

Checkin' Out My Walk

#11 - Thyatira > Medieval Church - Dark Ages - 590 AD - 1517 AD

Christians everywhere are living in a world steeped in the spirit of Babylon which includes human rebellion + demonic activity. It is man-centered, embraces a spirit of "let us," and is enveloped in hidden idolatry in the heart. From the earliest of post-flood times up to the present, the world and its religions are all tainted by it. It has taken root so firmly in our everyday lives and has been disguised so cleverly, we are blind to the fact we are practicing paganism, even in our modern "Christian" church.

It even astounded John to see this great Mystery Religion still present at the end of the Ages, having been present as an enemy to the Gospel of Jesus Christ all of these years! Babylon and the Harlot - When the angel told John he would tell him the "mystery of the woman riding the beast," he meant the Harlot, the false religious system, would have as its main teachings the same occultic practices as ancient Babylon. It would include black magic, demon contact, séances, miraculous materializations, witchcraft, astrology and sorcery. We know the ancient city of Babylon was ruled by this occultic influence. When Babylon and its temples were destroyed, the high-priest fled with a company of initiates and their sacred vessels and images to Pergamos, where the symbol of the serpent was set up as the emblem of the hidden wisdom. There the ancient cult was propagated under the name of the Etruscan Mysteries and eventually Rome became the headquarters of Babylonianism.

When Christ came into the world the "mystery of iniquity" was everywhere "holding sway." Thus, when the early Christians (apostolic era) set out upon the great task of carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth, they found themselves everywhere confronted by this system, in one form or another; for though Babylon as a city had long been but a mystery, her mysteries had not died with her.

Satan is known for his exploits in counterfeiting the things of God. His plan has always been to usurp the throne of God. So great is his pride, he has imitated the very ideas of God and has sought to win over as many of God's creatures' souls as he can through this great deceit. The Apostolic era ended in a general, systematic persecution of believers by the world system of the day. That persecution came to an abrupt end when the church suddenly found itself befriended by a pagan Roman emperor, bringing the church under the protection of and into cooperation with the political power of that time.

It is likely Constantine was an instrument of Satan to carry out a diabolical plan of destruction of the church from the inside out. His edicts, which caused the marriage of church and state, were the worst thing that could happen to the church.

Quote: Christianity became the established religion in the Roman Empire and took the place of Paganism. Christianity as it existed in the Dark Ages might be termed Baptized Paganism. Confusion and compromise were the obvious fruits of the Pergamos church age.

God told Pergamos: He Himself will fight against heresy in this church with His own Word (2-edged sword - Rev. 2:16). He actually did in this time period. The Canon of Scripture was accepted and the Church declared early in this period that Gnosticism was heretical and those who taught it were labeled as heretics. Unfortunately, the Church did not reject the world system. It played the "harlot" with the world and retained the self-enlightened priesthood clergy and the Babylonian practices that had now become doctrine.

D.A. Carson: "We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated."

C.S. Lewis: "As a matter of fact, if you examined 100 people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?"

During the early centuries of the church's history, the mystery of iniquity had wrought with such astounding effect, and the Babylonian practices and teachings had been so largely absorbed by that which bore the name of the church of Christ, that the truth of the Holy Scriptures on many points had been wholly obscured, while idolatrous practices had been foisted upon the people as Christian sacraments, and the heathen philosophies took the place of gospel instruction. Thus was developed the "mystery system" which for a thousand years dominated Europe (Dark Ages > Church of Thyatira) and trafficked in the bodies and souls of men, until the great Reformation of the 16th century brought in a measure of deliverance.

The Corrupted, Medieval Church That Married The World

Rev. 2:18-25 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: ¹⁹ "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as* for your works, the last *are* more than the first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. ²⁴ "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come.

Can you imagine what happened in the church at Thyatira when the letter was delivered and read? This is a real city, a real church and a real letter that was read to these people. Hebrews says God comes in judgment with the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. He has the power to perform devastating judgment and He has the holiness to not tolerate sin.

If something doesn't change in Thyatira, they will be caught in severe judgment.

Charles Erdman has a helpful perspective on the place of this letter among the seven.

"This letter to the church in Thyatira begins the second group of letters to the churches of Asia Minor. In the first group, the church at Ephesus (Apostolic - weeded out heresy) was characterized by a loyalty to Christ which was lacking in love.

In the church of Smyrna, loyalty was tested by fire. (Satanic opposition)

In the church of Pergamos the loyalty was lacking in moral passion. Yet all three churches were true to the faith and had not yielded to the assaults of evil. In the case of the church at Thyatira, as of the churches in Sardis and Laodicea, the situation was far more serious. Here not merely a small minority was indifferent but large numbers had actually yielded to the demoralizing influence of false teaching, and I might add of sin."

