

# THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## LESSON FOURTEEN = *The Church in Thyatira*

Bible Class Series by Ray Reynolds (4/3/11)

Introduction: Each of the congregations in the New Testament had unique features and characteristics. They all had qualities we can learn from and use to better our own congregations today. In this lesson we are going to consider the church in Thyatira. Let's study together . . . . .

Discussion:

### **I. *The Geography of Thyatira***

Thyatira is in the far west corner of Turkey (south of Istanbul and east of Athens).

It was in the northern most part of Roman province of Lydia and on the border of Mysia.

It is about 50 miles from nearest border of the Mediterranean Sea and 42 miles from the Aegean Sea.

The city lies on the Lycus river (just like Colosse).

It also stood at the junction of three main roads leading to Pergamum (37 miles northwest), Sardis (37 miles southeast) and Smyrna (47 miles southeast).

### **II. *The History of Thyatira***

The city was Pelopia until it was changed to Thyatira (Thyateira) by king Seleucus I Nicator in 290 BC.

- \* He changed the city's name during a war with Lysimachus.

- \* The name means "daughter" or also it can mean "the castle of Thya" or "white castle."

It did not stand on any of the Greek trade routes, but it was a very wealthy city.

- \* Its location in the Lycus valley, along the Lycus River, helped its popularity.

- \* It rapidly became a commercial center, but it was never a metropolis.

Before the time of Nicator the city was regarded as a holy city.

- \* It held several ancient temples.

- \* The ancient temple of the Lydian sun-god, Tyrimnos, was there.

- \* The goddess Boreatene, which is closely associated with Tyrimnos, was there.

- \* Another temple at Thyatira was dedicated to Sambethe (a prophetess).

Thyatira was specially noted for the trade guilds which were very organized.

- \* Every artisan belonged to a guild, and was an incorporated organization.

- \* Each guild possessed property in its own name, made contracts, and wielded great influence.

- \* The guild of the coppersmiths was huge, but the guild of the dyers was world famous.

Lydia of Thyatira seems to have been a member of this dyer guild.

- \* According to **Acts 16:14**, she sold her dyes in Philippi as a representative of the guild.

- \* The guilds were closely connected with the Asiatic religion observed in the city.

- \* Pagan feasts were held and there were many immoral practices within the city.

In early Christian times, Thyatira was home to a significant church, but it's almost forgotten now.

In 366 the Roman emperor Valens defeated the Roman usurper Procopius at Thyatira.

Thyatira is now represented by the modern town of Ak-Hissar.

- \* The population of 20,000 is largely Greek and Armenian, yet a few Jews still live among them.

- \* Before the town is a large marshy plain called Geurdeuk Chai.

The chief industry now is rug-making.

### **III. The Beginning of the Church in Thyatira**

There was a small Jewish population in this region, but probably not enough support a local work. We are unsure who founded this congregation and when, but there are theories.

- \* The church could have been established after Pentecost (**Acts 2:5-12**).
- \* The church could have been established after great persecution of Saul (**Acts 8:1-4**).
- \* The church could have been established by Lydia (**Acts 16:11-15, 40**).
- \* The church could have been established by Paul or one of his associates (**Acts 19:10**).
- \* The church could have been established by the apostle John (**Revelation**).

They were strong in the first century but founded during difficult time in Christian history.

### **IV. The Work of the Church in Thyatira**

The church in Thyatira was known for its love, faith, service, patience, and endurance.

### **V. The Letter to the Church in Thyatira**

*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: I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 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. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 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. 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. But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—"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; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* (**Revelation 2:18-29 - NKJV**)

### **VI. The Dilemmas of the Church in Thyatira**

The false teaching of Jezebel and her followers.

The people needed to repent of their sins.

The Lord wanted the people to know that we will be rewarded/punished based on our works.

Tribulation and trials were going to increase for those who practice evil.

### **VII The Maturity of the Church in Thyatira**

The congregation benefited from John's correspondence.

Jesus saw that the church could have a future.

- \* What Did Jesus Say?

Commendation: They had love, service, faith, and great patience.

Criticism: They tolerated cults, idolatry, and sexual immorality.

Command: Judgment was coming, keep the faith.

Compensation: They would rule over nations and receive the Morning Star.

- \* They needed to focus on steadfastness and truth.

The congregation grew because of their spirit and determination.

**Conclusion:** God clearly blessed the church in Thyatira. We can see that history shows the wisdom and providence of God throughout the New Testament. We should trust Him to provide direction for the church today. It is my prayer that by studying about these wonderful congregations of the Lord's people that we will see our place in the kingdom. Next week we will begin our study of Sardis.