

As you read on in the book of Revelation, you meet some major battles – the *dragon* vs. the *woman*, the beast from the Abyss vs. the two witnesses, the beast from the sea vs the saints, the beast from the earth vs the people on earth, the rider on the white horse vs the beast and the harlot....

These wars aren't Star Wars or Star Trek *fantasies*. These are real battles right here, right now in the 7 churches, and in all churches on earth. Those are wars in the church on earth described *in symbols from heaven's perspective*: Both Thyatira and New Horizon are fighting dragons and beasts and the great harlot when they face heresy, immorality and apathy. We must conquer by faith. And the church will win the battle through Christ our Saviour who won the battle at the cross and in His resurrection.

Thyatira faced the beast of tolerance, and allowed their love to turn into acceptance of evil.

When the Church puts love over truth:

1. Jesus **recognizes** the church's love;
2. Jesus **rebukes** the church's tolerance;
3. Jesus **reminds** the church to hold on

1. Jesus recognizes the church's love

¹⁸ **"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:**

a. Jesus calls Himself **the Son of God**, the only time in Revelation. The opening vision in Revelation 1 shows Him as **one like a Son of Man**. Now Jesus tells His Church that He is **God's Son**. *He shares the same nature as the Father. He is God!* All wisdom and authority are His, so *listen to Him*. God the Father said of His Son on the Mt. of Transfiguration: **This is my Beloved Son...Listen to Him!** (Matthew 17:5)

b. The **Son of God** walks in the midst of the Church in Thyatira as one **who has eyes like a flame of fire....** Here again Jesus takes the church back to the opening vision of who He is and what He's like. He's not like the permissive Dad who puts his head in the sand and says, *I seel know nothing*, and just lets his kids believe and do whatever they want. No, Jesus' keeps His eyes wide open and they burn like fire – His eyes penetrate, see very deeply. He sees and knows exactly what lives in each of His churches, also at Thyatira: the good and the bad, the real and the pretend, the strengths and the weaknesses – all are known to Him. *He cares deeply about our condition and knows what we need to hear.*

c. **His feet are like fine brass:** He walks among us (through His Holy Spirit) in perfect holiness, as the Saviour who hates sin and works to fight sin in His church. He does not adopt the attitude: *Oh well, people sin, that's life*. No, He goes after it. *He wants to purify His people!* This is not the Jesus the church in our culture accepts! We expect the fluffy-bunny Jesus who goes around giving group hugs to His people and says *Everybody's okay; everything's okay*. Not the Jesus who says of the "Jezebel group" in the church: **I will cast her on a bed of suffering... I will strike her children dead.** (22-23)

Does He love us? Absolutely! To the end! But His love isn't tolerant and permissive, covering over what's real. He loves like the surgeon who has eyes to see the tumor, and the sword of the Word that removes it. *This is the real Jesus many churches reject. Do we?*

d. Even though Jesus sees a serious cancer growing in the church at Thyatira in the "Jezebel group" His eyes also see the good and He is sure to praise the good that's going on there, to commend the church where it's strong and being a good witness of Jesus Christ. ¹⁹ **"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your ⁱⁱpatience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.**

This is the opposite of Ephesus which lost the love it had at first. This church was a loving church, and it's love was growing: **and as for your works, the last are more than the first.** [NIV: **you are now doing more than you did at first.**] They excelled at works like taking home disabled babies left to die in the Thyatira landfill. They cared for one another too. They set up soup kitchens to feed the poor and shared the Good News of Jesus with them. They took in the refugee. They studied their Bibles, prayed together, and grew in faith.

As a church you can hardly get a higher commendation from Jesus than this! They were *growing* in love, faith, service and perseverance. *A Church known for her love and good deeds:* what a model to pursue! What does Jesus see in us? Does He see *this*? This is altogether lovely! Apply it directly to your own life and family: does He see this in your life, in your home? Pray that it will

grow. **You have been taught by God to love one another, and in fact you do love all the brothers, and we urge you do so more and more.** (I Thess. 4:9-10) This is a goal for deacons and elders to encourage, and for all of us to pray for and pursue in our own lives.

If your faith today is cold and closed-hearted – and you keep everybody at a distance, you’re content just to stick to yourself and do your own thing, live a comfortable life not getting involved in the needs and messes of other people’s lives, I urge you to get out of yourself and put on the love and good deeds of Jesus: to meditate on the cross, how much He loved you and sacrificed Himself for you when He died for you!

2. Jesus rebukes the church’s tolerance

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.**

a. Jezebel: That’s all Jesus says to describe the problem. He says much more about the need to repent and remove this error than He does to describe it. But it’s obviously a very serious matter to Him. You **allow** [or: **tolerate**] **that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess**. Inside the church there is a group of people, or maybe even one particular lady who is functioning like a Jezebel. Jezebel was a pagan lady who married into Israel in the Old Testament and brought her false gods and teachings along with her into the church’s worship – Baal and Asherah – and raised up 100s of false prophets of Baal in the church. She had set up her own Baal Higher Life Seminary to train them.

b. Prophetess: This is how Thyatira had gone much further than Pergamum. Pergamum let the teaching of Balaam in the back door by allowing some of their members to hold to the teaching. But error has gotten a much stronger hold in Thyatira: Jezebel has a teaching position in the congregation. She had been given the pulpit to put on her higher-life seminars where she could train members in what v. 24 refers to “**the depths (secrets) of Satan**” like Jezebel taught Israel to add to the God of Israel (and to the Bible) the secrets of Baal and Asherah which were the key to fertility and prosperity. Balaam was an outsider to Israel. But Jezebel married and became an insider!

c. Allowed: And the church was **allowing** her teaching. Like Jezebel was *syncretistic* (mixing religions together), this group of teachers in the congregation would have said: We’ve been following the *antithetical* model too long – Jesus vs. other religions. But you know, you need to learn to love the people of Thyatira and see good in their religions too. People see us as judgmental; we have to be more accepting. There’s nothing wrong with going with the guys to the temple of Zeus before work to offer a sacrifice. That’s how life works in Thyatira. It’s the only way to have a job and make money. There’s nothing wrong with visiting the cult prostitute – it’s just how the culture works. Jesus hung out with the harlots too you know. He was accepting of other people. He didn’t judge! All so they can make money and live comfortably and be respected!

