

Chapter 1

Thyatira: Compromise (2:18–29)

1.1 Address opening the letter (2:18a)

Revelation 2:18a

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write ...

1. **Thyatira**: Smallest of the seven cities but the longest of all the letters. Rich in agriculture and commerce, but weak in natural fortifications to protect it from invasions. It was located in a valley and served as defense gate to Pergamum which is the capital. City had several trade guilds for worker of wool, linen, garments, dyes, leather, tanning, pottery, baking, slave trade, bronze smiting, etc. Membership is compulsory to be a trader. Lydia was from this city and was a seller of purple

Act 16:14. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul

It is predominantly gentile population. Apollo was the chief deity, emperor worship was not strong, but each guild had their own patron god who need to be worshipped by every member. The guild festivals include eating food sacrificed to idols and immoral activities. Christians lacked zeal for godly life and doctrine and tolerated those erring. Falsehood and idolatry permeated almost the whole church. The church might have been started by Paul

Act 19:10. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks

1.2 Attributes of the speaker (2:18b)

Revelation 2:18b

... These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

1. **Son of God:** The only direct use in Rev, indirectly in 1:6, 2:27, 3:5, 21, 14:1 and directly in John 1:34, 49, 3:18, 5:25, 10:36, 11:4, 27, 20:31. Equivalent of Messiah

Luke 4:41. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ

Church needs to be reminded of who really is her head

Mat 11:27. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him

Mat 16:16. Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"

Mat 26:63-64. But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "... Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" 64 Jesus said to him, "It is as you said ..."

Luke 10:22. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

John 11:4. When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

John 19:7. The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

2. **One who has the eyes as a flame of fire:** Surpassing intelligence with ability to search the hearts and minds of man, a prerogative of God

Dan 10:6. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude

3. **Feet like fine brass:** Moves in the midst of the churches to purge out the church from all moral impurity.

1.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (2:19)

Revelation 2:19

I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

1. **works (erga)**: A neutral word, it could be good or bad, the context determines the meaning. Works are the mirror of the character of the churches and is mentioned in all the seven churches (2:2, 5, 22, 26, 3:1, 8, 15). Considerable praise is given followed by blame. Works are elaborated as love, faith, service and endurance. The first two are internal (abstract qualities or motives) and the last two the external evidence of the internal reality.
2. **Love (agapen)**: Love is demonstrated in service to others and faith is shown through endurance of hardship imposed through persecution. The only church commended for both love and service. Love is the emblem of discipleship.

John 13:35. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another

3. **Faith (pistis)**: Faith is a firm persuasion, a conviction based hearing of God, Christ, or spiritual things from the Bible.

Heb 13:1,6. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen 6. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him

4. **Service (diakonia):** is ministry to meet the needs of others. It is voluntary service unlike that of a slave (doulos) who has an obligation to serve the master

Acts 11:29. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea

Rom 15:25. But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints

1 Cor 16:15. ...the household of Stephanas ...have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints

2 Cor 8:4. imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints

2 Cor 9:1. Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you

Heb 6:10. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister

5. **Endurance hypomonen**: Result of strong faith, sustained in hardships imposed through persecution. To withstand such pressure without wavering is expected of all followers of Christ

Mat. 16:24-26. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

6. **Last works are more than the first**: As time progressed their works also grown. It is commendable and this is an exemplary in spite of all the weaknesses.

1.4 State of the Church (2:20-24)

Revelation 2:20

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.

1. **You tolerate:** Danger to the church is not external, but internal; not pagan gods but false prophet.
2. **Jezebel:** Symbolical name of some prominent woman of the church who influenced the church in a wrong way just as Jezebel who also claimed to be a prophetess and misled Ahab and the people of Israel. Here, Jezebel is the personification of heresy

1 Ki 18:4,19. For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD ... 19. Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table

2 Ki 9:22. Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' So he answered, 'What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many years?'

