

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 9/19/04
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The Church at Thyatira. Part 2
Revelation 2:18-29

The dissertation to the church at Thyatira is one of the longest to the seven churches in *Revelation*, yet one of the most rewarding. We begin with our corrected translation of **Rev 2:18**, “*And to the messenger in Thyatira [the future pastor-teachers of this church, or the future pastor-teachers of the Thyatira-type believers in the Church-age] write [communicate]: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this...*”

Thyatira was the world’s center for the worship of the sun god Apollo and was also famous for its labor unions. It was the most completely unionized city in the Roman world. All craftsmen in Thyatira belonged to a union, and they had tremendous influence. These unions sponsored the phallic cult, which promoted of all forms of sexual activity, as in **2Co 12:21; Eph 3:5, 4:19, 5:5; Rev 2:14,20-23**. Phallic reversionism comes from demonism and was forbidden by God in **Exo 20:3,23, 23:24; Deu 4:28, 5:7, 6:14, 7:16, 8:19**. No nation ever survives the spread of the phallic cult and the influence of excessive sexual perversion. In Thyatira, many believers were coming under the influence of the cults and idol worship.

“*The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze...*” This statement stands in contrast to the sun god Apollo, the so-called “god of protection,” which was represented with flaming rays and feet of burnished brass, and claimed to be the son of Zeus, the father of all gods. Our Lord’s claim was much higher—He is *the* Son of God! The Lord is setting Himself in direct opposition to Jezebel, and His eyes are like a flame of fire, which means His inspection of every believer is intense and piercing. He scrutinizes His people, uncovering all the hidden things of darkness, penetrating the secret rooms in their heart, **Eph 4:27, Psa 19:12**. However, always remember there should be no guilt or condemnation when He reveals these things to us (**Heb 4:12-16**).

There is a secret room in the hearts of many believers where the soul stores up secrets, fears, and insecurities, and in many cases refuses to even admit that there is a problem. These things give an individual a very low self-image and can lead to the arrogance complex of sins. They weigh down the heart with guilt, and destroy a believer’s confidence in his relationship with God. This room often contains the idol of fear, doubt, or lust.

Defense mechanisms are designed to hide or to relieve the conflicts and stresses in the soul that cause anxiety, hysteria, fear, worry, or other categories of the emotional complex of sins, the worst being guilt. Defense mechanisms are designed to bury any reaction you might have, any lack of esteem, or any explanation for impulsive behavior or failure on your part.

1. **Denial:** The person fails to acknowledge some aspect of external reality that is obvious and apparent to others. Denial is a false perception of reality (**Pro 30:12**).
2. **Dissociation** or **withdrawal:** The person does not want to deal with a situation.
3. **Isolation:** The person is unable to experience what is really happening around them or in their life. They feel isolated from their problems because they cannot deal with their problems, so they must dump part of it into the “garbage can” of the subconscious to isolate it from the rest of their soul.
4. **Projection:** The person assigns or projects his own flaws, sins, and failures to others in order to rid himself of his own failures and elevate himself.
5. **Rationalization:** This is a defense mechanism that devises reassuring or self-serving but erroneous explanations for one’s behavior. This is rationalizing an action which the believer knows is not Biblical, but he feels he has the right.
6. **Repression:** The person is unable to remember or to be aware of disturbing lusts, wishes, feelings, thoughts, or experiences related to sin. It is the unconscious exclusion of painful impulses, desires, or fears from the conscious mind.
7. **Suppression:** The person *intentionally* avoids thinking about disturbing thoughts, problems, experiences, or feelings.
8. **Controlling:** The person attempts to excessively manage or regulate events, objects, or people in their environment.
9. **Devaluation:** The person attributes exaggerated negative qualities to self and others. This type of person is always putting self or others down.
10. **Direct attack:** Anger is used as a solution to the problems and frustrations of life. The individual makes wrong decisions, and when he is caught in the act, instead of admitting he is wrong, he attacks others to switch the blame.
11. **Subjectivity:** This involves self-pity, as the individual assumes no one loves him, and he feels left out and depressed (e.g., Elijah in **1Ki 19:3-4**). This type of believer has no capacity for life, love, and happiness, and so sublimates and becomes a slave to specific details of life.

All these defense mechanisms are the function of your own free will choosing to use them. The spiritual life that God has provided has all the solutions to every problem you will ever face. When you are in the plan of God, you will have difficulties to deal with. Choosing to use any defense mechanism means going in the opposite direction of your spiritual life. Many believers are embarrassed about this secret room in their soul; however, the Lord knows that it exists, and He has a plan to free the believer from this slavery. Unless the believer is free from these rooms of imaginary fears and worries or secret faults and sins, he will never enjoy true freedom. This room will become a dungeon and a prison in his life.

