Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Rd.

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770.469.9069

Seven Churches, Seven Lenses Part 4

The Church in Thyatira

Text: Revelation 2:18-29

Thyatira:

* Now the modern city of Akhisar, in the far west of Turkey
* South of Istanbul, almost due east of Athens
* 50 miles from the Aegean Sea
* In the first century, it was known for its trade guilds. Famous for purple cloth, which was dyed there (Acts 16:14). Inscriptions have been found that mention wool-workers, linen-workers, leather-workers, potters, bakers, bronze-smiths and tanners.

The self-description of Jesus here is different from the ones for the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos. This letter is from the Son of God (the only time this title is used in this book) who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass. Side note: this verse in verse 18 and in 1:14-15 are the verses some use to suggest that the earthly, historical Jesus was a man of color, not the model-looking Caucasian man with long wavy hair that we see depicted in artist’s renderings.

The commendation: I know your works, love, service, faith and patience. Five nouns. The Holy One then comments, more specifically, on their works. *The last are more than the first.* That is, their latter works exceed their former works. Recall with me that Ephesus was rebuked because they left their first love (2:4). Here, Thyatira is commended because *their* love seems to be growing. Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, in their book, *A Handbook on The Revelation of John*, offer an alternate rendering of verse 19 that is refreshing.

*I know how you have lived your lives. I know that you love one another and are loyal to me. I know the way you have helped one another, and your ability to endure. I know you are now doing more than when you first believed in me (became my followers).* (p.58)

The condemnation:

* You gave Jezebel a platform. You let her and her type have the microphone, so to speak (v.20). The text does not identify Jezebel. This is obviously not the OT foreign wife of King Ahab (1 Kings 16:31) This Jezebel is a prophetess who is either an individual or a group of people who symbolize heretical teaching and immoral living and eating food that has been sacrificed to idols (v.20). The spirit of this Jezebel is very much alive. It lives in every individual or group that would water down their theology so that they maintain popularity. Jezebel is present in every radio broadcast that suggests that God wants you happy rather holy and which promulgates prosperity over piety. The spirit of Jezebel is that teaching that suggests that what we do does not matter that much. God calls both Jezebel and those who side with her, to repent. There is a humorous conversation recorded in 2 Kings 9 in which Joram, son of Ahab and Jezebel, says to Jehu, “Have you come in peace?” Jehu replies, “How can there be peace as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound”. The ultimate “yo momma” response.
* When time was given to repent, she (Jezebel) did not repent. Time was given, as an expression of God’s patience and kindness and grace.

**Illus.**

The devil was speaking to some of his ambassadors and they were discussing how they were going to wreak havoc on the earth. The devil asked his first emissary, “What will you tell the humans?”. The junior devil said, “I will tell them there is no God”. The devil said, “Most people believe in God even if they don’t obey Him or follow Him, but you’ll get a bit of a following.” The second satanic ambassador said, “I will tell the humans that there is no heaven or hell.” The devil responded, “You’ll get some people with that line, but most people believe that there’s a place they will go to after death and they want to believe they’re going to heaven. But you will gain a bit of a following”. The third said, “I will tell them they have lots of time to make up their mind”. The devil said, “You, my son will do VERY well”. Time was given to Jezebel and Jezebel did not repent!

The consequence, the “or else” comes as a result of Jezebel’s failure to repent.

* I will cast her into (on to) a sickbed
* I will cast her and all who commit adultery with her, into great tribulation.
* I will kill her children

And all the churches will know something about Me (v.23).

An admonition: Hold on to what you have!

A promise: It is contingent upon the fidelity of the Thyatirans (v.26). The promise is two-fold:

1. I will give the overcomers power over the nations. Verse 27 is taken from Psalm 2:8-9. This is a mission promise. The nations shall come to the Christ. This not so much a statement of conquest as it is a declaration of the outrageous love of God for the nations of the earth.
2. I will give the overcomers the morning star. William Barclay, in his commentary on Revelation, lists the four most common interpretations of this second half of the promise: *I will give him* (the overcomer) *the morning star.*
3. It’s the Christians’ rising after the night of death.
4. It’s the Christians’ victory over Satan, the son of the morning (Isaiah 14:12). Lucifer’s name means *light-bringer*.
5. It’s an affirmation of those who are the faithful, based on Daniel 12:3. The promise is that overcomers will have their brightness turned up.

Daniel 12:3 “*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.”*

4. The fourth and best and most textually consistent of the interpretations of verse 28 is that this is a way of saying, the overcomers get more of Jesus, who is called, in Revelation 22:16*, the Bright and Morning Star.*

I recently read the story of an old-fashioned camp meeting. The preacher for the evening closed the service and was going to walk to his accommodations, which were a good distance from the auditorium where the service was held. This was before the days of flashlights on our phones and LED flashlights in our pockets. An old farmer saw the preacher walking back to his room and gave him a flaming pine torch. The preacher doubted that a pine branch on fire would serve him well. He asked he farmer, “What if it goes out?” The farmer replied, “It will see you home”. The preacher asked, “What if the wind blows it out?” The farmer replied, “It will see you home”. “What if the rain puts it out?”, the preacher asked. The farmer replied, “It will see you home”, and so it did. I want to remind someone here today that if you will be, and remain, faithful to the call of Christ and hold on to what you have (v. 25), this gospel, this faith, this proclamation, this hope in the Bright and Morning Star, will see you all the way home.

Amen