

**The Compromised Church  
Thyatira  
Revelation 2:18-29**

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Now we come to the church at Thyatira. Based on what Jesus has to say to them and about them, I am convinced I will be able to offend everyone before we are done. The smallest church received the biggest message and one that will take the better part of two or three weeks to cover.

Thyatira is forty miles southeast of Pergamum in the valley connecting the Hermus and Caicus valleys

Thyatira was built by Seleucus I., the founder of the Seleucid dynasty, whose vast realm, extending from the Hermus Valley to the Himalayas, was everywhere bounded loosely according to the varying strength of rival powers. The boundary at this north-western extremity was determined at that period by the power of Lysimachus, who ruled parts of Thrace, Mysia and the coast-lands as far south as Ephesus. For defence against him, a colony of Macedonian soldiers was planted at Thyatira between 300 and 282 B.C. (Ramsay 1904, 317)

Thyatira was predominately a military city and was annexed to be a part of Rome in 190 BC. It became a commercial center well known for the number of guilds within the city as well as a specialty

Acts 16:14–15

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. (NASB95)

The fact that Lydia, Paul's first convert in Europe, was a God worshiper, shows that there may have been a Jewish presence in the city even though Jesus does not reflect on that in His letter to the church in Thyatira. Trade guilds though were numerous there.

It is therefore not surprising that more trade-guilds are known in Thyatira than in any other Asian city. The inscriptions, though not specially numerous, mention the following: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers and bronze-smiths. The dealers in garments and the slave-dealers would have a good market in a road-centre. Garments were sold ready made, being all loose and free; and from the mention of dealers in outer garments we may infer the existence of special trades and guilds for other classes of garments. (Ramsay 1904, 324-325)

The modern city of Akhisar sits on the site of Thyatira.

About the space of half a city block or a city block has been partially excavated. There one can see the remnants of a second-century-AD colonnaded portico, as well as pieces of an ornate arched gate or entryway into this public space or forum. (deSilva 2018, Thyatira)

Some remains of ancient Thyatira can be found incorporated into the buildings throughout modern Akhisar. For example, the Ulu Cami mosque appears to have incorporated portions of an ancient church, which, in turn, was a converted pagan temple. So, if one wants to see remnants of ancient Thyatira, one

really needs to tour much of modern Thyatira, noting the places where ancient building blocks have been repurposed over the centuries into the city that now greets visitors today. (deSilva 2018, Thyatira)



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

So far we have seen the following pattern in the letters

- Ephesus – problem church
- Smyrna – perfect church
- Pergamum- problem church

Thyatira is in the middle of the seven and reflects something entirely different – perfect, problem and perverse church

The last three are in this pattern: perverse church—perfect church—perverse church. Thyatira appears to combine all three types: perfect, problem, and perverse. (Mulholland Jr. 2011, 443)

Even today, the modern city of Akhisar is only around 160,000 in the entire county, it is not a big city now and it was not a big city in the time of John.

It is remarkable that Christ should single out a very small church in a relatively obscure city for such an important letter. However, the message reaches far beyond the immediate circumstances in the church at Thyatira. (Walvoord 2008, 71)

Other than the reference made by Luke in the book of Acts, and the letter in Revelation, there is no other reference to this city in the Bible.

There is no record of any evangelistic effort in the city but remember, Lydia was the first convert in Europe and was from this town.

...it may be that the gospel was first brought to Thyatira through the instrumentality of Lydia. Her role of a seller of purple indicates that she was a representative of the thriving trade in purple cloth originating in Thyatira. Though Lydia was probably already deceased, Christ directed the longest of the seven letters to this small Christian assembly which may have been the fruit of her witness. (Walvoord 2008, 72)

Thyatira - High tower; a castle; feminine oppression; odor of affliction. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 237)

The destination in verse 18a is the Church of Thyatira, which means “continual or perpetual sacrifice.” (Fruchtenbaum 2003, 58)

#### Revelation 2:18–29

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’” (NASB95)

The church at Thyatira is the next in line after Pergamum. That church was a reflection of the church after Constantine’s edict of toleration and the fall of Rome till the beginning of what we call in history, the dark ages up to beginning of the reformation, 600 to 1500 AD.

