

# Jesus and His Churches (5): Thyatira

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(Revelation 2:18-28)

## I. Introduction

- A. *Koinonia Farms* was founded in 1942 in rural Georgia by Clarence Jordan
1. It was a commune farm built on principles of Christian love/fellowship
    - a. But it was an outpost of equality & dignity in a racially divided South
    - b. Years later, *Koinonia* would begin the “*Habitat for Humanity*” program
    - c. But its goal of racial equality/harmony was popular during the 40/50’s
  2. During one nasty legal battle, Jordan asked his attorney brother for help
    - a. Brother had political aspirations; would become state senator, chief justice
    - b. The political fallout of helping *Koinonia* was too much, so he declined.
  3. Jordan reminded him that they had both accepted Jesus as Savior & Lord
    - a. Jordan’s brother said, “*Yes, Clarence, I follow Jesus up to a point.*”
    - b. Jordan asked, “*Would that point be to the cross?*” Listen to his answer—
    - c. “*I follow to the cross, not on the cross. I’m won’t get myself crucified.*”
- B. That line just hit me; are we willing to come TO the cross, not be ON the cross
1. Salvation is great— your sins are forgiven, guilt assuaged, heaven as home.
    - a. Who wouldn’t want that? 87% of people believe in heaven (Fox News)
    - b. Most of those people (85%) also think that they are going to heaven
    - c. Who wouldn’t want to be forgiven, feel less guilt and go to heaven in end
  2. The problem is that the God who saves is also the God who demands!
    - a. The God that forgives is also a jealous God who won’t share affection.
    - b. The Jesus who saves is also the Christ who demands to be Lord of life.
    - c. We cannot follow Jesus to the cross without getting ourselves crucified
      - 1) He saves us from sin when that sin is crucified with Him (**Rom 6:6**)
      - 2) We have new life in Christ when crucified with him (**Gal 2:20**)
  3. We continue our look at “*Christ and His Churches*,” we come to Thyatira
    - a. What we are going to see in Thyatira is a church that has lot going for it
    - b. The problem is there are some who are teaching them to avoid the cross
    - c. Some in the church are beginning to listen... then Jesus speaks to them

## II. The Church at Thyatira (Reading: [Revelation 2:18-28](#))

- A. The city of Thyatira was not particularly powerful or politically important.  
(*R.H. Charles says, "This is the longest letter to the least important of the Seven Cities"*)
1. It was a rather prosperous city in a work-a-day, blue collar sort of way
    - a. Archeologists have found numerous inscriptions of different trade guilds
    - b. Was a city of woolworkers, bronze-workers, linen-makers, potters, bakers
      - 1) One of the letter we will study later was written to Philadelphia
      - 2) Thyatira was more like Pittsburg— a blue-collar, lunch-pail town
  2. In [Acts 16](#), we meet a purple-dye-dealer from Thyatira named Lydia
    - a. She was in Philippi (*on business?*) when she met Paul and was baptized
    - b. She hosted Paul and Silas (and likely the church) while in Philippi
    - c. Tradition suggests Lydia brought Christianity back home to Thyatira
- B. Each of the 7 letters begin with a description from the opening image in [Rev 1](#)
1. Jesus is pictured as pure white, bronze feet, blazing eyes, sword in mouth
    - a. Each letters stresses a part of that image—here it's the eyes and feet ([18](#))
    - b. The blazing eyes and bronze feet stress Jesus' presence among his people
      - 1) He begins just like he does the letter to Ephesus, "*I know your deeds*"
      - 2) Likes what he sees, "*love and faith, your service and perseverance*" ([19](#))
  2. Unlike Ephesus, Thyatira is going in the right direction—they are growing
    - a. Jesus says, "*You are now doing more than you did at first*" ([19](#))
      - 1) Ephesus had regressed; need to "*do the things you did at first*" ([2:5](#))
      - 2) Not Thyatira! They were doing much better than in the beginning
    - b. That is a pretty good description of spiritual growth; better than before
  3. How were they growing? How were they better than at the first?
    - a. Well, Jesus points to their love, faith, service and perseverance ([2:19](#))
    - b. When we think of growth, we think noses and nickels (*earlier lesson*)
      - 1) It bears mentioning that the two most faithful churches are smallest
      - 2) Smyrna has "*poverty*" ([2:9](#)); Philadelphia has "*little strength*" ([3:8](#))
    - c. Faithfulness is about much more than just noses and nickels
    - d. Often when we go after money and numbers, faithfulness is compromised

