Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)

Revelation 2:18 (NKJV)
"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:

1. The Identification and Meaning of Each Church Name

The words of Jesus to the church in Thyatira are similar to His words to Pergamos. Pergamos was the compromising church that mixed in pagan doctrines. This compromise continued through the Middle Ages (500-1500 AD). Now, Thyatira, as a result of continuing to compromise, is corrupt. Thyatira is the corrupt (apostate) church that tolerated a seductive false prophetess promoting sexual immorality, idol worship, and doctrinal error.

2. The Identification of the Author – How Jesus Described Himself to Each Church

Jesus feels the need to reiterate that He is the Son of God. This is a reference to Psalm 2:7, which refers to God raising Jesus from the dead (Colossians 1:18; Romans 8:29). This is also a reference to Psalm 2:8-9, which describes the nations gathering against the Messiah, and then Jesus defeating them (Revelation 19:11-16).

The reference to Jesus (with eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass) is a reference back to the description of Jesus (in Revelation 1:14-16) as the divine judge of all the nations (Matthew 24:14; Matthew 25:31-32; John 5:22-27; Acts 17:30-31).

3. Jesus' Commendation of Each Church

Revelation 2:19 (NKJV)
"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first."

The commendation to the Church in Thyatira is multi-faceted. They have love, service, faith, and patience. They are exhorted to persevere amidst the adversity of false teaching, while they continue remain faithful by doing good works until Jesus returns.

4. Jesus' Criticism to Each Church

Revelation 2:20-21 (NKJV)
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.
21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

The Church in Thyatira also had a few things against them:

First, they allowed the false prophetess Jezebel to continue her false prophecies, and to persuade people to practice idolatry and sexual immorality.

Second, they tolerated wrong doctrine – they justified teachings that idolatry and sexual immorality are not a serious matter for believers. After all, doesn't tolerance (moral relativity and cultural acceptance) in our modern society make it all ok? No, it doesn't.

Here's why: Idolatry and immorality are two things that break up families, both church families and the traditional family unit – husband (male), wife (female), and their children. Idolatry is anything that would take the place of God in our lives. Immorality is anything that would put our desires ahead of God's will for our lives.

Finally (in verse 21), the unbelievers in the church refused to repent. This intimates that some in the Thyatira church were never really saved in the first place. (see NLT)

5. Jesus' correction to each church.

Revelation 2:22-23 (NKJV)
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.

The correction is: Repent! The phrase, "Repent of their deeds" means: Turn away from the kingdom of the world (sexual immorality, idolatry, and self-sufficiency – "I can do life without God") and turn to the Kingdom of God (God, Jesus, and biblical truth). (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17)

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, Jesus (the living Word of God – Hebrews 4:12) will examine every believer's mind (thoughts) and heart (intentions) for faithfulness and reward them accordingly (Revelation 22:12).

Now let's address the issue of religious deception (Jezebel's greatest weapon).

Question: Does Jesus make people sick and kill their children? (John 10:10) Obviously, no.

Sin has consequences, but God is not the one bringing the consequences.

- Sickbed (bed of suffering): Sexually transmitted diseases.
- Great tribulation (suffer greatly): 37% of Americans carry $6,000 in credit card debt with 22% interest.
- I will kill her children (Jezebel's followers)

God's causative will = God brings it about. God's permissive will = God allows it.

If Jesus healed one person, it's His will to heal all persons (Acts 10:38; Hebrews 13:8), but will He do it for me?

Important point: Whatever a person really believes about God and Jesus, they will tend to continue to believe, even when it contradicts biblical truth (1 Kings 18:21; Hebrews 12:5-11).

VERY important point: Study the Bible in light of the new covenant and according to who you are in Christ because that's the way God is relating to the human race today.

6. Jesus' exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to each church.

Revelation 2:29 (NKJV)
"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Revelation 2:24-25 (NKJV)
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."

The phrase, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," is given to the church in Thyatira as an admonition to know who they are and an exhortation to reinforce their new identity in Christ. This is what pleases God (Hebrews 1:1-3).

In Thyatira, believers are to hold firmly to what they have until Jesus returns. They have a promise and a reward.

7. Jesus' reward for faithfulness to each church.

Revelation 2:26-28 (NKJV)
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."

In verse 26, the phrase "keeps My works" refers to faithfulness. The phrase "until the end," points to the second coming of Christ. The word "power" is the Greek word "exousia" which means authority (the right to govern). The NIV and NLT use the word "victorious" for "overcomes" which means you are not a victim.

Isaiah 54:17 (NKJV)
No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me," says the Lord.

In verse 27, these faithful overcomers will enjoy the privilege of reigning with Christ by ruling over the nations during the Millennium (Psalm 2:8-9; Revelation 20:4-6).

In verse 28, the morning star is Jesus Himself (Revelation 22:16). Jesus gives every faithful overcomer the privilege of executing His authority and being like Him (with a flesh and bone body – Luke 24:36) during the Millennium. NLT – Verse 26: "To them I will give authority over the nations." Verse 28: "They will have the same authority I received from my Father." This confirms Jesus' desire for His followers (as expressed in His upper room prayer in John 17).

Conclusion:
In all 7 churches, Jesus is addressing the issue of faithfulness; specifically, becoming a faithful overcomer in Christ (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4-5). The continuum of a believer's life goes from the point of salvation to being faithful in this life, to receiving rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, into the Millennium, and on throughout eternity.