

THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL

Revelation 2:18-29

Thyatira was known for its trade guilds for potters, tanners, dyers and bronze workers. It was particularly known for its wool and dyeing industry as illustrated in the life of Lydia, a distributor of the purple garments for which Thyatira was famous (Acts 16:14). These guilds created a tremendous problem because it was extremely hard for a merchant to pursue his or her trade without belonging to a guild. But to belong to a guild put a Christian in a compromising position because of the pressure to participate in their pagan, idolatrous feasts. Each guild had its own patron deity, feasts, and seasonal festivities that included sexual immoralities.

❖ Comfort & Approval

- ✓ I know your works (2:19)
The works of this congregation were actually increasing and, in contrast to the Ephesian Church, were motivated by their love and faith in Jesus.
- ✓ I know your patient endurance (2:19)
They, too, like their sister churches were suffering persecution, but continued steadfastly to trust and serve Jesus.

☒ Critique

You tolerate that woman Jezebel (20-21)

Jezebel refers to a literal woman who falsely claimed prophetic powers and who had somehow taken a position of leadership in the church. Her actual name was probably not Jezebel, but she was a virtual Jezebel in her actions (1 Kings 16:31-33; 2 Kings 9:30-37). The Jezebel of the Old Testament enticed God's servants to abandon their loyalty to the Lord and to worship Baal. This woman of Thyatira was enticing Christians to abandon their loyalty to Christ and a separated life. Her teaching was probably similar to that of the Nicolaitans. She was evidently teaching that a believer's freedom in Christ allowed them to not only belong to the trade guilds, but to participate in the immoral and idolatrous feasts that very often included cultic prostitution.

⊖ Chastisement (22-23)

- ✓ I will throw her (Jezebel) onto a sickbed.
- ✓ I will throw her followers into great tribulation.
- ✓ I will strike her children dead.
- ✓ I will give each of her followers what their works deserve.

With the church tolerating her and she refusing to repent of her sexual immorality, Jesus, Himself will come and discipline this woman severely along with her followers.

✚ Counsel

Hold fast what you have until I come (25)

There is no spiritual neutral ground. Left untended things naturally go downhill. We need always to cling to the Lord and hold tightly through a close walk with Him in the Word, prayer, fellowship and service.

✕ To the One Who Conquers

- ✓ I will give him authority over the nations (26-27)

All believers will reign and rule with Jesus in the millennial kingdom (20:4-6), but the experience will be different for those who conquer the temptation to compromise their commitment to Jesus in order to preserve their lives on earth.

- ✓ I will give him the morning star (28)

More than likely, the key to the meaning of the morning star is found in Revelation 22:16 which says, "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star." The Lord is promising the one who conquers that he will share His royalty and splendor as the morning star.

In the 3rd Century, Tertullian wrote a little book called "On Idolatry" that dealt with Christians who earned their living by making idols. They made statues to the idols. They painted them. They did for the guilders all the things that needed to be done to make and market idols. When the plea was made to them that as Christians you cannot do this they said, "We have to live. There's no other way by which we can live." But Tertullian challenged their rationalizations by asking, "Do you have to live?"

Tertullian wrote "No, you don't have to live, and the ultimate service to our Lord is the ultimate claim upon a Christian's life. We don't have to live. "Must you live", he asks? Elsewhere he says, "There are no musts where faith is concerned." In other words, the ultimate loyalty we have is not to our physical life. Our ultimate loyalty is to the Lord God, and if it means death that's our ultimate loyalty. The idea you must do this because that's the way it's done here is not a Christian idea at all. And our Lord does not leave any room for anyone who says, "Well I've got to live, so I have to do these things that are contrary to the word of God."

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15