of God with his idolatry and his leading of the people into the same sin..

3. He, "**served Baal;**" beginning when he married Jezebel. (I Ki 16:31)

4. Baal worship, and worship of his goddess wife Ashtoreth, (Greek & Roman-

Astarte; Babylonian-Ishtar) encouraged the use of female temple-prostitutes.

This was a natural evolution from the earlier Babylonian religion of the goddess Ishtar that required female devotees to have ritual sex with a stranger. The Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 B.C.) wrote that the pretty ones managed easily, but "the uncomely sometimes have to wait several years."

C. "**... to commit fornication...**" (V:20) And, "**...adultery...**" (V:22)

There are two possible meanings to this phrase.

1. This could mean that Jezebel may have formerly been a devotee of one of the false religions, possibly Artemis (Diana) whose huge temple was at Thyatira, and brought their ritual fornication with her upon her supposed conversion to Christianity. Claiming inspiration, (V:20, "... prophetess...") she may have been teaching promiscuity



among those in the church, adamantly insisting that they were free to make use of the plethora of prostitutes at the local pagan temple. The temple at neighboring Ephesus had 1,000 temple-prostitutes, and they must have been very plentiful at all of the temples, including the one here at Thyatira.

2. Or, it could mean “fornication... adultery...” in the sense of OT references to idolatry as being fornication and adultery against God. (II Ki 9:22; II Chr 21:11-13; **“fornications... whoredoms... adultery...”** Ez 16:15-43; et al)
3. There was probably some of both in the church at Thyatira; but, because of the parallels drawn between this woman and the OT Jezebel, I favor the stand that this refers primarily to chasing after strange gods and their customs. This was the crux of the issue in the OT concerning the manner in which Jezebel caused her husband, king Ahab, to sin against God, and to lead the people into idolatry (**“...fornication... whoredoms... adultery..”**) against God. The reason I say that there was some of both, physical as well as spiritual fornication and adultery, is because the physical act was such a part of the practices of pagan religions. Therefore, the physical act was a probable outcome of the spiritual act of fornication.

I would also, in support of this position that this is predominantly a reference to spiritual fornication and adultery, bring your attention to the further parallel between, **“...kill her children...”** in Rev 2:23, and I Ki 21:17-29, where God says to king Ahab, Jezebel’s husband, that he (God) **“... will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel.”** Meaning that the posterity of OT Jezebel and Ahab, through the line of the male children, will be cut off by God. We can compare this with the NT Jezebel of the church at Thyatira whose spiritual offspring, those who follow her heretical teachings, will also be cut off.

Rev 2:22 “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.”

Rev 2:23 “And I will kill her children with death...”

4. The NT Jezebel had obviously been given a previous warning and refused to repent of her false teachings. (:21) Therefore, Christ is coming in judgment against her and her followers.

D. Two groups of her followers.

There seems to be a differentiation made between those who were influenced by her and those who wholly embraced her teachings.

1. **“... them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation...”**

These seem to be those who compromised their Christian beliefs and followed her teachings. They are to be chastised, severely to be sure, but only chastised.

:22 “...cast her... and them... into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.”

2. The other group, however, are called, **"... her children..."** These may be those who wholly embrace her false teachings, to the point that they are past repentance. Therefore, Christ says that he will, **"... kill [them] with death..."**
- E. Christ is the God of judgment and will bring, **"... great tribulation... And... kill her children with death..."**
1. The first group of her followers (see the previous section) must be the truly saved who simply got mixed up in her heresy and are given the option to either repent or suffer tribulation. (:22)
 2. The second group evidently are the **"children"** of her heresy; i.e., they were won to her false religion of idolatry, and were never won to Christ. Therefore, as lost people, they fall into the group that will suffer the **"second death,"** Rev 20:14-15, which is being cast into the, **"lake of fire..."** This group are the ones that will not only be killed with physical death, but will be, **"... kill[ed] with death,"** i.e., they will die physically and then be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.
- F. The purpose of this is so that the churches will know that He is the one with **"eyes like a flame of fire"** that sees through (burns through) the outer, and searches the hearts (Hebrew usage- seat of the intellect) and reins (Hebrew- seat of the emotions.)

2:24- CORRECTION:

:25 A. For Jezebel and her crowd. (Overlaps back to V:21-23)

1. For those who had backslid into her error, they are told to repent. (:22)
 2. For those who had been won to her heresy and never had been won to Christ, it was too late, they were wholeheartedly converted to her false religion and would not repent. Therefore, they must suffer the coming judgment.
 3. You will notice that Jezebel herself is not included with the group that are killed with death. She is, instead, included with the group that must repent or suffer tribulation. This would seem to indicate that she really was saved and then fell into error. We can take a very fearful lesson from this by realizing that although we may be saved we still can fall into serious error and cause others to go to hell. If we do not stick with God's Word we could be the cause of much trouble for ourselves and other Christians who follow us; and worse still, be the cause of others never being won to Christ but being won, instead, to our heresy and, thereby, a false sense of security that will send them to the lake of fire.
- B. For the rest of those at Thyatira:
1. Those who don't follow Jezebel and the **"... depths of Satan, as they speak..."** receive an encouragement to hang in there, **"... hold fast till I come."** (:25)
 2. This is a statement of "Correction," to the church as a whole, but to the individual Christians that make up the church it is also an encouragement to remain unsoiled and faithful unto the coming of Christ.
 3. To them the Apostle John reiterates the admonition sent by the Apostolic Counsel

(Acts 15:28-29) in which they gave the precepts that the churches should abstain from fornication and food sacrificed to idols, both of which Jezebel encouraged the Christians at Thyatira to do in direct contradiction to God's teachings through the Council.

"... I will put upon you none other burden." (:24)

2:26- CHALLENGE: Overcometh... keep my works... power over the nations.

:28 Unlike the previous churches, here at Thyatira Christ gives the challenge first and then the call.

A. Overcometh. (V:26) (Rev 21:7 & I Jn 5:4-5)

B. Keep God's works. Don't keep the ungodly works of Jezebel and the devil (i.e., spiritual and physical fornication and adultery); but keep the works of God. (To "keep," means to *hold fast to*, i.e., don't let them go.)

C. Power over the nations. (V:26)

1. To judge them. (To sit with Christ in His throne. I Cor 6:2; Rev 3:21)

2. To rule with a rod of iron with Christ. (2:27 cf. Ps 2:8-9; Rev 12:5)

3. Receive the morning star. (V:28) Refers to joint leadership with Christ who is the morning star. (Rev 22:16; Num 24:17)

2:17 CALL: "... he that hath an ear, let him hear..."

If you have ears, then listen up!

