

Letters from God

“Letter #4: A Letter about Tolerating Sin”

Revelation 2:18-29 – March 9, 2008

Overview of Our Sermon Series

LETTERS FROM GOD		
A Seven Week Study of Revelation 2-3		
Date	Message Title	Bible Text
Feb. 17	A Letter about Priorities	Revelation 2:1-7
Feb. 24	A Letter about Suffering	Revelation 2:8-11
Mar. 2	A Letter about Cults	Revelation 2:12-17
Mar. 9	A Letter about Tolerating Sin	Revelation 2:18-29
Mar. 16	A Letter about Spiritual Sleepiness	Revelation 3:1-6
Mar. 23	A Letter about satan and Trials (Easter Sunday)	Revelation 3:7-13
Mar. 30	A Letter about Lukewarm Religion	Revelation 3:14-22

Address to a Specific Church (2:18a)

- Thyatira was the smallest of the 7 cities (in Revelation 2-3), yet Christ wrote the longest letter to it. Thyatira is modern-day Akhisar, Turkey
- Thyatira was founded by Seleucus I (311-280 BC) as a military outpost
- It boasted a temple of Apollo (the sun god). It is noted for its many trade guilds.
- Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth (Acts 16:14), was from Thyatira. At some point, Lydia moved to Philippi and came to Christ under the preaching of Paul (Acts 16:11-15). It is possible that she took the Gospel back to Thyatira and was the impetus for beginning to reach an entire city for Christ.
- Application #1 – Will I trust God to reach my city for Christ?

Attribute of Christ (2:18b)

- “Son of God” is an appropriate title to counter the false sun god (Apollo)
- “eyes like blazing fire” show that Christ sees everything including the satanic “deep secrets” of some in Thyatira
- “feet like burnished bronze” speak of His coming judgment

Affirmation of the Church (2:19)

- “I know” is repeated 8 times in these letters showing us that Christ is omniscient. He knows. He sees. He understands. He knows.
- Christ affirms and applauds 6 things about the church in Thyatira:
 - Their deeds
 - Their love
 - Their faith
 - Their service
 - Their perseverance
 - That they are doing more than they did at first
- This is the only church of the seven that received a commendation for its love.

- The churches at Thyatira and Ephesus have opposite issues

Church	Strengths and Weaknesses
Ephesus	Do not tolerate wickedness but have lost their first love (2:2-4)
Thyatira	Are strong on love but tolerate wickedness (2:19-20)

- Application #2 – Do I tend to be polarized toward love or holiness? Am I strong in love but weak in holiness? Am I strong in holiness but weak in love? God wants me to be passionately in love with Him, to love others well, **AND** to walk in holiness (right living). Lord, help me be lovingly holy.

Accusation Against the Church (2:20-23)

- There was a person in the church at Thyatira who was leading some Christians astray – deceiving them into practices of sexual immorality and idolatry.
- Jesus labeled this person “that woman Jezebel” apparently alluding to the OT queen of Judah who led the Jewish people into Baal and Asherah worship (1 Kings 16-21; 2 Kings 9).
- Several observations about this NT Jezebel issue:
 - The two mechanisms that this Jezebel person used to deceive and mislead people were: (1) teaching; (2) prophecy [v.20].
 - Part of the allure of this Jezebel person is that she offered insights into satan’s “deep secrets” [v.24]. Warning: Avoid a fascination with the things of satan. Instead, be fascinated with the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10).
 - In this passage, Jezebel is a person, not a spirit. God does not give evil spirits an opportunity to repent [v.21].
 - Christ’s rebuke of the church in Thyatira is that they tolerated and allowed this to go on in their church [v.20]. They should not tolerate the teaching and misleading of this Jezebel person.
 - Christ’s warning is that if the Thyatiran Christians continue to tolerate Jezebel’s leadership and do not repent (change their ways), then He will bring painful judgment consequences as an example for other churches to see (so that they do not make the same mistake) [vv.22-23]. Christ is serious about holiness!
- The word for “minds” in v.23 is literally the word “kidneys” (*nephros*). The kidney is an organ whose function is to filter and eliminate waste, toxins, and poison from the body.
- David Ravenhill: “The Body of Christ in Thyatira was suffering from kidney failure. What should have been eliminated was allowed to remain within the body, poisoning it. And because of a lax and tolerant attitude, nobody seemed to notice or be concerned about the toxin.”
- Application #3 – Am I experiencing spiritual kidney failure? Am I allowing toxins and poisons into my heart and home through the television, internet, magazines, books, media, music, “bad company” peers, and other means? Do I have a lax and tolerant attitude about what I allow into my mind and heart? Do I have a lax and tolerant attitude about what I allow into my family’s minds and hearts? What steps do I need to take to “guard my heart” (Proverbs 4:23)? What steps do I need to take to guard my family’s hearts?

