

24 But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden. Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Initial Questions 2:18-29

1. What were the commendable characteristics of this congregation - vs. 19?
2. The Lord acknowledged that the Church in Thyatira was a progressing congregation. But they failed to keep the doctrine and life of the Church pure. Is there anything so insignificant that we can let it pass by when it effects the belief and life of the Church?
3. How is the individual Christian to be judged - vs. 23?
4. Was the whole Church at Thyatira infected with deadly disease of false doctrines of Jezebel?
5. To what event does the phrase "till I come" vs. 25, refer?

The Church in Thyatira Chp. 2:18-29

The next congregation to receive the analytic glance of The Lord was the Church in Thyatira. Lydia, the first Christian convert from Europe was from Thyatira (Acts 16:11-15). Pliny called this city an insignificant city. Almost nothing is known of this city, therefore it is difficult to provide background information. But we do know that Thyatira was situated at the mouth of a valley which directly connected the Caicus and Hermus Rivers. A great road from the Byzantium (or Eastern Roman Empire) to Smyrna ran through this city making it easily accessible for evangelistic purposes. The province of The Lord utilized the great road-ways in the ancient Greek world.

Verse 18

I am sure that the congregation in Thyatira would never have forgotten the day the "postman of Patmos" delivered this letter.

A new title of our Lord appears here - "The Son of God." (We shall discuss the titles of our Lord in a *Special Study* at the close of this volume.) This is a categorical assertion of the deity of Christ. The remaining imagery of this verse is to be found also in chapter 1:14-15. There we were told that "one like unto the son of man" was revealing the plan of the ages to John.

Verse 19

The Lord highly praised this congregation. They exhibited self-less love and the faith and the service (ministry - we in the Restoration Movement need to make a serious study of The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry immediately in this generation.) Christ declared that they were a growing congregation and they were doing more now than before. They were to be commended for not using the "past" as a measuring rod for what can or ought to be done for Christ. In the seventh decade of the 20th century many among us are guilty of using the past as a criterion of where we are now with respect to growth and visible success.

Verse 20

This highly rated Church had a surprise coming. Christ had something against them. What was it? They were not as concerned about the purity of their doctrine as they ought to have been. "The one calling herself a prophetess" Jezebel was seducing the saints. Christ said that you are continually permitting (*apheis* - sing. ind. present tense - each one of the congregation is charged with permitting this heresy to continue in the church). John's imagery takes us back to that infamous Jezebel, wife of King Ahab of Israel. She is so deceptive that she teaches (pres. tense - continuously teaches) and continuously deceives (*plana* could be either sing. subj. pres. or sing. ind. pres.) my slaves (lowly servants) to commit fornication (*porneusai* - 1st aor. inf.) or an act of fornication - the use of the aorist tense points to the fact that they had not repeatedly committed fornication) and to eat idol sacrifices." (Paul provides us with the revealed attitude toward eating idol sacrifices in I Cor. 8:1ff, 10:4ff.)

Verse 21

Christ said "I gave her time in order that she might repent, (*hina*, clause or a purpose clause) but she did not wish to repent of her fornication.

Verse 22

Look here, I am casting her into a bed, and the ones committing adultery (*moicheuontas* - adultery, this is not the same word as is found in vs. 20 - *porneusai* - fornication) with her into great affliction. This reveals the two actions of the Lord in Judgment "casting her into bed" and those guilty of immorality with her - "into great affliction." This act of judgment was conditional. Unless (*ean mē*) they shall repent out of her works (out of - *ek*; *autēs* - her, not their). Clearly repentance is not merely being sorry for some deed; true repentance results in changed behavior.

Note: The present author is preparing an exhaustive analysis of the vocabulary and theology of repentance for a work on *Biblical Theology* which he is writing at present. The basic Hebrew word, *Teshubah* does not mean precisely what the Greek *Metanoia* does. The Roman Catholic Church has finished the task, which was started by early Church Fathers, that of distorting the Biblical doctrine of *repentance* into the sacramental theology of *penance*. For a history of the doctrine of Penance see Oscar R. Watkins, *A History of Penance from the Whole Church to 1215*. This two volume work begins with the N.T. literature and moves up to 1215 A.D. Burt Franklin, New York 25, N.Y. reprinted 1961, originally printed in London in 1920.

Repentance was one of the great Biblical doctrines which caused Luther to revolt against the Roman system of works and mere penance. For his heated discussion see his letter to Stanpitz, May 30, 1518.

Verse 23

"All the Churches (plural - not merely the seven churches but all congregations) will know of Christ's righteous indignation. He continues with an emphatic declaration "that I am the one searching (continually searching) the reins (literally *nephrous* - kidneys) and hearts, and will give to each one of you - according to your works." The organs of the body were used in Hebrew Psychology to refer to the seat or place of thoughts, feelings, etc.

Verse 24

Christ raised His voice in warning those in Thyatira who had not committed the acts of immorality which are under his judgment. Those who were still pure did not know about (had not personally experienced "the deep things of Satan." This is probably another reference to evil Gnostic cults which dominated the Spiritual lives of so many in that congregation. They had apparently paid no heed to Christ's words "to be in but not of the world."

Verse 25

Christ said that their burdens were so great that "I am not casting on you another burden." That great little word "nevertheless (*plēn*) what you have at this present time hold (*keratēsate* - 1st aor. act. imperative - they *plural* were commanded to hold on to it at all costs - do not surrender it) until I shall come (the particle *an* shows that the time of his coming is not certain). Christ promised that He was coming again - so hold on. The suffering will not compare with the glory which shall be those "that love His appearing." This also applies to the persecuted Christians on all far-flung mission fields today.

Verse 26

Christ's immutable promises are here set forth - only for the faithful. The person who used to be a good church member will receive the wrath of God, not the crown of life. To whom are the promises given? "The one continually overcoming and the one continually keeping my works until the purpose of God has matured or been fulfilled. (*telous*, the end or that which is fulfilled or matured.) Christ will give the faithful servant power or authority over the nations (*ethnōn* - literally the Gentiles and probably in contrast to true spiritual Israel - see Romans chp. 9-11).

Verse 27

The great Shepherd of the sheep "will shepherd them with an iron staff, as the clay vessels (or vessels of the potter) are broken (*suntribetai*, sing. pass. present ind.). The 1901 translation is not exactly correct.

Verse 28

"The morning star" is probably Christ. (See Rev. 22:16 - Christ says *ho astēr ho lampros ho prōinos* - the bright morning star.)

Verse 29

The conclusion to this letter is the same as the others.

Review Questions

1. What new title for Christ appears in vs. 18? What does it mean or imply about the person of Jesus?
2. Would most contemporary N.T. congregations feel satisfied with the commendations given to Thyatira by our Lord - vs. 19?
3. Was the doctrine of this congregation orthodox or right teaching - vs. 20?
4. What does Paul tell us about eating idol sacrifices in I Cor. 8:1ff? What does it say about the condition of the Church in Thyatira?
5. Name and discuss the two acts of the Lord's judgment mentioned in vs. 22?
6. What will the basis of judgment be - according to vs. 23?
7. What does Christ promise the faithful Christian - vs. 26?
8. Who is the morning star - vs. 28?

Special Study

The Word of God and Death!

Hebrews 9:27 (Greek Text) - "And as it is reserved (or appointed) to men once to die and after this judgment" - (there is no verb *cometh* in the text.)

What is the Hebrew view of man? How does Hebrew anthropology relate to the Old Testament view of death?

The Old Testament view of a "wholistic man" antedates the contemporary views of man by over 3000 years. Faculty Psychology has fallen; and the dynamic view of man has prevailed since Freud. There is an inrefutable interaction between body and spirit. H. Wheeler Robinson's essay on Hebrew Psychology (see *The People and The Book*, ed. A. S. Peake, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1925) clearly states the Old Testament case