We will also see from this letter and the issues being addressed, that it deals with issues that arose internally in the church

Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of God in verse 18. This is the only place in the book Revelation that Jesus refers to Himself as such. If we look at the conversation taking place between the Father and the Son in Psalm 2, we get a better sense of what this letter will be about.

#### Psalm 2:7–9

“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’” (NASB95)

Jesus will be approaching this church as judge. Through the reference we see later in this letter to Jezebel, (more to come about her) we know there is also going to be a problem with worship of the Mother of God, Astarte also known as Asherah and there is a connection as well to Ashtoreth and the Queen of Heaven, Anat.

ASH’ERAH (straight), the name of a Phœnician goddess, or rather of the idol itself (Authorized Version “grove”). Asherah is closely connected with ASHTORETH and her worship, Judges 3:7, comp. 2:3; Judges 6:25; 1 Kings 18:19; Ashtoreth being, perhaps, the proper name of the goddess, whilst Asherah is the name of her image or symbol, which was of wood. See Judges 6:25–30; 2 Kings 23:14. (W. Smith 1986)

ASHTORETH (a star), the principal female divinity of the Phœnicians, called Ishtar by the Assyrians and Astarte by the Greeks and Romans. She was by some ancient writers identified with the moon. But on the other hand the Assyrian Ishtar was not the moon-goddess, but the planet Venus; and Astarte was by many identified with the goddess Venus (or Aphrodite), as well as with the plant of that name. It is certain that the worship of Astarte became identified with that of Venus, and that this worship was connected with the most impure rites is apparent from the close connection of this goddess with ASHERAH. 1 Kings 11:5, 33; 2 Kings 23:13. (W. Smith 1986)

Ugaritic literature provides our primary source concerning the goddess. The name is spelt *aṯrt*, usually vocalised as ‘Athirat(u)’, or, following Hebrew convention, ‘Asherah’. She appears in the following contexts. In the ‘Baal cycle’ of myths, KTU 1.1–6, she is a great goddess, mother of the minor gods of the pantheon, referred to as ‘the seventy sons of Athirat’ (šb ‘m bn aṯrt, KTU 1.4 vi:46), who intercedes for

→Baal and →Anat before →El (KTU 1.4 iv), and who supplies a son to reign following the descent of Baal into the netherworld (KTU 1.6 i:45–55). In one obscure episode (cf. KTU 1.4 ii:1–11 with 4 iii:15–22) it is possible that she attempts to seduce Baal, or is thought by him to have done so (HOFFNER 1990:69). It may also be that Baal kills large numbers of her children (KTU 1.4 ii:23–26 with 1.6 v:1–4; HOFFNER 1990:69). She appears to be the consort of El (il), though this is nowhere stated. In the Keret story, KTU 1.14–16, the king, while travelling to claim his bride, makes a vow to “Athirat of the Tyrians, and the goddess of the Sidonians” (KTU 1.14:38–39), indicating that the poet regards her as a goddess of Tyre and →Sidon (but cf. B. MARGALIT, UF 28 [1996] 453–455). When the vow is broken, her vengeance entails the complete undoing of all El’s plans to redeem Keret. Further, the heir to Keret’s throne is described as one “who will drink the milk of Athirat, draining the breast of the Virgin [ ]” (KTU 1.15 ii:27—the completion of the lacuna by →‘Anat’ is gratuitous: WYATT, UF 15 [1983] 273–274 and n. 13). (Wyatt 1999, 99-100)

By the way, the goddess Anat, connected with all of this, is also referred to as the queen of heaven in KTU 1.108 6-7 and was a problem for Israel as referenced in Jeremiah.

