

Introduction

The seven churches represent at least four different things:

- Seven literal churches which existed at the time Revelation was given;
- Seven types of churches which can exist at any time in history;
- Seven types of churches which will exist in the Last Days;
- Seven types of individual believers.

Additionally, this writer believes as many do that each church represents a 5th aspect of a sequential, overlapping period of history when the corresponding church characterizes its overall condition for that time.

This is provided in much more detail in Jacob Prasch's book, "The Dilemma of Laodicea", which says of the age of Thyatira that it characterizes the transition of the rise of the institutional church down to its lowest spiritual state to date corresponding to what secular history itself calls "The Dark Ages". Thyatira to a time when the Church is far afield from its original roots and persecution is now coming from within the walls of this institution instead of from the world. All of these churches existed and were present, but the main environment was dominated by what is written about Thyatira.

Read verse 18

¹⁸"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

Q: What appears to be the main issue at Thyatira?

A: There is an interesting blend of issues which are revisited in the case of Thyatira which were the primary highlights of what was taking place in each of the three previous churches. They provide a picture progressively addressing Christian faith which must once again endure idolatry and immorality characterized as "the deep things of Satan". Added to that is now personal faithfulness.

Q: How does the meaning of "Thyatira" correspond to the spiritual condition of this church?

A: Bible dictionaries and lexicons propose various meanings for the word "Thyatira", one of the most common being "sacrifice of labor" and something related to either a tower or castle. But it is noteworthy that some sources offer the alternative, "feminine oppression".

Point: That first definition relating to labor is particularly interesting when juxtaposed against Christ's opening statement, "I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first", (Rev. 2:19) but the latter of "feminine oppression" parallels the issue of Jezebel's spiritual seduction.

Q: What characteristic of Christ is emphasized for Smyrna?

A: Christ has "eyes like a flame of fire" and "feet...like burnished bronze". These characteristics seem to emphasize judgment.

Point: This is the only letter to a church which designates it is coming from the “Son of God”, which seems to focus on His sovereignty as to qualified to judge.

Application: Thyatira is an example of a church that has **spiraled** to depths which call for a warning of **judgment** for what is currently taking place and to where it logically **leads**.

¹⁹I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

²⁰But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Read verses 19-20

Q: What are the different aspects of the “good news” in v.19?

- “I know your deeds...”
- “I know...your love...”
- “I know...your faith...”
- “I know...your perseverance...”
- “I know....that your deeds of late are greater than at first”.

Application: It is possible that even in churches with serious issues permeating throughout that there are still members who are excelling at the things which qualify them as authentic Christians?

Q: What is the “bad news”?

A: “...you tolerate the woman Jezebel...” (v.20)

Point: The word “tolerate” is rarely used in Scripture because it carries with it the meaning to compromise in a way that allows biblically ill behavior.

¹⁹For you, being so wise, **tolerate** the foolish gladly. ²⁰For you **tolerate** it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

2 Corinthians 11:19-20

Q: What is significant about using the term “tolerate”?

A: In Pergamum it was said, “...some...**hold** the teaching of Balaam”, (Rev. 2:14) but here it not an issue of endorsing and following someone and their false teaching, but tolerating it—allowing it to continue unchallenged even though you don’t believe it.

Application: Remember this the next time someone says you are wrong to speak out against a false teacher or movement because they believe them to be a Christian, something so scripturally askew that Christ says it should not be tolerated by true Christians in good standing with Him.

Q: Who was the original Jezebel and what are the qualities that defined her?

A: As originally recorded in the books of 1 & 2 Kings, she was an unbelieving daughter of a Gentile king married to Ahab, then ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. To her is attributed the introduction of Ba’al worship into Israel, which again fits very well with the character of “feminine oppression”.

Q: How was this false worship incorporated into the very fabric of Israel?

A: This was not merely bringing in a false god to compete with the True God of Israel, but was incorporated into Hebrew worship with a false priesthood, false temples, and false practices which all used the terminology and outward appearances of Judaism.

Point: *What is taking place in Thyatira is an attempt to look, sound, and feel like Christianity so it will be accepted and eventually replace the authentic.*

Q: How does Ba'al worship parallel what is taking place in Thyatira?

A: The Hebrew word for “Ba'al” means “husband” or “master”, and Israel was supposed to be exclusively faithful to Yahweh her Husband and Master. (Is. 54:5; Jer. 31:32; Eze. 16:32; Hos. 2:7) This is also true of the Church, often referred to as His woman.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you **the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**”
Revelation 21:9

Point: *The spirit of Jezebel embodies the attempt to seduce God's woman into unfaithfulness to another.*

Q: How do we know for sure whom Jezebel is targeting to this end?

A: “...she teaches and leads **My bond-servants** astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols”. (v.20)

Q: What is the second charge levied against Jezebel?

A: She “calls herself a prophetess”. (v.20) 3

Q: To what is her false prophecies directly tied?