The church of Thyatira represents the period between *590 AD to 1517 AD*, known as the Dark Ages, the "Devil's Millennium." What began in Pergamos comes to full bloom in Thyatira. If the church married the world in Pergamos, they were celebrating anniversaries in Thyatira. If compromise had begun in Pergamos, it had taken over in Thyatira.

This letter shows the depth of sin that compromise ultimately leads to...full-scale idolatry, full-scale immorality, and worst of all, tolerance of both. This church, infiltrated by the world, tolerated sin, absorbed sin and error and lived happily ever after with it.

It faced a problem that has troubled many churches through history > a strong internal movement advocating compromise with worldly interests.

- Thyatira was the least important and smallest of the seven cities in Revelation, yet Jesus' message to the church of Thyatira is the longest of the seven.
- Originally a Lydian town named Pelopia; later called Semiramis. It came under total Roman rule in 133 BC. > 200 years at the time of this letter to them.
- It is the modern day Turkish city of Akhisar.
- Thyatira means "unceasing or continual sacrifice." It probably received this name because it was a military buffer city. It was located some 40 miles south east of Pergamos. When enemies invaded, they would naturally come to Thyatira first. It was not well fortified; in fact, it had no natural defense at all. While its location did not allow it to defend itself very well, its mission was to hold the enemy just long enough for Pergamos, the capital, to prepare itself for battle. Every enemy that came in to Asia Minor came down through that valley,

swept through and devastated this small city of Thyatira.

As a result, Thyatira was destroyed and rebuilt many times during its history.

- There is a continual sacrifice through the abomination of the mass which was an invention historically of the Catholic Church. The Lord is always on the cross. Catholics teach in the sacrament of the mass through the broken bread and the poured out wine, there is a perpetual sacrifice over and over again of the Lord Jesus Christ in His death. That is why a priest is necessary.
Through this continual sacrifice, we in some way can merit some grace.
- Thyatira was among the first cities to use money. Much of the knowledge of ancient Thyatira comes from the images on these coins: baskets of fruit, serpents, double-sided battle axe, Apollo and Artemis, Cybele (the Anatolian mother goddess), Roman emperors and local governors, sports and festivals.
- Thyatira, known for its commerce, was an exporter of purple cloth, the clothing of the rich and affluent. The rare purple dye was produced in this city and obtained from:
(1) a certain shellfish brought up by divers; its throat was slit open; and a single drop of this dye was obtained. That dye, coupled with the chemical composition of the water of Thyatira, made colors possible there that could not be reproduced anywhere else on earth. (2) A root called the madder-root which grew around Thyatira and from that root they could extract purple dye.
- Its 1st mention in the Bible is with Paul's first conversion on the continent of Europe. When Paul was in Philippi preaching the gospel, a businesswoman from Thyatira, a seller of purple named Lydia, was born again by the Holy Spirit.
(See Acts 16:14 - the story of Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira.)
- There were many highly organized trade guilds, ancient unions of the day, in this city. Workers from the various industries of the city, bakers, wool worker, dyers, bronze workers, potters, and others, all banded together to set prices, guarantee work. Guild membership was compulsory for anyone pursuing a trade.
- Trade guilds each had patron gods and their membership meetings centered on the worship of their patron gods. In the fellowship meals, food was first sacrificed to idols. After the meals, orgies were a frequent occurrence. It was through participation in these meetings that commercial and financial security was assured.
- Necessity for membership in a trade community must have strengthened temptation to compromise. The dilemma facing Christian craftsmen must have been a simple but extremely difficult one. (1) Coming to Christ meant the loss of their livelihood and (2) the loss of their financial resources for the Church if they abstained from the communal feast. (3) Participation would be to renounce the faith they had received and to deny the One who had suffered and died for them.
- Though there is simply no way to arrive at a harmony between these two differing ways of life, nevertheless, Jezebel managed to work out a theology that compromised faith in Christ with continued participation in the trade guilds. This "theology" would ensure continued financial prosperity and material wealth.

- The church of Thyatira was a center of occult worship. A universal church system arose with great compromises, one of which was the emphasis of the worship of Mary. There was a temple in the city dedicated to fortune-telling.
- They were steeped in worship of the Roman emperor.
- The city was dedicated to the worship of Tyrimnos, god of the sun. Upon the early coins of Thyatira, Tyrimnos is represented as a horseman, bearing a double-headed battle-ax, similar to those represented on the sculptures of the Hittites.
- It's the first letter with a future in view. It's also the first whose members are divided into two categories; the saved and the unsaved.

Title of Christ to Church of Thyatira - Jesus Identifies Himself in 3 Ways:

Rev. 2:18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

Note: Christ uses the part of His nature which best describes His relationship to this church. The descriptive terminology used in these seven letters is drawn from the vision of Christ in Rev. 1:11-16 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.

He chooses to describe Himself in this letter with the imagery of the Son of God with the eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze.

