

Revelation week #8

Thyatira: The church that tolerated sin. Revelation 2:18-29

I. Introduction

- a. The Lord Jesus Christ has called His church to be holy and maintain purity by dealing with sin in its midst.
- b. In fact, the very first instruction He gave to the church was about confronting sin. In Matthew 18:15–17 Jesus commanded, If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. The practice of church discipline that Christ instituted to maintain the holiness of the church has a twofold purpose: to call sinning believers back to righteous behavior, and to purge from the church those who stubbornly cling to their sin. In either case, the purity of the church is maintained.
- c. After the birth of the church on the Day of Pentecost, the Lord demonstrated His commitment to a pure church by executing Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).
- d. The Jerusalem Council commanded believers to observe “these essentials: that you abstain from things

sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well” (Acts 15:28–29).

- e. The apostle Paul also had a passionate concern for the purity of the church.
 - i. Horrified at the Corinthians’ casual attitude toward flagrant sin in their assembly, Paul wrote: It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor. 5:1–5)
 - ii. Paul himself put two unrepentant sinning leaders out of the Ephesian church: “Hymenaeus and Alexander ... I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20).

- f. Despite the clear biblical teaching to the contrary, churches throughout history have tolerated sin, following a pattern like the Thy-atir-an congregation, whose members were engaging in both spiritual and physical adultery.
- g. Through the insidious efforts of a false teacher, those sins had become pervasive in the church at Thyatira. The letter Christ addressed to its members was a sobering one, and marks a new phase in the letters to the seven churches. Commentator Charles Erdman offers this perspective on the place of this letter among the seven: The letter to the church in Thy-a-ti-ra begins the second group of messages to the churches of Asia. In the first group, the church of Ephesus was characterized by loyalty to Christ which was lacking in love. In the church of Smyrna loyalty was tested by fire. In the church of Pergamum 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 influences of false teaching. (*The Revelation of John* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966], 56)
- h. There is a progressive worsening in the character of these seven churches, as they depict becoming more

and more influenced by evil. That downward spiral reached its lowest point at Laodicea.

- i. The phrase “the deep things of Satan” (2:24) reveals how far the Thyatira church had slipped in relation to those in Smyrna and Pergamum.
 - i. The Smyrna church faced hostility from the “synagogue of Satan,” that is, from unbelieving Jews (2:9).
 - ii. The Pergamum church existed at the site of Satan’s throne (2:13), symbolizing Gentile false religion (particularly the cult of emperor worship).
 - iii. But the church at Thyatira had plunged headlong into the very depths of satanic deception.
- j. The letter to this church is the longest of the seven, though addressed to the church in the smallest of the seven cities.
 - i. It has an important message for the church today: false doctrine and sin are not to be allowed—even under the banner of love, toleration, and unity.
 - ii. There may be much that is commendable in a church. It may appear on the surface to have an effective ministry, be growing numerically, and even have cordial society.
 - iii. Yet immorality and false doctrine, if not confronted, will bring judgment from the Lord of the church.

- k. The same seven elements constitute the letter to Thyatira: the correspondent, the church, the city, the commendation, the concern, the command, and the counsel.
- II. **The Correspondent.**
- a. ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.’ (2:18c)
 - b. The title Son of God and the two descriptive phrases drawn from the vision of the risen Christ in 1:12–17 identify the writer as the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c. The phrases chosen here focus on His role as divine Judge.
 - d. Son of God emphasizes Christ’s deity, stressing the truth that He is of one essence with the Father (cf. John 5:18).
 - i. This is a significant change in wording.
 - ii. In the vision recorded in chapter 1, Christ was described as the Son of Man (1:13).
 - iii. That title emphasizes His humiliation, His sympathetic identification with believers as their merciful High Priest.
 - iv. It offers encouragement to persecuted Christians; “He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He

has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:17–18).