3. **who calls herself prophetess:** Claim not accepted by Jesus Christ. The only woman called as prophetess in NT is Anna and daughters of Philip engaged in prophesying

Luke 2:36. Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher

Act 21:9. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied

In the first-century church a prophet was an inspired messenger of God who ranked high, just behind the apostles, in the capability of edifying the church

1 Cor. 12:28. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues

4. **she teaches (disaskei):** She teaches which is not permitted in the church

1 Tim 2:12. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence

5. **she seduces (planao):** This word occurs very frequent in the book of Rev than any other book. 1 John also has several references. Departure from fundamental faith (Rev 13:14, 18:23) and is also the title of devil (Rev 12:9). She also might have taught wrong things like Nicolaitans stating that idol is nothing, so going

to temple and partaking a common meal for the sake of business is okay (1 Cor. 8:4). She also might have claim deeper truths (2:24). Impact of her teaching on other within the church (children) is other churches also (2:23). In that sense, this is worse than Ephesus and Pergamum churches.

Revelation 2:21

And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

1. **gave time to repent:** She departed from faith long back. Lord warned her., probably through John (1 Jh 2:19, 4:1-3).
2. **sexual immorality:** There is close relation between spiritual faithfulness and marital faithfulness (Jer 3:6, Ezk 23:29, Hos 9:1. It is not clear how much physical involvement was there, definitely here there was literal immorality as evident from v 20.
3. **did not repent:** She has no inclination to repent in spite of the warning.

Revelation 2:22

Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

1. **Cast her into a bed:** The word sick was added by translators. It could mean:

- (a) Sick bed - contrasting the adulterous bed of pleasure. Ex 21:18. Ps 41:3, 1Cor 11:27-29. Problem: Sickness is normally a discipline by the Lord to believers, and it is too less for the crime of Jezebel,
- (b) Death bed (1Cor 11:29-30, 2 Ki 1:4). Problem: Unlikely, such usage is less and the word killing mentioned below,
- (c) Sending to hell. The word casting is used by Jesus referring to sending to hell (Mat 3:10, 5:29, 7:19, 13:42, 50, 18:8, 9; Mk 9:45, 47, Luke 3:9, John 15:6). Problem: stretching too much, and
- (d) Period of eschatological tribulation coming at the coming of the Lord.

Woman and her follower would then have same destiny. Bed is symbolic of pestilence and death and even eternal hell. Rev 2:5, 2:16, 2:25 all points to eschatological.

2. **those who commit adultery with her:** Pointing to literal adultery and literal punishment which is death (Lev. 20:10), but the extent is unknown. Not that the whole Church participated, but it permitted/tolerated the same exposing the weakness.
3. **into great tribulation:** The first reference of this word in the book, and points to the eschatological events. Rev 4-19 describes the unparalleled misery. Jesus also used great tribulation pointing to the end time (Mt 24:21)

Revelation 2:23

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.

1. **I will kill:** The other face of the Lord, the Son of God, one who judges.
2. **her children:** The one who whole heartily support her doctrine (antinomian)
3. **death (ethnato):** Pestilence resulting out of the great tribulation, a serious tone of the punishment indicates that they will be killed with the pestilence (Ezk 33:27, Rev 6:8, 18:8, 2Sam 24:13).
4. **all churches:** Broader purpose is that all the churches should be warned about.
5. **know:** Churches will know by observation the true person of Jesus: both his omniscience and omnipotence.
6. **I am He who searches the minds (nephrous) and hearts (kardias):** The prerogative of God (omniscience) to read the heart and minds. His knowledge is intimate that pierces below superficial appearance (Jer 11:20, 17:10, 20:12, Ps 7:9, Prov 24:12). The word kidney is used to designate mind, his will, affections etc.

7. **give each one according to your works:** Works are the basis of judgment (Ps 62:12, Prov 24:12, Jer 17:10, Rom 2:6, 2 Tim 4:14, Rev 20:12-13, Mat 7:16-20, 16:27, Rev 18:6, 20:12, 13, 22:12). Reward is to each one in the church. Works when done continually reflects the motive (1Cor 4:5).

Revelation 2:24

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.

