

Lesson # 7 -- The People of Jesus Christ at Thyatira.

Introduction

- A. Each of these seven letters remind us that the Church is a divine institution and as such an unusual group of people.
- B. When we make that truth personal and practical we understand how important the believer is to God. We are continually reminded of the providential care, love, promises, warnings, and commands of the Lord Jesus which demonstrates that importance.
- C. In the last letter and the one before us we see some serious warnings. The Savior was not willing to allow His people to continue in that which would bring harm into their life.

I. The Introduction to the Church at Thyatira.

- A. The city of Thyatira was situated about 45 miles due East of Pergamos. She was situated on the main trade route leading into the center of Asia Minor and then the Far East.
- B. Although not as large as Pergamos or Ephesus, Thyatira was noted for its commerce. It was the center of that region for wool, linen, leather, bronze, clothing, dye-goods, and slave-dealers. Lydia, won to the Lord by Paul at Philippi, was a "seller of purple" dye or dye-goods and she was from Thyatira. Acts 16:14
- C. What made the city of Thyatira a problem to the believers there had to do with her trade guilds. Each group of workers were part of their own guild, or as we would say today, labor union. They would often have a meal together in which meat offered to an idol was served, and which would be characterized by drunkenness and sensuality. This was a problem the believers had to face.

II. The Titles of the Lord Jesus.

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. Rev. 2:18

- A. The explanation of these titles.
 - 1. This is the only letter in which the Lord Jesus specifically calls Himself -- "The Son of God." The reason for this is undoubtedly to emphasize His authority. He is saying to this church, "Do not forget who is speaking to you."

2. When the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself as having "eyes like unto a flame of fire" He was reminding the church at Thyatira of the completeness of His knowledge which pierced through all their religious compromise and deception. The believers needed to realize they were dealing with One Who was angry with what He saw among them.
3. In referring to his feet to be "like fine brass" the Savior indicated that He was "in their midst" to judge what was out of harmony with His person and Word. In the earlier reference, his feet were described as composed of "fine brass as if they burned in a furnace" (1:15). These descriptions all point to the significance of judgment. It is probable that there is a reminder here of the brazen altar associated with the Old Testament tabernacle.

B. The application of these titles.

1. In each of these letters the title taken by the Savior is an indication of the need in the respective church. When He spoke of Himself as "The Son of God" He indicated a need found in the life of every believer in every age. We are each prone to misunderstand what it means for Him to be the Son of God. We so easily fall into the sin of making His Word non-authoritative. Our worship then become the lip-service of formalism. In the next step we find it easy to disobey Him. Wrong thinking always results in wrong action.
2. In the second title referring to the Savior's eyes -- we learn of the necessity of being honest with Him. His knowledge of us pierces through all the sham and pretense to which we are so prone. When we live that way we enter into a way of life that is displeasing to Him. Too often we act like the little child who believes he is invisible when he covers his own eyes.
3. In the third title, with its emphasis on judgment, we are reminded that the Lord Jesus cannot bless error nor will He allow us to live in error without doing all He can to bring us into the truth. We must never think of His discipline or even His judgment as being separated from His love for us. He knows our need and has assumed the responsibility to meet that need.

III. The Commendation of the Lord Jesus.

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first.
Rev. 2:19

A. The explanation of this commendation.

1. The Lord Jesus, in reminding them that He knew all about them, comforted them by stating His approval. They, like believers in every age, had the ability to please Him and many areas of their life and service were honoring to Him.
2. The works which pleased the Savior the most had to do with love, service, faith, and patience. In stating these four He emphasized the truth that a genuine spiritual work has a foundation in a Biblical relationship with Himself. This is clear in regard to love, faith, and patience. It also becomes clear about "service" when we realize the word used speaks of activities designed to help.
3. When the Lord Jesus spoke of "the last to be more than the first" He was recognizing their spiritual growth and fruitfulness. The works that grew out of love, etc., were continually in the process of development. This also pleased Him.

B. The application of this commendation.

1. Many of the saints at Thyatira had learned how to live with the daily goal in mind of -- pleasing the Lord. This truth was often emphasized by the apostle Paul.

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. I Thess. 4:1

2. It comes as a great shock to many Christians to realize that good works are not very "good" if they are not motivated by or characterized by love, service (concern to help), faith, and patience. If we have a spiritual answer to "why" we live the way we do -- then we are going in the right direction.
3. God expects us to grow in our relationship with Him. When we do so we will see the benefit in all the other areas of our life.

IV. The Admonition of the Lord Jesus.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. Rev. 2:20-24

A. The explanation of this admonition.

1. They had not disciplined a woman in the church that the Lord Jesus likened to Jezebel.
 - a. The Old Testament Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. The wicked king Ahab married her. The Scripture implies that he did so as an expression of his rebellion against God (I Kings 16:31). When Jezebel came to live in Israel she brought her Baal worship with her. She soon became the dominant force for evil that led Ahab and the nation into the wicked practices of idolatry.

But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. I Kings 21:25
 - b. What Jezebel did to the nation of Israel, this woman at Thyatira did to the church. She claimed to be a spiritual person who knew the will of God (prophetess) while all the time leading people astray. Her deceptive ministry was not done publicly in the church but by personal contact and through her home.
 - c. The effect of her influence was in the area of personal compromise. It was described as spiritual fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols. She taught the Christians to question how the Bible was applied to daily life, and then, by an overemphasis on the grace of God and spiritual freedom led them into carnality. This caused many to be deceived into a super-spiritual type of thinking and living which was in reality -- disobedience to God.
 - d. We can only imagine the division and confusion this introduced into their church.
2. The words "seduce," "fornication," and "adultery," explain the real meaning of this disobedience to God. It was a spiritual violation of their relationship with God. As adultery is a contradiction of marriage so disobedience is a contradiction to what it means to be a believer.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. James 4:4 (See also Hosea 3:1; Jeremiah 3:6,20.)

3. The words "I gave her space to repent . . . and she repented not" indicates both the patience of God and the bondage sin will bring into the life of one spiritually deceived. The Lord Jesus said "I will cast her into a bed . . . and I will kill her children with death." These words remind us of the responsibility the Savior has assumed for every believer. When we sin -- He must discipline us. He cannot, in His love and holiness, permit a believer to continue in deliberate rebellion.
4. The summary of this admonition is found in the words, "I will give unto every one of you according to your works." He meant by this that the depths of their spiritual life and reward or loss in Heaven was determined by how they expressed faith and love in daily life.

B. The application of this admonition.

1. The necessity of Biblical church discipline.
2. The power of the tongue for evil.
3. The devastation produced by deception (the depths of Satan.)
4. The overwhelming effects of the believer's daily life.
5. The importance of the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the standard for belief and practice.

V. The Counsel of the Lord Jesus.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not known this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Rev. 2:24-29

A. The explanation of this counsel.

1. The exhortation to discernment and faithfulness.
2. The promise of the reward of service with the Lord Jesus.
3. The emphasis on personal responsibility.

B. The application of this counsel.

1. We must examine our beliefs and practices as to whether we have fallen into some non-Biblical deception and disobedience.
2. We must respond to the promise of fellowship and service. Nothing is more important than a life of fellowship and service with the Lord Jesus.