- I. The Saving One > The Son of God. He is the Savior and He alone is worthy of worship. It is His messianic title indicating He is deity.

Note: In Rev. 1:13, He chose the title: Son of Man.

However, in Rev. 2:18, He chose the title: Son of God.

Note: The title "Son of God" is used 47 times in the New Testament, but only once in Revelation > in this passage.

a. There was a temple in Thyatira dedicated to Apollo - the sun god.

Son of God stands in strong contrast to the local cultic worship of Apollo Tyrimnos, which was merged with that of the emperor (identified as Apollo incarnate) so that both were acclaimed as sons of Zeus. Thus it is not the emperor or the guardian deity of Thyatira, but the resurrected Christ, who is the true Son of God.

b. Zeus was the chief god of the Greeks, the supreme god over all the others that existed. Zeus would therefore have taken the place of YHWH and considered sovereign in the minds

of the Greeks.

c. It is also true among the Pagan gods there are so-called "sons of gods" among their gods. Apollo was one of the sons of Zeus, the twin of the goddess Artemis (see Acts 19:23-41).

Being a 'son of Zeus' meant he was a son of the supreme god, a 'son of god'.

d. The emperor, regarded as being divine and worshiped throughout the Empire, had to be the 'son of god' made incarnate who dwelt among mankind.

e. Thus the true 'Son of God', Jesus, would have been an affront to the state religion and, more specifically, the religion of Thyatira which worshipped Apollo, the son of god, (Satan's Counterfeit) and the emperor, the incarnate son of god. It was not just an affront to Jesus that fellowship with gods (which were not gods) was taking place, but the one who was the object of the fellowship was entitled falsely > 'the son of god.' Pure devotion to Christ was impossible if he is only thought of as 'one son of god among many.'

f. By reminding the Thyatirans of His unique divine Sonship, Jesus elevates His own words over and above the authority of anything that would have, as its origin, the cult religion that existed in their city.

f. Jesus identifies Himself as the true Son of the true God. He is THE Son of God.

When a person is called the "son of" someone the emphasis is being placed on the fact they are of the same nature as their parent.

This title emphasizes the deity of Christ and establishes His supreme authority.

g. This church needed to see Jesus as the "Son of God" because they have been compromised and distracted by the influence of a false prophetess known as Jezebel.

Son of Man

1. The title which shows His humiliation

2. Emphasizes His sympathetic identification with believers as He walks among the churches
In Rev. 1, He moves among the churches trimming the lamps, holding the pastors or the leaders in His hand, ministering, serving the people.

3. Shows His sympathy as the merciful faithful high priest

4. Emphasizes His comfort, His encouragement to the persecuted Christians

He's there tending to them, lovingly, sensitively, sympathetically because He too was a man and understands.

5. Whenever He is designated Son of Man, it is emphasizing His humanness which makes Him able to be the sympathizer, to know the trials, the needs and temptations of His church.

Note: It was a time when the church in Rome:

1. Took the Bible away from the people and said only they (elite) could interpret it!

2. Exalted the "mother of God" and the "queen of heaven" above Jesus!

3. Told the people they must pray to a woman to get to God!

Question: Is it any wonder the Lord would address Himself as Deity > The Son Of God?

He was being denigrated. It was important for this church to know who He was!!

John specifically identifies Him not as the Son of Man but as the Son of God.

1. He's not emphasizing Him in His humility.
 2. He's emphasizing Him in His divine power and in deity.
 3. He is not coming as the sympathizer; He is coming as the judge.
 4. He is not coming as the man who understands; He is coming as the God who does not tolerate. He is coming in severe judgment against this church; angry deity.
- To see His anger, note Rev. 2:23. He says, "I will kill her children with pestilence."

II. The Searching One > *eyes like unto a flame of fire*

The Power of Jesus' Vision: Jesus saw far more than mere mortal eyes would. His powerful eyes give Him constant, intimate knowledge of our secret thoughts and motives of our heart and the works of our hands.

He comes, not as the meek and lowly Jesus, but with eyes ablaze with anger over sin.

Fire in the Scriptures is often a picture of purification and judgment.

II Peter 3:7 But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that someday all things will be tried by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Note: Fire consumes everything that opposes it.

His eyes can see through to the fatal flaws in the church. There's no good veiling it in a lot of activity or superficiality because His penetrating eyes can see right through it.

Nothing is hidden to Him. He penetrates it all. You cannot disguise it; you cannot cover it.

Jer. 16:17 "For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes.

Heb 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Isaiah 29:15 Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, Who sees us? Who will know?

III. The Sovereign One > Feet Like Burnished Bronze Speak Of Penetrating Judgment.

Brass is the symbol of judgment and sacrifice.

He is justified in His anger when individuals refuse to accept His work and receive the forgiveness of God by failing to turn to Him in repentance and forsake their ways.