May ‘Anatu-of-Might also drink, Lady of kingship, Lady of sovereignty, Lady of the High Heavens. (Pardee and Lewis 2002, 194)

The Beth Shan stele refers to Anat (spelled ‘ntt, but the final t is simply a graphic marker of feminine gender [personal communications, T. O. LAMBDIN and J. F. BORGHOUTS]) as “the →queen of heaven, the mistress of all the gods” (A. ROWE, The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan [Philadelphia 1940] 33) (Day 1999, 38)

Jeremiah 7:17–18

“Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods in order to spite Me.” (NASB95)

This was a problem prior to the exile as Jeremiah relates and Anat continued to be a problem for those who escaped, against God’s word and counter to instructions from Jeremiah, to Egypt

Jeremiah 44:15–19

Then all the men who were aware that their wives were sacrificing to other gods, as well as all their wives, answered Jeremiah. There was a great crowd of them representing all the people who lived in northern and southern Egypt. They answered, “We will not listen to what you claim the LORD has spoken to us! Instead we will do everything we vowed we would do. We will sacrifice and pour out drink offerings to the goddess called the Queen of Heaven just as we and our ancestors, our kings, and our leaders previously did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and had no troubles. But ever since we stopped sacrificing and pouring out drink offerings to the Queen of Heaven, we have been in great need. Our people have died in wars or of starvation.” The women added, “We did indeed sacrifice and pour out drink offerings to the Queen of Heaven. But it was with the full knowledge and approval of our husbands that we made cakes in her image and poured out drink offerings to her.” (NET)

Also, since the church in Thyatira has an internal problem where they are beginning to compromise with the world and are including pagan trappings into worship it becomes important to see this.

In any case, it stands in strong contrast to the local cultic worship of Apollo Tyrimnos, which was merged with that of the emperor (identified as Apollo incarnate) so that both were acclaimed as sons of Zeus. Thus it is not the emperor or the guardian deity of Thyatira, but the resurrected Christ, who is the true son of God. (Mounce 1997, 85)

Jesus, as the Son of God, has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze

The blazing eyes suggest the penetrating power of Christ’s ability to see through the seductive arguments of Jezebel and those who were being led astray by her pernicious teaching. (Mounce 1997, 85)

We have seen this before in the book of Daniel chapter 10

By the time we get to Daniel 10, for three weeks Daniel, who is in his 80's, has been involved in a partial fast. He is doing this during Passover as well so he is serious. In chapter 10, Daniel is at the Tigris River and has been seeking the Lord for three weeks. It is now three days after Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, Daniel receives a vision.

Daniel 10:4–9

“On the twenty-fourth day of the first month I was beside the great river, the Tigris. I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen; around his waist was a belt made of gold from Upaz. His body resembled yellow jasper, and his face had an appearance like lightning. His eyes were like blazing torches; his arms and feet had the gleam of polished bronze. His voice thundered forth like the sound of a large crowd. Only I, Daniel, saw the vision; the men who were with me did not see it. On the contrary, they were overcome with fright and ran away to hide. I alone was left to see this great vision. My strength drained from me, and my vigor disappeared; I was without energy. I listened to his voice, and as I did so I fell into a trance-like sleep with my face to the ground.” (NET)

This is the same Jesus John saw in Revelation 1.

Revelation 1:13–16

“and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.” (NASB95)

The description is one of a divine being, it is one of divinity, it is Jesus Christ. It is supernatural and here in Revelation, Jesus is reminding the church He is God, and He is pointing to previous instances where He has shown up as God for validation. The viewpoint of those in the church of Thyatira was one which accepted the supernatural, thus the language. They knew what it meant too.

If you are going to throw off the supernatural, you might as well burn your Bibles at once. You take the supernatural out of that Book and you have taken Jesus Christ out of it, you have taken out the best part of the Book. There is no part of the Bible that does not teach supernatural things. (Moody 1895, 23)

In God's universe He is both immanent and transcendent. The powers of nature are limited, but God is able to introduce unto infinity therein whatever He wills to do. His own works as manifest in creation and providence are hardly to be classed as miracles. They are rather the normal works of God in His own particular sphere of action. What is natural with God may be supernatural with man. (Chafer 1993, 239)

The right context for understanding the Bible is the context that produced the Bible. That seems simple, but experience has taught me that commitment to this patently obvious truth isn't easy.