We catch just a tiny glimpse of this in the early church when the church father Tertullian rebuked a believer for participating in idolatry for the sake of his business – if he wanted a contract he needed to go to the idol feast with his client (like we might take a client out for golf). The man defended his idol worship: I *have* to go; after all, I must live! Tertullian answered: *Must you?*

d. Seduced: Jezebel used the argument of love to overthrow truth, to bring in heresy. Their love was losing its discernment – the kind of love that wants to accept everything and says we shouldn’t judge. Paul prayed for the church at Philippi **that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.** (Philippians 1:9)

²¹ **And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.** ²² **Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.** ²³ **I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.**

Jesus is calling the church to discipline those who hold to this immoral and worldly teaching. If the church doesn’t, He will. He will send plagues, sickness, death. Just to remind the church that He searches hearts and minds. He is Head of the Church and we aren’t free to do with her whatever we like. He *judges* her for errors.

This speaks so powerfully to the church today: we are so heavily into tolerance, into a false kind of love that sacrifices truth, into bragging about being non-judgmental. Two statements I heard (one recently, one a few years back): One was a Christian who said: *I’m a Christian but I’m totally not judgmental!* Now what does that mean? if being non-judgmental means being kind to all and

reaching out to them with the truth of the Gospel without being self-righteous, we say “Amen” to that! But if it means not judging between right and wrong, and not being willing to tell people in a tender-hearted way that desires their salvation what Jesus accepts and doesn’t accept, then we’ll lose our way.

The church needs to raise sons and daughters who are warriors – we need men and women of both Truth and Love. Only Jesus can make us men and women of God. Because that’s who Jesus is – a Man of Truth, of firm, uncompromising conviction. And a Man of Love: gentle and humble in heart, ready to help the most hurting and despised members of society in order to save them.

The other is a man in a church that has chosen the way of error, of following the world in accepting the feminist and homosexual agenda. A very kind man and I challenged him to speak up for Jesus and oppose this direction: *Ah, no Harry, I can’t. I’m a lover not a fighter.* Well, folks that’s not an option. A Christian is a lover and a fighter. He deals gently with weak and straying and he fights the good fight of faith!

3) He reminds the church to hold on

²⁴ “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come.

Some in the church have not gone to Jezebel’s Higher Life Seminars. They oppose them. “It’s too worldly. It compromises the Gospel.” Jesus commends them, and commands them: **Hold on to what you have until I come.** When the Bible gives this command it means: Hold on to your profession of Christ, hold on to eternal life, and hold on to the teaching of Scripture entrusted to you. Don’t look for more than the Bible. Hold on to that – until Jesus comes. If it doesn’t agree with the word, don’t tolerate it. Not to keep your friends, to keep your job. Not to keep your family, to keep your life. That’s how the church stays faithful: when its members hold on. Hold on to the truth – and hold on to your first love!

The Thyatira church was about 40 years old. Only 40! It doesn’t take long for a church to go astray. Every generation needs to fight for the Gospel. That can’t skip a generation. We must oppose the tide of our culture and stand firm in our faith and in love!

²⁶ **And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—²⁷ ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

Jesus ends with a wonderful promise, another 2-fold promise.

a. If you overcome – keep on believing in Jesus and His Gospel everyday – you may appear to be conquered and defeated by this world, but I will give a place on my throne where I am seated now ruling the nations and **I will give him power of the nations.** Psalm 2 says that for the Son of God: **He will rule the nations with an iron sceptre – I conquered sin and death and God put me on His throne.** And when you conquer, I will do the same for you. I will give you a place of rule over the world. Yes, in heaven we will judge angels, the Bible says! (1 Corinthians 6:3) We will have authority over them! We will rule with Christ over the world. Like Adam and Eve ruled Paradise in the beginning.

b. **And I will give him the morning star.** This means that we will shine forever like stars in the new creation – people whose lives are bright with the glory of Christ. In Daniel 12:3 God gives this promise: **Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.** Jesus said: **Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.** (Matthew 13:43)

What a glorious future for those who believe in Jesus and keep holding on to Him who died and rose for them until he returns: you will reign with Christ forever and ever. You will shine with Christ’s glory and righteousness forever and ever.

Conclusion

Rather than getting to know the deep things of Satan in false religion, let us search out the deep things of God that are taught us in the Bible. And the greatest depth of God to know is *His love in Jesus Christ*: how He loved the world by giving His only begotten Son to us, to die for us in our sin and punishment, so that in Him we might be set free from all sin and punishment. And He raised Him from the dead on the third day and exalted Him to His right hand in heaven with all authority and power in order to save and gather a church from all the nations, and to destroy the devil and his whole kingdom.

Those who believe in Him and allow for no other teaching or salvation besides Him, they will spend eternity with Christ in the glory of the new heavens and the new earth.