Admonition to the Church (2:24-25)

- “I will not impose any other burden on you” is a reference to Acts 15:28. The Christian life is not a burdensome list of do’s and don’ts. It is a relationship with the Living God!
- Christ’s exhortation to those who are not following Jezebel is to “hold on to what you have until I come” (v.25)
- **Hebrews 4:14** - *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.*
- Application #4 – Keep believing. Keep trusting Christ. Walk by faith. Walk with God. Hold fast. Be strong. Keep on keeping on... in Christ!!!!
- Jesus Christ is coming back!

Award for Overcomers (2:26-29)

- Two promises to those who overcome and do His will to the end:
 1. We will share in His authority (vv.26-27)
 - Jesus is quoting Psalm 2:9
 - **Psalm 2:8-9** – *Ask of Me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter.*
 - Application #5 - We can reach nations for Christ now! Pray that God will give us the Ban*jar people for Christ.
 - We will co-reign with Christ in heaven! (Revelation 22:4-5; Matthew 25:21-23; Luke 19:17; 1 Corinthians 6:2).
 2. We will share in His glory (v.28)
 - Jesus is the Morning Star (Revelation 22:6; Numbers 24:17)
 - We will shine with Him both in this life and the next (Dan 12:3; Phil 2:15).
- Are we listening? (v.29)

Today’s Major Application – Are you a Jezebel, an Ahab, an Elijah, or a Jehu?

Going Back to the Jezebel Story of the Old Testament

- 1 Kings 16:29-34 – Summary of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel
- 1 Kings 17 – Elijah announces to Ahab a 3-year drought as judgment. Elijah retreats to another land for 3 years. (Miracles: widow’s jar; widow’s son.)
- 1 Kings 18:1-15 – Elijah returns to Judah. Note: Elijah’s dialogue with Obadiah about Queen Jezebel (18:4).
- 1 Kings 18:16-46 – Elijah’s showdown on Mount Carmel against the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah. These were all prophets raised up by Jezebel (18:19). By God’s power and to God’s glory, Elijah won the showdown and ordered all 850 of these false prophets killed.
- 1 Kings 19:1-2 – When Jezebel learns about this, she puts a bounty out on Elijah’s head and declares him a dead man walking.
- 1 Kings 19:3-14 – Elijah is afraid of Jezebel and flees for his life. He is suicidal. He is depressed. He is ready to quit the ministry.
- 1 Kings 19:15-21 – God allows Elijah to pass his ministry on to Elisha and Jehu

- 1 Kings 21 – Naboth’s Vineyard – Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard to use as a vegetable garden. Naboth said “no.” Ahab pouted. Jezebel took matters into her own hands and had Naboth assassinated (using Ahab’s signature). God holds both Ahab and Jezebel accountable (21:17-26). Note: Ahab is judged for tolerating Jezebel’s evil actions. Ahab is judged for being passive.
- 1 Kings 21:25-26 – Summary statement about Ahab and Jezebel
- 2 Kings 9:1-13 – Jehu is anointed by one of Elisha’s prophets. The specific calling on his life is announced in 9:6-10.
- 2 Kings 9:14-10:36 – Jehu fulfills God’s destiny for his life
- 2 Kings 9:30-37 – Jehu kills Jezebel

Today’s Major Application – Are you a...

- Jezebel** – a controlling person who manipulates others in negative ways?
 - If so, repent (Rev. 2:21). Turn away from your Jezebel ways and turn to Christ. He can make you into a new person (2 Corinth. 5:17).
- Ahab** – a passive person who tolerates negative things around you and through you and allows others to manipulate you?
 - If so, repent (Rev. 2:22). Turn away from your Ahab ways and turn to Christ. He can make you into a new person (2 Corinth. 5:17) who can stand up for what is right and who will not be manipulated anymore!
- Elijah** – a committed believer who has been used by God to help stop some negative Jezebel stuff, but who is tired, afraid, and ready to give up?
 - If so, hold fast until Christ comes (Rev. 2:25). Don’t be afraid. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in this world (1 John 4:4). Don’t give up. Lean on Christ. Trust Him to take care of you and protect you. You can stand up to Jezebel! Lean on God. Lean on others.
- Jehu** – a warrior anointed by God to track down and eliminate Jezebel’s schemes against your family, your church, your city, and your nation?
 - If so, hold fast until Christ comes (Rev. 2:25). You go, man!

Some Important Closing Thoughts

1. Don’t go on a witch hunt trying to identify Jezebels in our church and get them disciplined or kicked out. Pray for your church leadership and trust God to work through them to do that.
2. Start with yourself. Get the 2x4 out of your own eye before you start trying to help other people get the saw dust out of their eyes (Matthew 7:1-5).

Prayer Altar Time – Let’s do any repentance work that we need to do for ourselves, this church, and America.

Questions to Discuss with My Family, Friends, and Small Group

1. When you hear the word “Jezebel,” what comes to your mind?
2. Read Revelation 2:18-29 aloud and discuss its meaning and applications using these notes. What are your applications? Pray for each other.