The biblical context includes its supernaturalism. The biblical writers believed in an active, animate spiritual world. That world was home to a lot more than the triune God, angels, Satan, and demons. It included other gods (i.e., the gods of the nations were not merely idols) and territorial spiritual beings that were not demons—and were, in fact, superior to demons. It included what we think of as ghosts, who could appear visibly, and even physically, and communicate to the embodied living world of which they had once been a part (1 Sam 28:3–20). For the biblical writers, divine beings could eat, drink, fight, and produce offspring with humans (Gen 6:1–4; 18:1–8; 19:1–11; 32:22–32; Num 13:32–33; 2 Pet 2:4–10; Jude 6–7). (Heiser 2017, 16)

Our generation is overwhelmingly naturalistic. There is an almost complete commitment to the concept of the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system. This is its distinguishing mark. If we are not careful, even though we say we are biblical Christians and supernaturalists, nevertheless the naturalism of our

generation tends to come in upon us. It may infiltrate our thinking without our recognizing its coming, like a fog creeping in through a window opened only half an inch. As soon as this happens, Christians begin to lose the reality of their Christian lives. (Schaeffer 1982, 255)

Because of our naturalist viewpoint of the world, one which is based in the cult of science we now find much of our generation worshipping at, we miss the hints being given in the text here in Revelation. Jesus is approaching His church as judge.

As we go through this letter, we will also find that this is being written to the first church that will also be involved in the rapture as well as the tribulation. These hints did not show up with the previous churches. Whatever is going on in Thyatira is happening then and will continue on in church history until the end of the age. That means what was going on in Thyatira, is still going on in the church today. We have already seen that with the other churches, but now we really have to pay attention.

In the church at Thyatira we are going to see faithful believers reflecting their faith to the outside world, we are also going to see those who have compromised and added in false religion, because they have to keep their job in the guild, and you will have those who just want to get along

This goes on today with churches that have those being faithful, then there are those who want to maintain their social standing and perhaps their jobs and they have compromised with the social agenda of the day, then there are those who just want to get along.

Nothing has changed, no compromise is still the rule of the day.

First the good news.

Revelation 2:19

“I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.” (NASB95)

Jesus is intimately aware of the deeds of this church. They, unlike the church at Ephesus, have deeds that express love and faith. As a result of those actions, they are expressing that love and faith in the real world through service and perseverance.

So, we have Jesus, reflecting that He is the judge saying that some of what the faithful at Thyatira are doing is commendable, but He spends way more time talking about that which is not commendable for this church and actually moves to the realm of perverse.

Revelation 2:20

“But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” (NASB95)

Jesus is pointing to an internally generated problem within this church that is a problem. Rather than spending a lot of time discussing what it is this woman is doing, He uses a name from the old testament that would be familiar to those reading and would make them research who this person was.

Revelation 2:21–22

“I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.” (NASB95)

A little bit more to digest before we dig in. This is not new news. Jesus, apparently through John, has already confronted this woman and her followers about her sin, and she refuses to repent.

Remember, there are a lot of guilds in Thyatira. Each with their own god and their own worship systems as well as their own festivals, all of which run counter to what a true believer should be doing. There are things we encounter in the world that may look ok, but when you dig down, really aren't. We may think we have freedom, but when we get down to what the holiday truly means, we may not have as much freedom as we thought. More on that next week.

This might be the background behind the letter John wrote that we call 1 John.

Prophetess is not an unknown office in the scriptures. "Scripture recognizes numerous women who fulfilled the role of prophetess : Miriam, sister of Aaron (Ex. 15:20); Deborah (Jdg. 4:4); Huldah (2K. 22:14); Noadiah (Ne. 6:14); Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3); Anna (Luke 2:36); the daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:9). But nowhere does it record a true prophetess that is self-proclaimed." (Garland 2006, Re 2:20)

One more thing, Paul had given specific instructions.

