

INTRODUCTION

If you will, just glance ahead to chapter 6 for a moment. Remember this is in the future. After Jesus comes back to rapture the church and the church is caught up to be with him in heaven, then there will be seven years of Tribulation on planet earth. Christians will not be here and it is during that time plagues will be released upon the planet. That's why Jesus calls it a time of Tribulation in Matthew 24. These seven seals you have been hearing about on the news this is all it is. In heaven there is a picture of Jesus, the Lamb, who takes the scroll that is rolled up and the scroll has seven wax seals on it just like in the olden days the way they used to instead of binding a book they would roll up a scroll and seal it with wax seals. This scroll in heaven Jesus takes has seven of these wax seals on it. He opens the first seal and he reads the plague. He opens the second seal and reads the plague that shall be upon planet earth. All seven of those seals are contained there in Revelation, chapter 6 and we will get to that.

David Koresh claims to have the interpretation of that and he believes that is what is going on right now in Waco. somebody told me the other day, "Do you know what Waco stands for? We Ain't Coming Out!" I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet but don't be a bit surprised at what happens after he writes about the seven seals. The seventh seal opens up seven trumpets and then the seventh trumpet goes into seven bowls or vials of wrath that are poured out. Don't you be a bit surprised when he finishes the seven seals he wants to write about the seven trumpets and then the seven bowls. They could be there for some time. But don't be deceived. Believe God's word.

The passage for today is Revelation 2:18-27, the message Jesus gave to the church at Thyatira. I am entitling the message, "Torn Between Two Lovers," because this church loved Jesus but they also loved someone in the church who was teaching heresy and it caused a problem. This is Jesus speaking and he says:

"To the angel (or the messenger) of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. (which, literally, is like a preacher) By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teachings and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come.

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give him authority over the nations.— (Then he makes this quotation from Psalms 2) ‘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. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Thyatira was a literal church in Asia Minor. This was a place well-known for the color purple, because they had a profitable business of dyeing cloth into the royal color of purple. Lydia, who became a Christian in the book of Acts, was from the city of Thyatira and she was known as a seller of purple garments. We don’t know much about the church. Of all these seven churches, this is the most obscure and unknown of all of them. I want us to learn the lessons from this church and apply them to our own lives. Three things we notice about the church.

I. THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH

1. The church was characterized by love

Number one, what kind of condition was this church in? Jesus said some good things about the church and as we have talked about earlier he says good things about every church except the church at Laodicea. Notice four things he says about this church are positive. Number one, He said it was a loving church. Verse 18 gives us a picture of Jesus. He says, “These are the words of the Son of God whose eyes are like blazing fire.” That means Jesus has the ability because of his fiery eyes to peer and gaze through all of our hypocrisy all of our pretense and he can look into our hearts and he can really see whether we actually love one another. He said, “I commend you because in this church you really do have a love for one another, agape love.

2. The church was characterized by faith

Then he says number two “I commend you for your faith.” Faith is like a muscle and if you do not exercise the muscle of faith in your life, it will become weak and it will just grow weaker because of lack of use. The Bible says “without faith, it is impossible to please God because he who comes to God must believe that he is.” (Hebrews 11:6) You have to believe there is a God—that’s faith—and then you must believe he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him. So you must exercise faith in your daily life in your church. Even the faith we exercise is a gift from God. Have you ever thought about that? We think, “I’m so proud of myself because I have a strong faith.” The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” So this church had a great gift of faith.

3. The church was characterized by service

Number three he says, “I commend you for your service.” That’s the good old word we use for deacon: *deaconos*. Everybody ought to be serving the Lord. You’re not saved to sit and to listen; you are saved to serve. That word *deaconos*, where we get our word *deacon* from us the same word *service* is. Two Greek particles *dea* = *through*, *conos* = *the dirt or the dust*. It is a picture of someone who is so diligent in serving the Lord they raise a dust cloud around them, like Pigpen from the Peanuts cartoon strip. Anytime you see Pigpen you always see this dust cloud

around him. That is the picture the Bible uses of a true servant. These folks were good servants. He says, "I commend you for your service."