“*And His feet are like burnished bronze...*” “Burnished bronze” is a reference to historical judgment to the nations of history, under the principle that Jesus Christ controls history. The eyes like a flaming fire and the feet of bronze are two ways of describing the judgments that the Lord Jesus Christ brings upon believers who fail to execute their own personal drama and personal sense of destiny.

In spite of the desperate conditions in the church at Thyatira, we are impressed that the Lord Jesus Christ gives them the warmest commendation for love and service when He says in **Rev 2:19**, “*I know your deeds [your accomplishments, Christian production], namely the virtue-love and the faith [the three stages of the faith-rest drill], and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.*” Even though these believers were growing spiritually, the Lord Jesus Christ still gives them a warning about idol worship and inordinate attachment to the wrong influences.

The Lord goes on in **Rev 2:20**, “*But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*” Jezebel was a smart, beautiful, dangerous woman, and she represents all that is attractive and tempting and that lures the believer away from the predesigned plan of God.

1. Jezebel is not her literal name; it is a title that describes what this woman was like—a very intelligent, beautiful woman living at the head of a phallic cult in Thyatira.
2. She had succeeded in luring believers away from doctrine into the phallic cult just as the historical Jezebel who corrupted Israel. The worst invasions Israel ever faced was not the Assyrian army of 180,000 troops; it was one woman called Jezebel.
3. The Word of God strongly opposes female leadership in spiritual matters, **1Ti 2:11-15**.
4. The pattern for this Biblical prohibition of female leadership goes back to the Garden of Eden and the historical trend related to the weak controlling the strong. The Bible calls the woman the “weaker vessel,” not because she lacks courage or character, but simply because she is dependent on the man.
5. The woman sinned first and became weak, which is why the Bible calls the woman the weaker vessel. In the Garden of Eden we have the first case of the weak and the strong—the woman, who had sinned first, was the weak, and the man who had not yet sinned was the strong.
6. From the very beginning of man’s failure on planet earth he was the victim of the weak controlling the strong.
7. Adam took the forbidden fruit from the hand of the woman, not from the tree.

Genesis chapter three is the “seed plot” of the entire Bible. Every doctrine in the Bible has its beginning in here, as well as many allegorical teachings.

1. The Garden of Eden was to Adam (when he looked at the first sinner and was tempted) as the predesigned plan of God is to the believer when faced with temptation and manipulation by the weak. The fallen woman in the garden is the pattern of the weak controlling the strong, and Jezebel follows this pattern perfectly (**2Co 11:3**).
2. Inside the predesigned plan of God, “the battle is the Lord’s.” You win when you make the right choice. Inside the cosmic system, the battle is yours and you lose, because you have made the wrong choice.
3. There are no winners in the cosmic system; there are just different kinds of losers, including those who are strong but are controlled by the weak.
4. Fortunately for the church at Thyatira, many believers had rejected the lure of the weak controlling the strong.

5. Starting with Adam’s wrong decision, we have the great conflict; man must choose between arrogance and humility as an extension of the angelic conflict.
6. If you think you are strong you really become weak, and you will be entangled in a system stronger than you are—the cosmic system of Satan, by which he administers his rulership of this world (**1Co 3:18**).
7. Once you choose a power system in which to reside as a believer, your decision merges into a power greater than you are.

The author of the book of *Kings* is clear that Jezebel was an implacable dictator—a clever intriguer and a shameless tramp. She was the priestess of the phallic cult called Ashteroth (Aphrodite). Her husband Ahab was a great soldier; he would have been a great king, except for the fact that he was a victim of a very evil, weak person controlling the strong. In her marriage to King Ahab, Jezebel changed her nationality, but she never changed her religion, the phallic cult. By controlling Ahab, she brought great apostasy to Israel, the greatest invasion of the cosmic system into Israel in all of its history. She sponsored 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Astarti, who were feminine or homosexual men. With her foot in the door, she also arranged the assassination of the Lord’s prophets, as in **1Ki 18:13**, **2Ki 9:7**. Jezebel has stamped her name on history as the representative of all that is conniving, crafty, malicious, vengeful, and cruel. She is the first great instigator of persecution against the saints of God. She outlived Ahab by about 14 years, and she was a magnificently beautiful woman, with brains.