### III. The Failure of Thyatira

- A. Things weren't totally peaches and cream at Thyatira—there were problems
1. The church had come under the evil influence of a Jezebel (**Rev 2:20**)
    - a. OK, Jezebel wasn't her name; surely nobody names their kid Jezebel
    - b. Jesus gives her that name because she had become like Queen Jezebel.
      - 1) The OT Jezebel was a Phoenician princess that married King Ahab
      - 2) She introduced the worship of Baal into the Northern Kingdom
      - 3) She took the lead in Ahab's sin (*wants to kill Elijah, see **1 Ki 19:2***)
  2. This woman like Jezebel in Thyatira gained a following in the church astray
    - a. Jesus says she claimed to be a prophetess, she was teaching, and she led
    - b. So she had gained an leadership role (official or unofficial) at church
      - 1) **Problem:** She didn't speak for Christ ("*calls herself a prophetess*")
      - 2) And she was leading the church astray... *and some were following*
- B. What was she teaching? It sounds a lot like what we saw in Pergamum
1. "*Sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols*" (**Rev 2:20**).
    - a. Like in Pergamum, compromises were being made with the pagan world
      - 1) The word for sexual immorality (πορνεία) is used twice here (**20,21**)
      - 2) And this immorality is also connected to "*food sacrificed to idols*"
    - b. Jezebel taught participation in pagan festivals with their attending orgies
  2. We suggested earlier that the trade guilds were important in Thyatira
    - a. These guilds were important ways tradesman promoted their business.
    - b. But the guilds were connected to pagan gods; each guild had its patron
      - 1) Put Christian in bad position (*pagan banquets, orgies, sacrifices*).
      - 2) Jezebel taught them to "*take care of business*" and make concessions
  3. Perhaps the reason her teaching took hold—it's what they wanted to hear
    - a. What she was offering the church was an easy way to fit in at both places
      - 1) You can worship at CHURCH and cozy up to idols at the GUILD
      - 2) You can sing praises to God HERE and fit in with the world THERE
      - 3) You can be like the SAINTS one day and fit in with SINNERS next
    - b. Jesus makes painfully clear that we can't have it both ways (**Rev 2:21-23**)

## IV. Conclusion

- A. Several years ago, I was putting a roof on a storage shed in my back yard
  - 1. My neighbor was in our small group and had just started coming to church
    - a. He came over and just stood there and watched me drive nails for awhile
    - b. He finally said, “*I was wondering what you’ll yell when you hit thumb*”
    - c. Harry was trying to be funny... I think. May want to see if a difference
  - 2. If we are going to follow Jesus, then that should make a difference
    - a. We should talk differently, live differently, spend our money differently
    - b. We should even react differently when we hit our thumb with hammer
      - 1) Being Christian doesn’t mean we spend Sunday mornings differently
      - 2) We are to talk differently, act differently, and live differently
- B. The sin of Jezebel and her bunch was in trying so hard not to be different at all
  - 1. It wasn’t such a big deal to look a little pagan if that helps you fit in, right?
    - a. After all, business is business, right? You gotta make a buck, right?
    - b. You have to live, right? You have to go along to get along, right
    - c. After all, we don’t want to be too fanatical about our faith, right?
  - 2. **Question:** Was I just talking about Jezebel and Thyatira or struggle today?
    - a. Are we ever tempted to fit into our world, to go along to get along?
    - b. How many develop two sets of behaviors, vocabularies, personas, etc
    - c. We act one way around church friends and another when out in world?
- C. Back in early days, the human voice over the telephone was pretty bad
  - 1. It sounded “*tinny*” or “*mechanical.*” It didn’t sound real— it was “*phony.*”
    - a. Do you think our worship on Sundays ever sounds phony to God?
      - 1) Sing “*More Holiness Give Me*” & “*Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen*”
      - 2) Does it sound phony if we spent all week “*going along to get along*”
    - b. We can’t just come to the cross, we have to get on the cross too
  - 2. There are two different invitations offered to Thyatira... and us
    - a. To those who hadn’t compromised, the invitation is “*hold on*” (**24-25**)
    - b. To those who had compromised, the invitation was “*repent*” (**22**)
  - 3. So which will it be—do you need to “hold on” or to “repent?”