

Thyatira and Sardis

Recap who Jesus appears as to each church and how that relates to each letter:

Ephesus – The one who holds the seven stars in His hands and walks in the midst of the 7 Golden lampstands – They lost their first love, Jesus appears as One who is with them and is holding them

Smyrna - The First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life – They are facing death by persecution. Jesus relates to them and also shows He overcame death, so they can too.

Pergamos - He who has the sharp two-edged sword – Jesus appears as the Word of God, and they were guilty of false doctrine and a false Gospel. They do not measure up against the Word of God.

Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-29 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: ¹⁹ "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. ²⁴ "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come. ²⁶ And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— ²⁷ "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels"—as I also have received 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." '

- The smallest of the 7 cities. We don't know a lot but we do know this was the hometown of Lydia, who was seller of purple cloth. This city was the leading producer of purple dye.

Jesus introduces Himself

- the Son of God
- Jesus emphasizes His deity with Son of God. In the Gospels, He tended to emphasize His title as Son of Man, but here He is less concerned with the humanity He took on and presents His Godness.
- who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass
- Fire symbolizes refining and purity
- To have eyes of fire is penetrating judgement
- Brass symbolizes strength and steadfastness. Since feet, unmovable
- Jesus sees impurity and brings refining fire. His ways are unchanging. Even when culture changes the definition of right and wrong – His does not change.
- Even when it makes it difficult in that culture.
- So Jesus presents Himself as the Son of God, Holy and pure to address the unholy within His church.

What Jesus liked about Thyatira:

When we read about this church, what do we immediately think of?

- What they have done wrong.
- The coming destruction
- Jezebel
- Death – Not good stuff

But notice something –

- It first starts off with positive traits. This is a great church. Full of love, service, faith, patience.
- In many ways, the church at Thyatira was a model church. They had four great essential qualities. They had love, both for the Lord and for

one another. They knew service, and had faith and patience worth mentioning.

- And they are increasing. Maybe in size. Maybe in influence. Maybe in maturity. But they are growing. Growing in their love, service, faith and patience.

Of course, it then moves into what Jesus has against them. What is that?

- They have allowed Jezebel to continue

Who is Jezebel?

- There was not a woman named Jezebel at this church. Rather, there was someone, that called themselves a prophetess that operated under the spirit of Jezebel.
- Jezebel is a mix of strong flesh patterns combined with demonic activity
- This woman was doing several things:
 - Calling herself a prophetess when in fact she was not – at least not of God.
 - Teaching and seducing people to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.
 - Sexual immorality – Probably worshiping other gods. God often referred to worship of other gods as committing adultery or fornication.
 - Eating things sacrificed to idols - We know this in and of itself is not bad. See Romans 14. This is probably more about guild trades. Creating art or idols for other gods.
 - Thyatira, like all cities had a center of business and trade. It had active trade guilds, each having their own patron deity from the Greek and Roman pantheon of gods.
 - The draw to the guilds and their meetings was powerful. “No merchant or trader could hope to prosper or make

money unless he was a member of his trade guild.”
(Barclay) Nonetheless, Christians were expected to stand in the face of this kind of pressure. One ancient Christian named Tertullian wrote about Christians who made their living in trades connected to pagan idolatry. A painter might find work in pagan temples or a sculptor might be hired to make a statue of a pagan god. They would justify this by saying, “This is my living, and I must live.”

- This forces us to examine what is happening now. Should bakers make cakes for gay weddings? Should photographers work at transgender celebration events?
- By working at something, does it condone it, or mean you are participating in it?

What should they have done?

- Stopped Jezebel
- Vs 20 - ... you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce...

What are they to do now?

- Nothing. Continue on
- Vs 24-25 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come.

Who will fix this?

- God
- Vs 22-23 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their

deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

I see 2 things in this passage: Responsibility and Grace.

- The church is given a responsibility. We have standards to uphold. We have discernment to use.
- But when there has entered something into the church that is not supposed to be there, it is God that does the work to remove it. It's like sanctification.
- God shows mercy – I gave her time to repent
- God gives opportunity – unless they repent
- God shows that He does the work – I will take care of everything
 - He will cast her into a sickbed – This is figurative. Since adultery is generally in a bed, Jesus sends a bed of affliction.
 - Great tribulation – meant to drive out this Jezebel spirit and those affected. This is meant to draw them to repentance.
 - If they do not repent, they will be killed. The tribulation will be so great that death will be the outcome.
 - This is all in reference to the OT Jezebel whose sons were in sickbeds and died and there was no lineage of Jezebel.
- Even when we have messed up our responsibilities, God gives grace. He comes in and does what needs to be done.
- Jesus will purify His church. We see it happen all the time.

In our personal lives, it's the same thing. We have a responsibility to shun evil. To live holy and pure. But when we do not, God comes in with refining fire.

Even when we have messed up – We can still rest in God. But still repent.

Vs 25 But hold fast what you have till I come.

- The only work God is looking for is those that are not a part of Jezebel is just to continue on.

