

The Churches of Christ Salute You

Lesson Eleven

(Romans 16:16)

August 24, 2008

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

Overview:

1. Paul wrote to the Romans about the “churches of Christ.”
2. A plurality of churches did not mean a number of different denominations.
3. Instead, each was a local body of believers that belonged to Christ.
4. Since we also are a church of Christ, there are many lessons to be learned from these early churches.

Introduction:

1. Thyatira was located about 45 miles southeast of Pergamos and about 35 miles northwest of Sardis.
2. Halley writes that “Thyatira had no illustrious history, and is scarcely mentioned by ancient writers.”
3. It was a garrison city for over 200 years, though its military significance was only to delay an invasion of Pergamos.
4. Still, the Lord was concerned about Thyatira...

I. Salutation

Revelation 2:18 a

- A. It is not known how, when or by whom this church was founded.
- B. Thyatira is mentioned only one other time in Scripture, in Acts 16:14, as the home of Lydia, a seller of purple.
 1. Thyatira was known for its purple dye, called “Turkish red.”
 2. Material or clothes made with this dye were very expensive.
- C. Thyatira was home to numerous trade guilds.
 1. Skilled workers had to join a guild (union) in order to find work.
 2. These guilds possessed property, issued contracts and wielded wide influence.
 3. They were also connected to the worship of false gods and goddesses since each guild had its own deity as its guardian and patron.
 4. Thus, members of the guilds were expected to participate in acts of devotion and feasts to their god or goddess.
 5. Those who refused to join a guild were ostracized from the business world and had little hope of financial gain.
 6. There were guilds for nearly every trade – tailors, linen makers, wool workers, tanners, leather workers, bakers, potters, slave dealers, bronze workers and dyers.
 7. How significant does Acts 16:13-14 become in light of these facts?
- D. It was also known for many small, shallow streams that were home to leeches used for medicinal treatments throughout eastern Europe. *{They were gathered by sending children into the waters barefoot. Upon returning to their employers (or masters), the children’s feet would be covered with leeches.}*
- E. The sun god, Apollo, was the principal deity of Thyatira.

II. Description of Jesus

Revelation 2:18 b

- A. Jesus is called the “Son of God.”
 1. In Thyatira, they worshipped the sun god, Apollo.
 2. But, the Son of God is Jesus the Christ.
- B. Jesus is called the One with eyes like “a flame of fire.”

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1. Apollo was connected to the idea of flaming fire.
 2. But, Jesus' eyes of flaming fire remind the Christian that only He is the all-seeing, omniscient God of Heaven.
- C. Jesus is called the One with feet "like fine brass (or, burnished bronze)."
1. They glowed with white intensity as if in the midst of a fire.
 2. This symbolizes His stability and permanence in purity, majesty and judgment.
 3. Compare with Daniel 10:6, Ezekiel 1:7 and Revelation 10:1.

III. Commendation

Revelation 2:19

- A. The Lord knows His people (cf. 2 Timothy 2:19).
- B. They were commended for their love.
- C. They were commended for their faith.
- D. They were commended for their endurance.
- E. They were commended for their service.
- F. They were commended for their works.
 1. Unlike Ephesus, who had left her first love and neglected her first works, Thyatira had grown in both love and works.
 2. How would the Lord rate our works contrasted with 5 years ago, 20 years ago, or even 50 years ago?
 3. 1 Thessalonians 4:1; John 15:2; 2 Peter 3:18; etc.

IV. Condemnation

Revelation 2:20

- A. In spite of these good qualities, there were some problems in the church.
- B. They were condemned for tolerating the false prophetess Jezebel.
 1. Jezebel was the wife of King Ahab in Israel (1 Kings 16:30-31).
 2. She was also the daughter of Gentile king, Ethbaal.
 3. Her pagan influence brought idolatry into practice by King Ahab.
 - a. Baal was believed to provide rain for the earth.
 - b. He was implored by offering sacrifice – often innocent children.
 - c. It is no wonder why Elijah prayed that it would not rain in Israel for 3½ years while Baal was worshipped by Ahab (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1; James 5:17-18).
 4. Thus, she became symbolic of wickedness and corruption, especially in women.
 5. She went so far as to attempt to kill God's true prophets, including Elijah (1 Kings 18 – 19).
 6. In Thyatira, Jezebel was a manipulator of the church – leading Christians into sin and error.
 7. Likely, her error had to do with encouraging Christians to go along with the practices of the trade guilds.
- C. They were condemned for compromising with sin and error.
 1. It would be easy to justify one's participation in the sins of a trade guild when one's very livelihood was at stake.
 2. Considering that a Christian has the knowledge that an idol is "nothing" (1 Corinthians 8, 10), why not go along to get along?
 3. But, God views it as fornication – spiritual unfaithfulness.
 - a. It is likely that physical fornication was also involved.
 - b. However, it is still a compromise of Truth with error.
 4. What kind of example would the church set before the world if she partook of their same wickedness and idolatry?

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- D. What a contrast between faithful Lydia and sensual, seductive Jezebel.
- V. Warnings Revelation 2:21-23
- A. First, there was a warning to repent.
 - B. Second, there was a warning that the time for repentance was expiring.
 - C. Third, there was a warning of tribulation for those who refused to change.
 - 1. A contrast is made with the harlot's bed and the sick bed.
 - 2. Not only was Jezebel spiritually sick, but also those who were seduced by her doctrines.
 - 3. As a result, they would endure great suffering for their sins.
 - D. Finally, there was a warning of death for Jezebel and her followers.
 - 1. A very strong expression of the Hebrews – "*shall surely be put to death*"
 - 2. We must not overlook the eternal tribulation and death of Hell.
 - 3. Their punishment would be a reminder that God sees the outward actions and the inward heart of all men.
 - 4. Thus, He judges us according to our works.
- VI. Exhortations Revelation 2:24-25
- A. There were those in Thyatira who had not followed the heresy of Jezebel.
 - B. Thus, they had not known the depths of Satan.
 - C. They are encouraged that there is laid upon them no other burden but to continue to remain steadfast in contention against the evil among them.
 - D. Thus, they are exhorted to hold fast to Christ, His Word and their own purity.
- VII. Blessings Revelation 2:26-29
- A. Those who overcome will rule with Christ over the nations.
 - 1. As Christ rules over the nations through the Gospel, when the church is victorious over Satan and his forces, the faithful followers of Christ will rule with Him (cf. Psalm 2).
 - 2. This reign takes place now as man lives by the authority of Christ.
 - B. Those who overcome will receive the morning star.
 - 1. The morning star heralds the dawning of a new day.
 - 2. Likewise, the church is given assurance that – even in the darkness of suffering and sin – a new day is dawning.
 - 3. Jesus is the morning star (Revelation 22:16)!
 - 4. Jesus and His church will be victorious over the enemy.
 - 5. Heaven will be ours!

Conclusion: The church at Thyatira teaches many powerful lessons for us today.