- v. The title Son of Man views Christ in His ability to sympathize with the needs, trials, and temptations of His church.
- e. In this passage, however, Jesus is identified as Son of God (the only time this phrase appears in Revelation); the emphasis is not on His humility, but on His deity, because His approach to the church at Thyatira is not as sympathetic High Priest, but as divine judge.
 - i. Not comfort, but judgment is in store for the church at Thyatira when Christ’s divine power moves against this adulterous assembly.
- f. As the divine Son of God, Jesus Christ has eyes like a flame of fire.
 - i. His piercing, laser like vision sees all; nothing can be disguised, covered, or hidden from Him.
 - ii. Describing Jesus Christ in His second coming glory, Revelation 19:12 says that “His eyes are a flame of fire” (cf. Dan. 10:6).
 - iii. A church may feel satisfied with itself, have a good reputation in the community, or even with other churches.
 - iv. But the penetrating eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ see it as it really is.
- g. The description of His feet as being like burnished bronze is reminiscent of Revelation 19:15, where it says of Christ that “He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.”

- i. That Christ's feet glowed brilliantly like burnished bronze depicts His purity and holiness as He tramples out impurity.
- h. This terrifying description of the Lord Jesus Christ must have created shock, consternation, and fear when this letter was read to the congregation at Thyatira.
- i. It came as a sobering realization to them, as it should to all sinning Christians, that Christ will judge continual, unrepented sin.
- j. In the words of the apostle Peter, "It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God" (1 Pet. 4:17).

III. The Church.

- a. church in Thyatira (2:18a)
- b. As is the case with the churches at Smyrna and Pergamum, the Bible does not record the founding of the church at Thyatira.
- c. According to Acts 16:14, "A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God," was converted under Paul's ministry at Philippi.
- d. Verse 15 records that members of her household also came to saving faith in Christ and were baptized.
- e. It is possible that Lydia and her household participated in starting the church at Thyatira.
- f. More likely, the church there was founded as an outreach of Paul's ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

IV. The City

- a. Thyatira (2:18b)

- b. From Pergamum, northernmost of the seven cities, the Roman road curved east and then southeast to Thyatira, approximately forty miles away.
- c. Thyatira was located in a long north-south valley connecting the valleys of the Caicus and Hermus rivers.
- d. Unlike Smyrna or Pergamum, Thyatira was built in relatively flat country and lacked an acropolis.
 - i. Its lack of natural fortifications would play a significant role in its history.
- e. Thyatira was founded by one of Alexander the Great's successors, (se-luke-us) Seleucus, as a military outpost guarding the north-south road.
- f. Thyatira was the gateway to Pergamum, and the task of the defenders at Thyatira was to delay an attacker and thus buy time for Pergamum.
 - i. Unfortunately, since Thyatira had no natural defenses, the garrison there could not hope to hold out for long.
 - ii. Thus, the city was repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt; the scanty references to it in ancient literature usually describe its conquest by an invading army.
- g. Finally, about 190 B.C., Thyatira was conquered and annexed by the Romans and enjoyed the Roman peace.
 - i. The city then became a flourishing commercial center.

- ii. Its location on the main north-south road, formerly a liability, now became an asset.
 - iii. That road became even more important in Roman times, as it connected Pergamum with Laodicea, Smyrna, and the interior regions of the province of Asia.
 - iv. It also served as the Roman post road. At the time the book of Revelation was written, Thyatira was just entering its period of greatest prosperity.
- h. Thyatira was noted for its numerous guilds (roughly the equivalent of today's labor unions).
 - i. Thyatira's main industry was the production of wool and dyed goods (especially purple goods, dyed with purple dye extracted from the madder root), but inscriptions also mention guilds for linen workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths (William Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (Albany, Oreg.: AGES Software; re print of the 1904 edition], 260).
 - ii. Lydia probably represented her guild in Philippi (Acts 16:14), showing that Thyatira's market extended across the Aegean Sea to mainland Greece.
- i. Unlike Pergamum or Smyrna, Thyatira was not an important religious center. T
 - i. The primary god worshiped by the Thyatirans was the Greek sun god, Apollo.

- ii. Nor does there appear to have been a sizable Jewish population.
- iii. The pressure faced by the Christians in Thyatira came from the guilds.
- iv. To hold a job or run a business, it was necessary to be a member of a guild.
- v. Each guild had its patron deity, in whose honor feasts were held—complete with meat sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality.
- j. Christians faced the dilemma of attending those feasts or possibly losing their livelihood.
- k. How some in the Thyatira church were handling the situation caused the Lord Jesus Christ great concern.