Scripture indicates that although women can have great wisdom (Proverbs 31:26) and work alongside men instructing other believers (Acts 18:26), in the assembly they are not to occupy teaching roles over men (1Cor. 14:34; 1Tim 2:12). The reason for this prohibition is not cultural , but reflects God's created order (1Tim 2:13) and recognizes differences between men and women (1Tim 2:14). The teaching role of women is primarily to be instructing other women (Titus 2:3-4) and children (2Tim 1:5, 3:15). (Garland 2006, Re 2:20)

1 John 1:5–10

"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." (NASB95)

When looked at in the light of what is going on in Thyatira, 1 John takes on a light of needed action as well as comfort for those who choose to remain faithful. Almost like an expansion of what we see here in the letter to Thyatira.

So Jesus makes reference to the self styled prophetess Jezebel, Mounce adds "The choice of the epithet, Jezebel, and references to sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols indicate a first-century parallel with the wicked queen of Ahab who fostered in Israel the idolatrous worship of the Canaanite Baal (1 Kgs 16:29ff.; 2 Kgs 9:30ff.). (Mounce 1997, 86)

Jezebel (jez'-e-bel) = Noncohabitant; unchaste. Without obligation; i.e., (self) righteous; unmarried; chaste, free from carnal connection; (roots = [1] without; [2] to inhabit; to dwell together with). (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 145)

Furthermore, when a woman is used symbolically in Scripture, she represents a religious entity. This might be either positive or negative. On the positive side, there is Israel as the Wife of Jehovah and the Church as the Bride of the Messiah. On the negative side, there is the woman with the leaven (Mat. 13:33), the Great Harlot of chapter 17, and here, the woman Jezebel. (Fruchtenbaum 2003, 58)

1 Kings 16:29–33

"In the thirty-eighth year of Asa's reign over Judah, Omri's son Ahab became king over Israel. Ahab son of Omri ruled over Israel for twenty-two years in Samaria. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the sight of the LORD than all who were before him. As if following in the sinful footsteps of Jeroboam son of Nebat were not bad enough, he married Jezebel the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians. Then he worshiped and bowed to Baal. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal he had built in Samaria.

Ahab also made an Asherah pole; he did more to anger the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.” (NET)

1 Kings 21:25–26

“Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him. He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the sons of Israel.” (NASB95)

1 Kings 18:19

“Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.” (NASB95)

1 Kings 18:22

Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men.” (NASB95)

1 Kings 18:3–4

“Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly; for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)” (NASB95)

1 Kings 21:5-15

Then his wife Jezebel came in and said to him, “Why do you have a bitter attitude and refuse to eat?” He answered her, “While I was talking to Naboth the Jezreelite, I said to him, ‘Sell me your vineyard for silver, or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.’ But he said, ‘I will not sell you my vineyard.’” His wife Jezebel said to him, “You are the king of Israel! Get up, eat some food, and have a good time. I will get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite for you.” She wrote out orders, signed Ahab’s name to them, and sealed them with his seal. She then sent the orders to the leaders and to the nobles who lived in Naboth’s city. This is what she wrote: “Observe a time of fasting and seat Naboth in front of the people. Also seat two villains opposite him and have them testify, ‘You cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.” The men of the city, the leaders and the nobles who lived there, followed the written orders Jezebel had sent them. They observed a time of fasting and put Naboth in front of the people. The two villains arrived and sat opposite him. Then the villains testified against Naboth right before the people, saying, “Naboth cursed God and the king.” So they dragged him outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they reported to Jezebel, “Naboth has been stoned to death.” When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, “Get up, take possession of the vineyard Naboth the Jezreelite refused to sell you for silver, for Naboth is no longer alive; he’s dead.” (NET)

2 Kings 9:22

When Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?” And he answered, “What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?” (NASB95)

2 Kings 9:30–34

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.” (NASB95)

### **Jezebel**

So what do we know about Jezebel now?

She assumed authority where none was given to her

She introduced false gods into the worship of Israel to include the worship of the queen of heaven.

