

Letters to the Seven Churches

Lesson #4, Chapters 2 and 3 – Thyatira and Sardis

Becky Hintz' diligence shines in this week's lesson. There's much to glean from these letters to the churches. May God bless you in your efforts to learn and apply these lessons.

Read the letter to the church at Thyatira beginning at Revelation 2:18.

1. As is His pattern, Christ opens with words of praise for the church in Thyatira. What were they doing right, according to verse 19?
2. This sounds like a great church! Yet Christ points out a major problem. What is it (verse 20)?
3. What do we learn about the woman "Jezebel" and her teaching from verses 20-24? What similarities does she have with the infamous idolater in the Old Testament? See 1 Kings 21:20-26.
4. Instead of overlooking the sin in their midst, what should the church have done with these immoral people? Review Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; Gal. 6:1. Why do many churches (including Thyatira, a church of otherwise solid believers) choose not to do this?

Thyatira was an industrial city controlled by guilds, or trade unions. These guilds held regular festivals in honor of pagan gods, involving sacrificing animals, eating the meat, and then indulging in immoral activities. All guild members were required to attend these festivals, and refusing to do so could mean forfeiting one's membership in the guild, resulting in unemployment. Christians who did not participate were considered social outcasts, and often found themselves in poverty.

5. In this setting, how could believers justify participating in these festivals, or at least tolerating others who chose to do so? In contrast, take a look at what the Scriptures say: Matt. 6:24, James 4:4, 1 Jn. 2:15-17.

6. What are some ways in which we can be tempted—or pressured—to compromise devotion to the Lord in order to fit in with the world in our day and age? What insight do the following verses provide in your struggle against temptation? Ps. 119:9-11; Matt. 5:30; Rom. 13:14.

7. What does the fact that God had already warned Jezebel to repent—and given her plenty of time to do so—demonstrate about His character? What do the following verses teach us about His attitude towards sinners? See Ezek. 18:30-32; Is. 55:7; 2 Pet 3:9.

8. Christ details the punishments that He will mete out to Jezebel and her followers. What will be revealed through the execution of these punishments (verse 23)?

9. Along these same lines, in His self-description in Rev. 2:18, Christ states that He has eyes like a flame of fire. Why does He highlight this attribute to this particular church? What does He want the wayward members to understand? See also Prov. 24:11-12; Jer. 17:10; Acts 5:1-11.

10. Few of us actually think we can hide anything from God, yet in practice many believers try to do just that—either by distancing themselves from God when they sin, or like some of the Thyatirans, refusing to repent altogether. How should an understanding of God's omniscience cause us to deal with our sin? Look up Ps. 32:1-7; 139:23-24; Prov. 24:16; James 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:8-9.

11. What instruction does Christ give to those who have remained faithful (verses 24-25)? What blessings await them for their obedience (verses 26-29)?

12. Define the term *hold fast* (Strong's #2902). What else are believers to "hold fast"? See 2 Thess. 2:15; Heb. 4:14; 6:18.

Read the letter to the church at Sardis beginning at Revelation 3:1.

13. How does Christ describe Himself as He opens this letter, and what does He know about this church (verse 1)?

14. How can this church have a reputation for being alive, and yet be dead? See what insights you can gain from the way these terms are used in the following verses: Eph. 2:1, 5; 5:14; 1 Tim 5:6; Titus 1:16. What sort of people filled the pews in this church?

15. List all of the actions that Christ commands the church of Sardis to take in verses 2-3.

16. What will happen if they fail to follow these commands (verse 3)? What is the intended impact of these words upon unrepentant sinners?

17. In contrast, if the Sardisians were walking in obedience, how would they view Christ's sudden return? See John 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 4:16-18; Rev. 22:20.

18. When you think of the very real possibility that Christ could return even today, what is your gut reaction? Is your conscience pricked by any particular areas of your life? Take a moment to search your heart and confess any hidden or persistent sins to the Lord, so that you can honestly say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

19. In verse 4 Christ shifts gear to highlight a different group within the church, those who have *not soiled* (NKJV *defiled*, Strong's #3435) their garments. Define this word, look up Rev. 14:4, and record any insights into what these people were like.

20. What promises are made to the few who have not soiled their garments (verses 4-5)?

21. Why should we care about the color of our heavenly apparel? Look up the following verses to see who wears these white garments and why they are so special. Matt. 17:2; 28:2-3; Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:7-8.

22. Look up the following verses to see what you can discover about the book of life: Luke 10:20; Rev 13:8; 20:12-15; 21:23-27.

23. What great things Christ is preparing for us in heaven! Write out a prayer of thanks to God for the inheritance that awaits us. Enjoy meditating on the glories of heaven today!

“A heavenly mind is a joyful mind; this is the nearest and truest way to live a life of comfort, and without this you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at a fire and not be warm; or in the sunshine and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? O Christian get above. Believe it, that region is warmer than this below.”

~Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*

“And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, or the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” ~Rev. 21:23