4. The church was characterized by perseverance

Then he says number four "I commend you for your perseverance." It was a lot tougher to be a Christian back in these days than it is in today, because they were dying because of their faith. There was intense persecution against Christians. But these were the kind of Christians who were hanging on and they were not giving up. Then he says something very interesting about their perseverance in verse 19, "You are now doing more than you did at first." Compare that to the letter he wrote to the church at Ephesus. He said just the opposite about the church at Ephesus. He said, "You've lost your first love." He said, "Your love for me used to be greater than it is now." That's not what he says about Thyatira. He says, "Now you are doing more than you used to do. You are closer to me. You are more in love with me than you were at first." Can you say that about your life? Can you say that right now the works you are doing, the love you have for Christ, the service you are rendering right now for Christ is better, deeper and greater than it has ever been before? That's what he said about this church. He said some good things about it but then he goes on and he points out the problem in the church.

II. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE CHURCH

Number two is the condemnation of the church, because Jesus has some strong words to this church. It basically revolves around one woman in the church, "that woman Jezebel." Biblical scholars do not believe her name was literally Jezebel. People seldom named their daughters Jezebel, because of the terrible reputation Jezebel had in the Old Testament. It's kind of like today do you know many women who name their daughters Delilah? That's just not a very good name because of the reputation of Samson and Delilah. We don't name our daughters Jezebel today because of the reputation of that name. Many people believe this unnamed woman is called "Jezebel."

1. The church was faulted for the teaching of Jezebel

There are two things about this problem with Jezebel. First was her teaching caused a real problem in the church because it led them into sexual immorality. Who was the Jezebel? I love Dr. R. G. Lee's great sermon, "Payday Someday." At the beginning of that sermon he introduces all the characters in the sermon. Dr. Lee in his inimitable style introduced Jezebel this way. He would say something like this. "I introduce unto you, Jezebel, that slithering, snide serpent coiled beside the throne of Ahab, the King whispering in his ear tempting him to do that which was displeasing to his God." In the Old Testament there was a godly king named Ahab who was king over Israel, but he made a big mistake. He married a woman named Jezebel. She was the daughter of the king of Tyr and Sidon. She became a missionary for the worship of Baal. This worship was a fertility cult. Ancient man tended to worship that which they did not understand and they didn't understand human reproduction and so they worshiped it. They made a religion out of reproduction human reproduction agricultural reproduction livestock reproduction. That's why they worshiped the symbol of the female because they thought the female with her reproductive power was to be worshiped and Baal was a very sensual kind of sexual religion.

There was a lot of that going on in this time in the early church and apparently this woman who was in the church had some kind of far-out teaching that allowed church members to be involved in sexual immorality just like Jezebel.

Jesus said to this church, "You have a problem. The teaching of that woman, Jezebel, will destroy your church." I like what Vance Havner said in his book about the seven churches. He said, "A good woman is the best thing on earth. Women were the last at the cross and the first at the open tomb. The church owes a debt to her faithful women, which she can never estimate to say nothing of the debt we owe in our homes to Godly wives and mothers but an evil woman is the most dangerous thing on earth. It is highly significant that so many false religions and modern delusions were begun by prophetesses. Not only do false teachers lead captive silly women but silly women prophetesses lead many astray just like Jezebel." Jesus says, "There's a woman in your church who is teaching something that is contrary to the word of God. You cannot put up with it!" and that was the second part of the problem.

2. The church was faulted for the toleration of Jezebel

Number two, they were tolerating Jezebel. They were saying, "Let's just go along to get along." But Jesus said, "I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel." He says in other words, "You allow her to do that." Have you ever noticed how Jesus gets mighty particular at times? Here everybody in the church knew who he was talking about. We don't know who she was. We weren't there but everybody in that church knew exactly who Jesus was talking about. That's the way the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit never generalizes. He always particularizes. That's why the prophet, Nathan, pointed his finger at David and he didn't say, "I heard about a guy who cheated on his wife and had her husband killed." He said, "No you are the man." That's what the Holy Spirit does.

Do you remember in the Old Testament when they went into Jericho and God said, "Don't you steal any of the goods there! Don't spoil the goods." This guy by the name of Achan went in and he stole a piece of gold and some silver and he hid it under his tent. God said, "There's sin in the camp and I'm not going to bless you unless you root out the sin." Then, one by one he gathered all of the men of the nation of Israel out there and he began to narrow it down by tribes and by families and then by men in the families until finally God pointed his finger at Achan and said, "You are the guilty one!" (Joshua 7) The Holy Spirit has a way of particularizing.