A: Her teaching. (v.20) False prophecies and false teaching are two sides of the same coin—where one is present the other inevitably follows.

Application: *The faithful may not be **following** false influences in the Church, but neither are they to **tolerate** them.*

Read verses 21-23

²¹I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. ²²Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. ²³And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

Q: Why doesn't God immediately and swiftly carry out His judgment against such false personalities like a Jezebel?

A: He always provides the “time to repent”. (v.20)

Q: What is telling about her response?

A: “...she **does not want** to repent of her immorality”. (v.20) She does not want to give up earthly lust. It's her choice.

Q: What is listed here as to what Christ will do to her personally?

- (v.22) “I will throw her on a bed of sickness”.
- (v.23) “I will kill her children with pestilence”.

Point: *She will not only suffer great personal loss, but incur great suffering in the process.*

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Q: What is Christ's reasons for doing these public things?

A: So that "all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts". (v.23)

Q: Why will this be known by all seven churches?

A: Each of their individual letters are being shared with the whole of the Church because that which is written for them is actually for all Christians and fellowships. Therefore everyone will witness the end result as an example to all.

Point: This is supposed to convict her followers to know that Christ sees exactly what they've been up to as well.

Q: What are the consequences for Jezebel's followers?

A: "I will throw...those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation". (v.20)

Application: Adultery begets adultery.

Q: What is provided for every individual in that church whether following her or not?

A: "I will give to each one of you according to your own deeds". (v.23)
This can be good or bad depending on one's spiritual standing with Christ.

Point: There is always a distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful even when they're in the same proximity to each other.

Observation: Ever notice how often the followers of fallen, false teachers simply move on to another false teacher? Like Jezebel, they do not want to repent and actually prefer the false.

Application: When false influences fall by **divine** intervention, we are supposed to learn the right **lesson** and **recommit** to exclusively following His Word and ways.

Read verses 24-25

Q: How are the teachings of the false prophetess Jezebel expressly defined?

A: As "the deep things of Satan".

Point: The seductive antics of the spirit of Jezebel are not a temporary backsliding or some kind of trial or test, but an overt working of Satan. This helps explain why she cannot be tolerated.

Q: What is Christ's promise to the faithful remnant who find themselves in this situation?

A: "I place no other burden on you".

Q: Why doesn't Jesus tell the faithful remnant to leave that church and either go to a better one or form their own?

A: At this time, although Jezebel steadfastly refuses to repent, the Lord is providing that opportunity to her followers. In taking a stand against Jezebel, the faithful need to be an example to the rest of being

²⁴But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you.
²⁵Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

an example for Jesus. It is very likely Christ will use the faithful in the course of this process.

Q: What is the proposed solution to their problem?

A: “Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come”.

Q: Why the stipulation of “nevertheless”?

A: It is not guaranteed that her followers will repent. So the faithful, regardless of the outcome, must hang in there to help facilitate the solution.

Application: Sometimes the faithful must **endure** in less than ideal circumstances for the sake of **Christ**, even in a bad **church**.

Read verse 26-29

Q: How does this ending slightly differ from all those provided in the rest of the letters to the seven churches?

A: There is the added stipulation, “and he who keeps My deeds until the end”.

Q: Why is this noteworthy?

A: The term “overcomes” refers to obstacles or issues which have the potential to defeat us and must be endured, whereas “keeping My deeds until the end” is a call to endure as a faithful servant carrying out the work of the Kingdom.

Q: What is therefore promised those who are successful on both fronts?

A: Authority and “the morning star”.

Q: How does the nature of that authority fit with the issue of personal faithfulness specific to Thyatira?

A: “...as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces” relates to someone who does not measure up to the standards of their Creator; the “morning star” is a steady navigational feature guiding those who use it properly

Application: It is not just about overcoming the **world** to the very end, but living and performing like a faithful **Christian** to the very end.

Overall Application

Thyatira would appear to be the next in a progression of detailed illustrations of the kinds of spiritual environments and underlying forces with which the Church at large must deal with until Jesus returns for them, either by death and resurrection during any age of the Church, or in the course of the eschaton by way of the one-time Harpazo. But the greater emphasis in this case is not just enduring trials and hardships, but living a crucified life in Christ to the very end.

- Are you, or have you been, in a church spiraling downward? What should/did you do? When is it appropriate to leave and when must you still remain?

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²⁶‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; ²⁷and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; ²⁸and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

- *Although you may not follow false influences, are you tolerating them within your own sphere of influence? Why?*
- *Do you recognize you may have to endure in a fellowship having less than ideal circumstances? Even perhaps steeped in false teaching?*
- *When it comes to the End Times, do you fully comprehend it is not enough to endure the hardships but to continue the work to the very end?*

*[NOTE: The answer to when we become a good candidate to leave a bad church is when our behavior and beliefs begin to become corrupted by **their** influence, instead of us continuing to be a positive influence on **them**. Thyatira still had a solid remnant who weren't swayed to the other side and could still be used by Christ in that environment.]*

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