She put to death those who were followers of YAHWEH and were His ministers.  
She created her own priesthood and took care of them.  
She added to the system of worship which already existed and made her prophets look a lot like those of YAHWEH.  
She ignored God's word and God's law holding her word above that of God.  
She was a witch.  
She changed the festival days around to align with her changes.  
She was unrepentant.  
She took authority that belonged to another and used it to lie and falsely accuse and kill others to take their property.

We see in the church at Thyatira, we have a group that is faithful to the Lord and hold strongly to the faith, we also have an extreme liberal group that is the antithesis of everything that Jesus taught, and in the middle we have those who want to get along. To use terms we see today, we have fundamentalists, liberals, and those who follow the denominational line.

As for the women being characterized as Jezebel and her followers, they will go into the Great Tribulation unless they repent. She is a self-proclaimed prophetess who is leading the church into idolatry and fornication. Remember, Jezebel enforced worship of Ashtoreth / Astarte / Anat.

Ashtarte was the chief goddess of the Sidonians, among whom she was worshiped as an independent divinity, and also under the name "Ashtarte of the name of Baal," as a counterpart of Baal (compare "C. I. S." i. 3 and "Hebraica," x. 33). A fragment quoted in Philo Biblos connects the worship of Ashtarte with Tyre. (Singer ed. 1901-1906, 206)

In Babylonia and Assyria she was worshiped as Ishtar at several different shrines, in each of which the goddess possessed slightly varying characteristics. Erech was one of the oldest and most important of these shrines, where she was called also Nanâ, and generally appears as the goddess of sexual love and of fertility. (Singer ed. 1901-1906, 206)

From Babylonia, emigrants carried her worship to Assyria, as represented in the Assyrian inscriptions. In Assyria, at Nineveh, and Assur she was regarded as the spouse of Assur and the mother of gods and men. With the god Assur she was supreme, although other gods were worshiped. (Singer ed. 1901-1906, 206)

Her name shifted as the worship of this god moved across the Bosphorus into Europe. In Greece she was called Aphrodite and in Rome, Venus.

Often known as the Great Mother, she communicated the powers of the occult. The goddess Istar was a spiritual force in the Sumerian age (1800 B.C.), bridging the gap between the living and the dead with her occultic power. The pagan religions of ancient Canaan worshiped the goddess Anat, a divinity resembling Istar. The Syrian goddess Cybele or Atargatis had all the qualities of Anat. The Cybele myth reproduces the cult myth of the Egyptian Isis, the goddess of witchcraft and magic. This Eastern occultic goddess finally came to Rome. (Jones 2003, 18)

Eventually, Rome turned from the older gods. "Roman spirituality was saved by the goddess. As ruler of the dead, of demons and of magic, the one who possessed the key to the door of Hades, and goddess of the underworld, she brought the everyday "techniques" of magical control into the spiritual domain of the mystery religions. As the source of magic and witchcraft, she offered to her initiates the benefits of her cosmic power. This was pagan mysticism with a pragmatic vengeance—the tangible power of the occult joined to a deep sense of personal redemption and union with all things." (Jones 2003, 22)

The new name was Cybele. Religions were not simply placed side by side in a gesture of friendly dialogue. They were theologically intermingled. There are many examples. In a display of interfaith communion, many different gods were housed in the same temple. In Apollo's temple at Didyma, outside

Miletus, a visitor in the second century A.D. described the place as a “circle of altars to every god.” In other temples, one priest would officiate for half a dozen deities. (Jones 2003, 30)

### **Augustine**

Then, the Mother of the gods migrated to Rome from some out-of-the-way place called Pessinus. For, of course, it was beneath her dignity to lurk in obscurity while her son was enthroned on the Capitoline. The Mother of all the gods followed some of her children to Rome, but she got there ahead of the others. I should be a bit surprised, though, if she really give birth to dog-headed Cynocephalus, who came from Egypt much later. Whether the goddess Fever was also one of her children, I leave it to Aesculapius, her great-grandson, to say. But, whatever her origin, I do not suppose that the immigrant gods will dare declare a goddess of low birth is a citizen of Rome. (Augustine of Hippo 1950, 144)

Prior to the Edict of Milan under Constantine, it was not unusual to combine several different gods and their worship. There was a history of toleration for all but true Christianity, but if you can't beat them, join them. A lesson learned in Thyatira.