V. **The Commendation.**

- a. I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. (2:19)
- b. As He had with the churches at Ephesus and Pergamum, Christ commended the church at Thyatira before voicing His concerns about it.
- c. He assured them that He had not forgotten their righteous deeds (cf. Heb. 6:10), which He divided into four categories.
- d. First, the believers at Thyatira were showing love for God and for one another—although that love was apparently fragile, since there was not a strong foundation of unified sound doctrine.

- i. In some ways, Thyatira was strong where Ephesus was weak; in fact, it is the first of the seven churches to be commended for its love.
- e. Second, Christ commended them for their faith.
 - i. *Pistis* (faith) is better translated “fidelity,” or “faithfulness.”
 - ii. The true Christians in Thyatira were dependable, reliable, and consistent (cf. v. 25).
 - iii. Faith and love are frequently linked in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor. 13:2, 13; 2 Cor. 8:7; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 1:15; 3:17; Col. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:3; 3:6; 5:8; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2:15; 6:11; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2).
- f. Out of faith and love grow service and perseverance.
 - i. Those who love will express that love through meeting the needs of others.
 - ii. Those who are faithful will steadfastly persevere in the faith (cf. Matt. 16:24–26; 24:13).
- g. Not only did the Thyatiran Christians possess these virtues, but also their deeds of late were greater in number than at first.
 - i. Their loving service was becoming more consistent, and their faithful perseverance growing stronger.
 - ii. They were growing in grace, maturing in their Christian lives, and advancing the cause of Christ (cf. 2 Pet. 1:8).
 - iii. For that behavior they were to be commended.

VI. The Concern.

- a. But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. (2:20–23)
- b. Despite the commendation they received, all was not well with the church at Thyatira.
- c. The problem was not external persecution, but internal compromise; not vicious wolves from outside the flock, but perverse people from within (cf. Acts 20:29–30).
- d. The penetrating gaze of the Lord of the church had discerned serious error, causing Him to warn I have this against you.
- e. The use of the singular pronoun points this admonition especially to the leader of the congregation.
- f. The indictment is that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.
- g. The sin, apparently involving the majority of the Thyatira church's members, was twofold.

- h. First, they violated the biblical teaching that women are not to be teachers or preachers in the church (1 Tim. 2:12).
 - i. That led them to tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess.
 - ii. They compounded their error of permitting her to teach by allowing her to teach error.
 - iii. As a result, Jesus declares, she teaches and leads My servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.
- i. Jezebel undoubtedly was not the false prophetess's real name, but like the infamous wife of King Ahab, she was Satan's agent to corrupt God's people.
 - i. Therefore the Lord branded her with the symbolic name Jezebel.
 - ii. The Old Testament Jezebel was an unspeakably vile woman—so much so that the Bible names marrying her as the most evil thing wicked King Ahab did: “Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him” (1 Kings 16:30–31).
 - iii. Through Jezebel's evil influence, Baal worship became widespread in Israel.

- j. Like her Old Testament counterpart, the woman in Thyatira who falsely called herself a prophetess succeeded in leading Christ's servants astray so that they committed acts of immorality and ate things sacrificed to idols.
 - i. One might speculate that she may have espoused the philosophical dualism so prevalent in contemporary Greek philosophy.
 - ii. When brought into the church, that teaching held that the spirit is good, and the flesh is evil.
 - iii. Since God is only interested in the spirit, its purveyors falsely argued, it doesn't matter what one does with one's body.
 - iv. Thus, according to Jezebel, it did not matter if Christians committed acts of immorality or ate things sacrificed to idols.
- k. She led the Thyatiran believers astray from truth and righteousness.
- l. The Bible teaches that true Christians can fall into sexual immorality (cf. 1 Cor. 6:15–20) and idolatry (cf. 1 Cor. 10:21).
 - i. But to lead other Christians into false doctrine or immoral living is a very serious sin, one meriting the most severe punishment.
 - ii. In Matthew 18:6–10, Jesus graphically described the serious consequences for those who lead other believers into sin: Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone

hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

- m. The “little ones who believe” in Christ are not physical children, but spiritual children—believers. It is so serious to lead another believer into sin that the Lord said death by drowning was a better option.
- n. The imagery of maiming oneself is language depicting the need for drastic action in dealing with sin.
- o. In the Old Testament, Jezebel met a gruesome end, befitting her status as one who led Israel astray:
 - i. When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out the window. As Jehu entered the gate, she said, “Is it well, Zimri, your master’s murderer?” Then he lifted up his face to the

window and said, “Who is on my side? Who?” And two or three officials looked down at him. He said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot. When he came in, he ate and drank; and he said, “See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king’s daughter.” They went to bury her, but they found nothing more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, “This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the corpse of Jezebel will be as dung on the face of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say, “This is Jezebel.” ’ ”

(2 Kings 9:30–37)

- p. Graciously the Lord gave the false prophetess at Thyatira time to repent, but illustrating the sad truth that people love darkness rather than the light (John 3:19), she did not want to repent of her immorality.
 - i. Her blunt and final refusal to repent would lead to a terrible judgment, introduced by the arresting word behold.
 - ii. Because Jezebel refused to repent, Christ declared I will throw her on a bed of sickness.
- q. Divine judgment was about to fall not only on Jezebel, but also on those who commit adultery with her.

- i. The Lord threatens to cast them into great tribulation—not the eschatological tribulation described in Revelation 4–19, but distress or trouble.
 - ii. Since these were the sinning Christians who had believed her lies, the Lord does not threaten to send them to hell as He did the false prophetess. He promises to bring them severe chastening—possibly even physical death (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16)—unless they repent of her deeds.
- r. Then Christ names a third group facing divine judgment, declaring, I will kill her children with pestilence.
 - i. Jezebel’s children were not her biological but her spiritual children.
 - ii. The church was about forty years old when John wrote, so that her false teaching had been around long enough for a second generation of errorists to have arisen.
 - iii. As he did with Ananias and Sapphira, the Lord threatens to kill these errorists with pestilence (literally “kill them with death”).
 - iv. It was too late for Jezebel; her heart was hardened in unrepentant sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ mercifully warns her disciples to repent while there is still time.
- s. The severe judgment promised to the false prophetess and her followers again reveals Christ’s passion for a doctrinally and behaviorally pure church.

- i. He will do whatever is necessary to purge His church of sin—even to the point of taking the lives of false teachers.
 - ii. That sobering reality should cause all who purport to be teachers and preachers in the church to be certain they are speaking the truth (cf. James 3:1).
 - iii. It should also warn Christians who are following false teachers to repent of their sins, lest they face divine chastening.
- t. Christ would receive glory when He judged Jezebel and her followers.
 - i. When that happened, all the churches would know that He is the One who searches the minds and hearts.
 - ii. That phrase offers further confirmation of Christ's deity, since it is used in the Old Testament in reference to God (e.g., 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 7:9; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12).
 - iii. After He judged the Thyatira church, all other churches would be warned against the evil of tolerating sin.
 - iv. They would also realize that nothing can be hidden from the penetrating gaze of the Lord of the churches.
- u. It is not known how many in that congregation responded to Christ's warning, but, tragically, the Thyatira church as a whole apparently did not heed it.

- v. History records that it fell prey to the Montanist heresy (a movement led by a false prophet who claimed continuing revelation from God apart from Scripture) and went out of existence by the end of the second century.
- w. Christ then addressed a word of comfort to those true believers in the Thyatira church who had not followed Jezebel's false teaching: I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.
 - i. Christ's unerring judgment would be based on each person's deeds; those who were innocent would not be punished along with the guilty. That everyone will be judged by his or her deeds is a frequent theme in Scripture.
 - ii. In Matthew 7:16 Jesus said of false prophets, "You will know them by their fruits."
 - iii. Speaking of His second coming, Jesus warned, "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:27; cf. Rev. 22:12).
 - iv. God is the righteous judge "who will render to each person according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6). Paul wrote of his bitter opponent Alexander the coppersmith, "The Lord will repay him according to his deeds" (2 Tim. 4:14).
- x. Works have always been the basis for divine judgment.