If there is a problem in your life of unconfessed sin, the Holy Spirit won't be general; he will come and he will point his finger right at you and say, "This is sin in your life. You need to get rid of it." What does that say about a church? It says a church should be very careful not to tolerate false teachings in the church. Neither Dennis nor I know everything that's taught in Sunday School. We cannot be in every Sunday School class. Let me say to you if you are ever in a Sunday School class and you hear something taught that you think is contrary to the word of God, you come to me! You come to Dennis You talk to us because we cannot tolerate false teaching in the church. That will be a problem that will become a festering sore and it will harm many people. We cannot tolerate it.

Let me just take a moment to address this point. There are some people who say any woman teaching in a church is heresy. Have you ever heard that? There are some preachers that say that. Let me tell you what I believe. I believe God gifts many women to teach. I even believe God gifts some women to preach. I really do. I’ve heard some wonderful women preachers. They have the gift of preaching and teaching but the New Testament is very clear. I don’t believe a woman should stand in spiritual authority over a congregation. If you were to ask me, “Brother David, do you believe the New Testament teaches the ordination of women as pastors?” No I don’t believe it teaches that but if you were to ask me, “Brother David, do you believe in the ministry of women in the local church?” Yes, yes a thousand times yes! “Do you believe in women teaching in the church?” Yes, yes! I believe in that! Godly women teaching so just because it’s a woman don’t rule her out from teaching. You say, “They should never have authority over a man in their class.” I don’t think they do. I think every Sunday School teacher in our church teaches under the authority of that church itself and the head of that church is Jesus Christ himself.

III. THE CORRECTION FOR THE CHURCH

So they had a problem in their church and that’s why Jesus condemned them. Then number three. He says, “Here’s the correction for the church. This is what you ought to do about it.” He gives them two directions.

1. Repent of the evil they were allowing

Number one he says, “You must repent of the evil.” Notice what Jesus says about this woman Jezebel, “I have given her time and space to repent.” God never sends judgement without giving a person an opportunity to repent. Jesus said, “I have convicted her. I have sent people to talk to her, but she is unwilling to repent.” So he says, “She ought to repent.” He says not only should she repent, but he also says, “Those who are practicing her teaching Unless you repent trouble’s going to come.” I don’t want to violate the word of God by trying to water it down and take away from it. I believe it says what it means and it means what it says. Jesus said, “Listen, I’m going to have to come and I’m going to have to get busy in the lives of some of these people who refuse to repent of evil. I might even have to use the chastisement of death.” That’s exactly what he says in verse 23, “I will strike her children dead.” Why? “So that all the churches will know that I am he who searches the hearts and minds.” I think what we need today is a good revival of fear of God old-fashioned, holy fear of a powerful, mighty, holy God who cannot tolerate evil. So that’s why he says, “Repent.”

2. Hold on to the good they were doing

Then he has a message to those who are not involved with this woman. To the good people in the church he says, “not only repent of the evil, but hold fast to the good.” Look at what it says in verse 25. “For those of you who are not practicing this, just hold on to what you have until I come.” Jesus Christ is going to return and he says, “Until I return I want you to hold on to the truth hold on to the faith hold on to the love that you have and don’t you give up.”

CONCLUSION

If you have ever run in a 5K or 10K race or even perhaps a marathon (over 26 miles) you know what it is when I mention something called "the second wind." Sometimes when you are running along you have a goal in mind of running in a certain time or a certain mile and you get to the point where you just say, "Hey I've blown it. I've run up against the wall. I can't run any farther. I can't take another step. I'm about to perish with fatigue." Suddenly it's as if you start running downhill it's as if God gives you a "second wind" and you are able to breathe again and your strength is renewed and you can keep on. The Bible says that is possible for Christians. Many times in our lives God can keep on giving us those "second winds." When we run up against the wall and we think things are going to just fall apart he says, "I'll give you more strength." One of my favorite hymns, of course, is "Amazing Grace." The verse that means a lot to me many times is the one that says, "Through many dangers, toils and strife we have already come." Think about that. Everybody in this room has been through tough times before and because he's brought you through tough times before, hold on because he'll take you through the tough times ahead. That's the message of hope he gives tonight.

Don't be "Torn Between Two Lovers" don't love God and love some false teacher he says.
"Love me only!"

OUTLINE

I. THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH

The church was characterized by:

1. Love
2. Faith
3. Service
4. Perseverance

II. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE CHURCH

The church was faulted for:

1. The teaching of Jezebel
2. The toleration of Jezebel

III. THE CORRECTION FOR THE CHURCH

1. Repent of the evil they were allowing
2. Hold on to the good they were doing



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes