

Fourth in the sermon series “Church Are You Listening?”

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Thyatira was on a major trade route and was well known for its trade guilds - there were carpenters, dyers, sellers of goods, tanners, weavers, tent makers, etc. all making a living from their trade. You might remember Lydia. She was a trader of fine cloth and one of Paul's first converts in Thyatira on his second missionary journey (Acts 16). Now these guilds were similar to our trade unions. It was very difficult for the blue collar tradesmen and women to make a living unless they were a part of one. They differed, in that they were linked with the worship of other gods. The members of the church in Thyatira were torn between making a living on the one hand which meant having to be part of the guilds and on the other hand staying faithful to Christ and his standards. Read Rev 2:18-29(vs 18) Christ reveals himself in a special way to the church always relevant to the situation they are in. Here, Christ's describes himself as “Son of God”. This is the only place in Revelation that this title is given to Christ, though it is used often throughout the gospels. It comes straight out of Psalm 2:7. The context of this Psalm is that kings and rulers of the earth plot against the Lord and his anointed. It is nothing short of satanic rebellion against God. However God promises that his Son has authority over the world. God will make all nations His inheritance and the ends of the earth His possession. When the church in Thyatira heard the name “Son of God”, they would be reminded that Christ has ultimate authority in a world which is hostile to him. Matt 28:18 Christ states “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

The second part of his description about his appearance, Vs 18 that He has “eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze.” The image is again straight out of the O. T. - from Dan 10:6. Here Daniel sees a vision of a man who tells him of kings and nations that would terrorize and persecute the people of God. But Daniel was not to fear - why? Because although kings and people of the earth are hostile to God and his church, Christ is sovereign - even over the hostile rulers. The images of flaming eyes also reminds us that God's eyes are penetrating, seeing everything, knowing everything. - Jer 16:17 - “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes.Heb 4:13 - And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.Christ sees everything and here his eyes are flaming - He is angry with what he sees. His feet are also of bronze. Bronze was the hardest metal known of at that time and is often used of to speak of judgment.

COMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHURCH (vs 19) Christ says: 1) they were a loving church 2) they were a serving church 3) they were a faithful church 4) they were a growing church - their works were more now than ever.Sounds good doesn't it.

Sounds like an ideal church - what could Jesus have been angry with? What could have prompted the use of the name “Son of God” and the images of fiery eyes and feet of bronze?The answer is in the next verse (vs 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. CONDEMNATION OF THE CHURCH (vs 20-23) Despite the growth apparent faithfulness, love and ministry, they were being misled. There was a woman who Jesus called Jezebel who was calling herself a prophetess, but was misleading the people. What is a prophet? ... one can either be foretelling the future or forthtelling the Word of God. A true prophet has authority; a false prophet has mislaid authority which does not come from God.

This church looked good on the outside, but inside it was rotten. We may look at other churches and say - God is really doing something in their midst. Look at all the people flocking to their services. They are reaching out to the community and really making an impact. But you can't judge a book by a cover. We rush to hear speakers. Thyatira, was a growing church - thriving, but they were following wrong doctrine. Vs 20 the teaching led people to practice that which was clearly condemned in the Word of God. It is likely that this prophetess was teaching that it was alright to be part of the trade guilds - "political system. She'd say "God has told me "you need to make a living and God doesn't expect you to starve, giving into the political climate over the Word. Don't be worried.

Christ called her Jezebel. She was a queen of Israel at the time Elijah was a prophet. She was a wicked woman daughter of a pagan king and had no business being married to Ahab, the King of Israel. When she became queen, she turned first the heart of her husband, then the hearts of Israel, to the worship of Baal. Her first official act, as recorded in Scripture, was to kill the prophets of the Lord (1 Ki 17:4). She did away with God's spiritual leaders and replaced them with the prophets of Baal. She was definitely not to be trifled with. While Elijah was happy to face up to 850 prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel, you might remember that he fled when he heard Jezebel was after him. Jezebel replaced God's word as given through his appointed prophets with a counterfeit one given by the prophets of Baal. She sought to replace the worship of God completely with the worship of other gods and introduced idolatry once again to the people of Israel. Do you see the similarities here between the Jezebel of O T times and the prophetess in Thyatira? Both tried to replace God's authoritative word with a poor substitute, the political correct system. There are some other similarities between the two. Both were given opportunity to repent. Jezebel had Elijah proclaiming the truth about God, but she refused to listen. The prophetess of Thyatira also was given the chance to repent, vs.21 "I have given her time to repent". Then Jesus proclaims I will make the church suffer greatly unless they repent of her way. I am he who searches (sees) hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. How can we tell whether a teaching or a doctrine is from God or from a Jezebel? Here are some things we can look for ... Firstly Jezebel doctrines teach that something evil can be good. Calling that which is evil good and what is good evil. Doing away with the bible is okay as long as you are in communion with God and relying on his spirit's revelation. All these are evil, but seem to be good. Paul warned the Ephesian elders against such false teaching. Secondly, the doctrine of Jezebel hates God's true Word. Jezebel hated Elijah and tried to destroy all the true prophets. Christians who are bound by Jezebel's doctrine similarly have no regard for God's word. They would rather experience God rather than study his word. They would rather worship God or fellowship with other believers than sit under biblical teaching.

Thirdly, the doctrine of Jezebel deceives people Christians bound by the Jezebel doctrine believe they are 100% right, in their cause so their methods even when counter to Gods word are justified. This book is the word of God's no other special revelation is needed. How many times do you check out what Pastor is saying and see whether it lines up with the Word of God? Don't trust what any man woman or child tells you - look to the book for answers.

PROMISES TO THOSE THAT OVERCOME (vs 24-29) Let's wrap this up. We have seen that Christ has condemned false prophets or teachers and those that follow them. But for those who overcome God has some promises²⁴ Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): ²⁵ Only hold on to what you have until I come. No secrets from Gods penetrating eyes, God knew what we would have need of before his word was published. ²⁶ To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— ²⁷ 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ I will also give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the overcomer, those who don't get misled by false teaching, God promises two things. 1) He says that he will give authority over the nations. We don't have to be worried about the world as it presses in on us. We will have authority over it. I felt I needed to apologize to future TJ voters for the choses we have left them. 2) He says that he will give them the Morning Star. In Rev 22:16, the morning star is identified as Christ. The overcomers are therefore promised Christ himself. This will be the greatest reward of all. So where are we, will we be overcomers or are we part of Jezebel's following. God expects us to be students of the word. That is the only way we will not be deceived by false teaching.