For the overcomer:

- And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— ²⁷‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star.
 - Overcoming is holding on
 - The overcomer will receive power over the nations – This is a quote from Psalm 2. It is a passage describing the rule of the Messiah on earth and that those who come against Him will be broken.
 - **Psalm 2:7-9** “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”
 - This is not a missionaries passage to claim.
 - This is a promise to rule and reign with Christ. To be in a position of authority
 - The morning star is Christ Himself.
 - **Revelation 22:16** “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready

to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. ⁶ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

Sardis

- Sardis had great wealth, but was in decline at this time. The first coins ever minted in Asia Minor were minted in Sardis. This city was also a city well known for its softness and luxury. It had a well-deserved reputation for apathy and immorality. The combination of easy money and a loose moral environment made the people of **Sardis** notoriously soft and pleasure loving. "The great characteristic of Sardis was that, even on pagan lips, Sardis was a name of contempt. Its people were notoriously loose-living, notoriously pleasure-and luxury loving. Sardis was a city of the decadence."

Jesus introduces Himself

- He who has the 7 spirits of God – 7 represents completeness and perfection. The 7 spirits are from Isaiah and mean the complete Holy Spirit. All that is God is in Him
- And the 7 stars – This is the fullness of the church. The stars in His hand indicates that He holds the churches and takes care of them. Combined with the aforementioned Spirits, Jesus is the One that empowers the church with the Spirit. It is His to distribute or not. A church is only a true church if Jesus says it is a true church.

What Jesus sees in this church

- I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

- To the world, this appears to be an active, growing church with lots of meetings, activities, community involvement. A great reputation.
- But it is dead. What others see and what Jesus sees are not always the same thing. Sardis was not under attack from the enemy, but not because they overcame him, because they were of no threat.
- Sardis was "A perfect model of inoffensive Christianity." (Caird) Their problem was not scandalous wickedness, but disguised death. Their image said "alive," but in substance they were dead.

What Jesus tells Sardis to do

- Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain
 - The fact that things remain tells us the church is not beyond hope. Jesus has not removed their lampstand.
 - Be watchful – Sardis was on top of a cliff with natural defenses. It was hard to get to. But there were also walls to the city for watchmen. Sardis was conquered twice because they grew lazy in keeping watch and people scaled the cliffs and easily got in with no watchmen.
 - The spiritual state of Sardis is the same. They are lazy in keeping a spiritual watch and making sure they are keeping in accordance with the Gospel.
 - Jesus doesn't say specifically what things remain, but we can infer that there is a love for God and a belief there in the work of Christ. They have drifted from it, and gotten into a mess, but it is likely still there.
 - Their works are not perfect – The presence of works does not indicate the presence of God. The presence of God will lead to works that are godly and just, but works will never lead to God.
- Remember how you received and heard.
 - **1 Thessalonians 2:13** For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

- When we first come to Christ there is faith and love. A perfect work is belief. And the love of God is our greatest command.
- Hold fast and repent
 - Hold fast to the true Gospel. Repent by coming into agreement with God that His truth is what they will believe. Change their beliefs for His beliefs.

Consequences of not repenting

- **I will come upon you:** How would Jesus **come upon** them? He could **come** in the sense bringing immediate judgment. Or, He could **come** in the sense of His coming at the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Used in either sense, it showed He might come suddenly and unannounced, so they must **be watchful**.
- Jesus said He would come like a thief in the night in Matthew 24. The parable of the 10 virgins speaks to always keeping watch. And in Revelation 3 and 16 Jesus likens His coming to a thief in the night.
 - This is essentially meaning to always be ready and expecting. We do not know when Jesus is coming back, nor do we know when our time will come to an end. We cannot choose to live for ourselves now and “one day” get right. It will sneak up on us and we will get caught with our guard down.

Something good

- You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy
- There are some that have not become dead. They have remained faithful. God always preserves a remnant. Even in a city this wicked, there are those who are faithful.
- Defiled garments mean those that are not righteous.
- Walk with Me – close fellowship. Jesus gives white garments because He gives righteousness.
- The greatest reward Jesus can give is Himself. Greater intimacy. The pure can have greater intimacy with God not because they

have *earned* it, but because they are simply more interested in the things of God. God promises to reward that interest: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8).

He who overcomes

- He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
- The overcomers will be identified with those that have not defiled. They will also receive righteousness. And be counted as pure. This is in contrast to those that embraced the impurity of the worldliness around them.
- This is a throwback to the parable of the wedding feast and not wearing the garments that were provided for them.
- Blotted out of the Book of Life – Does this mean that we can lose our salvation? No. This is about assurance of salvation. When we choose Jesus, our names will never be blotted out
 - One theory – Based on the parable of the wedding Garments – Everyone is given righteousness. But they must choose to put it on. If they do not, then their names are blotted out.
- Confess you before My Father and His angels - This was an amazing promise. It simply makes sense that we should be willing to confess the name of Jesus, but it is amazing that He would not be ashamed to confess us!