- i. That does not mean, however, that salvation is by works (cf. Eph. 2:8–9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5).
 - ii. People's deeds reveal their spiritual condition.
 - iii. That is what James meant when he said, "I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18).
- y. Saving faith will inevitably express itself in good works, causing James to declare that "faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself" (James 2:17, cf. v. 26). Christians are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).
- z. Works cannot save, but they do damn.
 - i. Judgment must begin with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17).
 - ii. But Christ's judgment will fairly reflect each person's deeds—a reality that should bring fear to those who teach and practice false doctrine, but comfort and hope to those whose faith is genuine.

VII. The Command.

- a. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I (2:24–25)
- b. Having warned the practitioners of false doctrine to repent, Christ addressed words of comfort to the rest

who are in Thyatira, who did not hold to Jezebel's false teaching.

- c. They are reminiscent of God's words of comfort to those in Malachi's day who feared being swept up in divine judgment:
 - i. Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. "They will be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." (Mal. 3:16–17)
- d. Christ further defined the true believers as those who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them.
 - i. Jezebel and her followers claimed to be plumbing the very depths of Satan's domain and remaining spiritually unscathed.
 - ii. In their perverse, licentious false theology, they believed they could do so with impunity.
 - iii. This pre-Gnostic teaching said that one was free to engage the sphere of Satan and participate in sins of the body without harming the spirit.
- e. Since the spirit belongs to God, their twisted logic went, what does it matter if the body attends idolatrous feasts and engages in sexual immorality?

- f. They imagined themselves to be free to explore the satanic sphere and then brazenly come to worship God.
- g. To the true believers who had not experienced the alleged deeper knowledge claimed by these heretics, Christ said, I place no other burden on you.
- h. Bearing the burden of seeing blatant false teaching and immoral living rampant in their church, and having to resist the incessant solicitation and ridicule from the Jezebel party, was burden enough for them to bear.
- i. But lest they become overconfident, Christ exhorts them, what you have, hold fast until I come (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12).
- j. The use of the strong word *krateō* (hold fast) indicates that it would not be easy.
- k. The coming of Christ as it related to the Thyatira church was His coming to them in judgment.
 - i. But in a wider sense, all believers are to “cling to what is good” (Rom. 12:9) until Christ’s return.

VIII. The Counsel.

- a. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’
(2:26–29)

- b. To the one who overcomes (i.e., a true Christian; cf. 1 John 5:5) and ... keeps Christ's deeds (in contrast to those in v. 22 who practiced Jezebel's evil deeds) until the end (steadfast obedience marks a genuine Christian), Christ promises two things.
- c. First, Christ will give such people authority over the nations; and they shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces.
 - i. That promise, taken from Psalm 2:7–9, is one of participation in the millennial kingdom.
 - ii. Those who remained faithful to Christ despite being beaten and despised in this life will rule with Him in His earthly kingdom.
 - iii. They will exercise authority over the nations, ruling them with a rod of iron (cf. Rev. 12:5; 19:15).
 - iv. Those nations in the millennial kingdom who rebel against Christ's rule and threaten His people will be destroyed.
 - v. Those people who rule with Him will help protect His people and promote holiness and righteousness.
 - vi. Christ will delegate authority to them as He also has received authority from His Father (cf. John 5:22, 27).
- d. Christ also promised to give to His faithful followers the morning star.
 - i. Some connect the morning star with such passages as Daniel 12:3 and Matthew 13:43. The

promise would be that believers will reflect Christ's glory.

- ii. While Christians will reflect Christ's glory, it is better to see the morning star as Christ Himself—a title He assumes in Revelation 22:16 (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19).
- iii. Christ promised believers Himself in all His fullness; the One whom we “now ... know in part [we will] then ... know fully just as [we] also have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12).
- e. The concluding words, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, are a charge to heed the message of the letter to the church at Thyatira.
- f. Three important truths stand out.
- g. First, this letter reveals the seriousness of practicing and tolerating sin, and that God will judge continued, unrepentant sin in the church.
- h. Second, a pattern of obedience marks true Christians.
- i. Finally, God's gracious promise to His own is that, in spite of struggles with sin and error in churches, they will experience all the fullness of Christ as they reign with Him in His kingdom.
- j. Those churches, like Thyatira, who fail to heed the message will receive divine judgment; those who do heed its message will receive divine blessing.

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Revelation 1–11*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 93–107.