1. **to you the rest:** First time a remnant is singled out who do not participate with the pagan practice. Remnant is unlikely to be a minority as the works shown in 2:19. Two things characterize them: correct doctrine, and not known the depths of Satan.
2. **as many as do not have this doctrine:** this remnant were completely free from any contact with her false teaching and they wisely distanced themselves from it.
3. **who have not known the depths of Satan:** Tradition reveals that a number of pagan religious and heretical sects boasted of their knowledge of the deep things. It amounts to claim of esoteric knowledge, superior morality, and higher law. If a man is to know them, he must have supernatural help. They used the same language which Paul used in **1Cor 2:10. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit**

searches all things, yes, the deep things of God, Rom 11:33. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!, Eph 3:18. may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height. This was their way of claiming they could indulge in idol feasts, including their immorality, without sinning. They viewed this remnant as weaker ones. They even claimed sinless (1Joh 1:10, 3:10) and ridiculed the genuine Christians which is a typical characteristics of heretics. They claim to venture into Satans strongholds to demonstrate the powerlessness of the enemy over him, or else to learn the real nature of sin in this firsthand way. They even went to the extent of claiming their actions would help the weaker brethren to strengthen him. A Gnostic will tell that such knowledge help him to understand the earthly things are unreal and harmless. He is sure of his sinlessness, his immune to sin for he is free in spirit.

4. **I do not cast on you another burden (baros):** The burden is to resist Jezebel and her group, and staying away from her evil practices which itself invites ridicule. The word mean a weightier or important matter (Mat 23:23, 2 Cor 10:10, 1 Thes 2:6) which the Lord is giving. Hence, the meaning is: I put upon you no other weighty admonition than this: Hold fast what you have.

1.5 Promise of the Lords return (2:25)

Revelation 2:25

But hold fast what you have till I come.

1. **hold fast (krateo)**: It is a common metaphor to describe strict adherence to a tradition or teaching either in a good or bad sense (*2Thes 2:15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle*, Rev 2:13, 3:11, *Mk 7:3, 8.3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men - the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do*, Rev 2:13-15). Here the emphasis is on continuing with its focus on urgency.
2. **what you have**: the valued possession they have which is resisting wrong doctrine and lifestyle.
3. **till I come**: They have to hold this till Jesus come and the period is indefinite.

1.6 Command to hear and obey (2:29)

Revelation 2:29

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

1. ... has an ear ... let him hear: similar to earlier three churches Rev 2:7, 11, 17.

1.7 Promise to the overcomer (2:26-28)

Revelation 2:26

And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

1. the one who overcomes (ho nikon): Not a member of special class of Christian having higher spirituality but refer to a description of what is expected of true believers.

2. **and keeps (Kai ho teron)**: is the same individual as ho nikon. The over comer also obeys the Word. The word tereo is used 12 times in John and 6 times in 1 John, and 9 times in revelation, all referring to obeying the Word.
3. **the works (ta erga)**: works being performed in compliance with Gods commands.
4. **until the end**: maintain an obedient life and may coincide with the return of Christ.
5. **I will give power over the nations**: Believers will share in His eschatological rule with authority/power. This alludes to **Ps 2:8. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession** and is the only overcomer who receives double promise. This promise is the first definitive reference in Revelation to the coming millennial kingdom which Jesus is to establish when He returns to earth.

Revelation 2:27

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;

1. **I destroy (poimanei)**: The Greek word translates as shepherd or rules. It is a rule of violent destruction of the enemies or nations.

2. **rod of iron:** Alludes to **Ps 2:9**. *You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel* and symbolizes a royal scepter of some kind with which a rigorous rule is achieved.
3. **as vessels of a potter shattered to pieces:** A graphic picture of the collapse of the enemies of the Messiah when He confronts them.
4. **I also have received from My Father:** the source of Messianic power is from the Father (Ps 2:7-8) and Jesus will delegate this power to his people.

Revelation 2:28

and I will give him the morning star.

1. **morning star:** In the messianic kingdom the righteous will shine like stars indicating royalty

Dan 12:3. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever

Mat 2:2. saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Mat 13:43. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

The overcomer has a role of not only destroying the enemies but also ruling/shining with Him. Note Rev 20:6, 22:16 indicate that Jesus is also called as morning stars.

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