“She teaches and leads My bond-servants astray...” The Greek word *planao* means to deceive, seduce, or lead astray. Deception is vicious and evil, and must be identified and dealt with. Satan has one goal in the life of every believer—to lead them astray. Deception is demonization of the soul and personality of the believer or unbeliever living in the cosmic system. All believers and unbelievers in the cosmic system are under some form of satanic deception, **Col 2:1-4**. This is what Jezebel specialized in as a pawn of Satan and the kingdom of darkness.

God’s Word continually warns us against deception, as in **Eph 4:14,27**; **2Pe 3:17**; **Jam 4:6-8**; **Pro 3:34**; **1Co 15:33**; **Mat 22:29, 24:24**; **Psa 95:10**; **Heb 3:10**; **Gal 6:7**; **1Jo 1:8**; **Rev 13:14**. In every passage where God makes war against the arrogant, there is a reference to deception. In **Rom 16:17-18**, Paul gives us a stern warning and command concerning those who have been deceived and are deceiving others: *“Now I urge you, brethren, be alert for those who cause dissensions and hindrances to doctrine [they cause apostasies] contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and turn away from them. For such individuals are slaves, not of our Lord Jesus Christ but of their own emotions and appetites, and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting [the stupid].”* For the believer, deception can only be avoided through life in the predesigned plan of God. Resistance is a matter of learning doctrine. The four R’s protect us from deception—(1) Reception, (2) Retention, (3) Recall, and (4) Resistance.

This dispensation is the age of the *power systems*—the predesigned plan of God versus the cosmic system—and the options for the believer are very simple; either choose God’s way and God’s power in the predesigned plan of God, or choose Satan’s way and Satan’s power in the cosmic system. When we fall out of the predesigned plan of God, we are led away by the weak controlling the strong.

Normal weakness must be distinguished from evil weakness. Normal weakness includes the problems in our life that we cannot solve and our inability to solve those problems. Evil weakness is association with the cosmic system. Evil weakness seeks to solve the problems of life by ignoring or rejecting the problems, or using cosmic solutions, such as those in the religion in Thyatira, which was composed of sex and ecstasies. We are the products of our own decisions, not our environment; volition creates environment.

All apostasy is preceded by some form of inculcation. The believer does not have to listen to false teaching or inculcation, but he will if he has neglected Bible doctrine, and wandered away from the power system, the predesigned plan of God. In the human history phase of the angelic conflict, man is free to fail and free to succeed, and therefore, the source of either failure or success is the same. Freedom carries the responsibility of making decisions. We must be so inculcated with truth and doctrine, that he will take the responsibility for our own decisions.

“So that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols...” The Greek verb *porneuo* means fornication and sexual sins. The question is, do you control your life or does your life control you? In the case of fornication, it is the body controlling you. Eating food sacrificed to idols has to do with the function of the phallic cult; the food sacrificed to idols was sometimes human flesh, which entails cannibalism. However, no matter what kind of meat it was, the fellowship and partying with those in the cosmic system brings up a very important principle—**believers must be very aware of who they have a social life with**. The people with whom you socialize will often have the greatest influence in your life. In effect, this passage says, if you want to stay out of the cosmic system, guard your social life, especially your sexual life.

There is fornication as a social sin, and there is fornication related to religion, specifically the phallic cult. One is a sin, one is a system of evil, and both are terribly destructive. God invented sex for right-man/right-woman (**one** man and **one** woman). Every man must guard his soul and his body for his right woman. Both soul and body must be protected when waiting, or dating the right woman or right man. Sexual affairs will knock you down and keep you down. Every time someone has sex with the wrong person, they give their glory away. Your glory, all of it, and your sex, all of it, belongs to only one other person. When someone is trying to lead you astray sexually, walk away and save your glory. We must flee from such dangerous, destructive attacks and temptations. Optimum satisfaction in sex is related to virtue in the soul, not sexual athleticism. Remember, grace is the power to change, the power to be restored. You cannot change your past but you can change your future.

Rev 2:21-22 continues, *“And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality.* [Jezebel is apparently a believer, as she is commanded to repent of her fornication, rather than unbelief.] *Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness,*

and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.” God will not stand by while members of the Royal Family sink into degeneracy. He takes stern measures to alert them to their critical situation and to encourage them to rebound and re-enter the predesigned plan of God.

In His perfect wisdom, God knows when to warn each believer. He knows the most effective way to confront us with the fact that we are totally dependent on His grace. All divine discipline is administered in grace. The Christian under discipline may doubt that God is treating him in grace, but he could not imagine how much more he would hurt if God were not acting in grace.

In conclusion, our Lord makes this great statement of encouragement and promise in **Rev 2:24-29**, *“But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority 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.**”*

For a more detailed study, order tapes 1920 to 1925.