

The Book of Revelation

Week 6: The Letter to Thyatira

Thyatira: An important border city (Pergamum and Syria) but not very well defended. Ample ground for grazing, lots of wool and dye production, a bit of brass/armor work done here too. The city is known for shrines to Apollo/Helios and to Artemis.

- Lydia from the book of Acts is from Thyatira

First impressions/Introduction: Eyes like blazing fire, feet like bronze are a sight that every misbehaving child has seen. It is interesting that the judgement is deeds-based and not belief-based.

Naming someone Jezebel: We discussed the strong possibility that this is a metaphor to draw attention to the previous Bible narrative in the books of Kings.

- Jezebel married Ahab king of the Northern Kingdom of God's people, Israel.
 - She is a leader in the worship of Baal and Asherah (Idols). Some of their worship services/practices would be rated R and/or illegal today. Jezebel leads close to 1000 prophets for these idols, and she has them join her at her queenly dinner table.
 - She ordered the execution of the prophet Elijah. God had to supernaturally protect him.
 - She tries to seduce the next king Jehu, after he has killed much of the previous regime. It is dramatically unsuccessful and leads to her death.
- There is a false teaching in Thyatira that is connected to immorality, *and* eating food sacrificed to idols. We talked about the challenge of **Syncretism** that is present in this and so many other letters. There were many places (social circles, merchant guilds, business/commerce, etc...) where life would be *much easier* to just play-along with the Romans (and their idol-based culture) instead of stand out as different. In Rome prostitution was legal (and part of certain aspects of idol-worship), and slavery was commonplace.
- We explored some of the theology involved in the meat-sacrificed-to-idols dilemma as Paul walks through it in the book of 1 Corinthians.
 - This is a good example of the tangible effect of a theological argument.
 - We also discussed the allure of mystery religions (like Gnosticism) that appeal to the 'deep teachings'.
- Something is coming soon to Thyatira that will cause great distress to those involved in the false teaching. We discussed the possibility of a sickness.

Scripture Worth Reading:

- Acts 16 – the story of Lydia from Thyatira – purple dye is quite hard to make and expensive.
- 1 Corinthians 8 – Paul deals with a similar syncretism problem in the church of Corinth.
- 1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 9 – as it relates to the character Jezebel
- Psalm 2 – An enthronement Psalm of David