It becomes legal to be a Christian and by 500 AD, we begin to see things coming into the church, many which are reflected in this letter from Jesus to Thyatira.

Several centuries after the early church had suffered so much for the cause of Christ, the church establishment at Rome submerged itself into a flood of worldliness and arrogance. Following the fourth century, after the fall of the Roman Empire, the bishops of Rome stepped into Caesar's place and accepted the title Pontifex Maximus. (Couch 2002, 150)

As the church slipped into the middle ages, things began to come into the church from the inside, not the outside.

Just as the example of Jezebel from Thyatira to compare with the Jezebel of Israel, who was in reality a Sidonian princess. She just did not corrupt the worship of YAHWEH, she introduced a whole new god and system of worship were introduced in Israel (1 Kg. 16:29–33). Through Jezebel, Baal worship came into the Land, resulting in more idolatry than ever before. Involved in the worship of Baal was sexual immorality. (Fruchtenbaum 2003, 59)

In the west was the rise of the Roman Church which, by the fall of Rome, saw power shift from the emperors to the Bishop or Pope of Rome. Leading into this, after the Edict of Milan, saw changes, some good and some bad in the church. With the fall of Rome, the changes accelerated as power shifted

At certain times, religious issues were used for political gain, making it easier to be a Christian. A nominal Christianity was thereby allowed, if not encouraged. Many pagan customs were included within Christian practice. Persecution by the Christian emperors of other beliefs and of the Christians among themselves were often as severe as the former persecutions. The church became more wealthy and showed more of a tendency to worldliness and a love of luxury. (McDowell 1997)

### **Western Doctrines**

Justification by works—Not simply by grace through faith;

Baptismal regeneration—That a person is saved by baptism;

Worship of images;

Celibacy—Forbidding priests to marry, a further distinction between clergy and laity;

Confessionalism—Where sins are confessed to a priest who then declares absolution of those sins;

Purgatory—A place of confinement, which is neither Heaven nor Hell, but a place where one has to be refined before going into Heaven, and so sanctification was not complete at death;

Transubstantiation—The concept of the continual and perpetual sacrifice of Jesus;

Indulgences—Where through the giving of money, a person's time in purgatory could be reduced;

Penance—Involving the torment of one's body in order to reduce time in purgatory; and

Mariolatry—The worship of the virgin Mary, her elevation as the mother of God, and the declaration of her deity. (Fruchtenbaum 2003, 59-60)

The Pope holds the titles and the keys of Janus and Cybele. Cybele is the goddess who had the “power of the key,” and was worshipped in Rome, along with Janus, ages before Christianity. The earliest Popes simply assumed some of the trappings of the Roman religions and carried this forward into Christendom. (Couch 2002, 153)

In terms of compromise, the middle ages were a lot like the period of the Judges for Israel. Not all people knew the truth, yet there were still places within the church where the truth was being followed. People were being saved.

In the east, they became busy fighting the Muslims, but from a theological point, “the Eastern church tended to be relatively static in their theology, and the Western church tended toward change.” (McDowell 1997)

In the Middle Ages the already existing difference between Western and Eastern Christianity became more apparent in relations between church and state. In the West there developed a pattern of ecclesiastical sovereignty over feudal estates, while the Eastern way followed the older Roman tradition of imperial sovereignty shepherding the church. (Austad 1990, 21)

There were other groups that grew during the period, such as the Waldensians who were more Biblical in their viewpoints. Just as we see in Thyatira, so we see in the middle age church.

More next week as we look at one other thing that took place, the adaptation of festivals to mask those of pagan cultures.

In AD 835, Pope Gregory IV designated November 1 as All Saints' Day, or All Hallows' Day (the term hallow refers to saints). The night before November 1, October 31, was known as All Hallows' Evening. (Ankerberg 2008, 9)

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