



Jesus' Appraisal

The Letter to Thyatira

April 18, 2021

SONG #1

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 9:1-9

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

When my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish before your presence.

For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.

You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish; you have blotted out their name forever and ever.

The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins; their cities you rooted out; the very memory of them has perished.

But the Lord sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

SONG #2

PRE-SERMON READING | Revelation 2:18-29

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

'I know your works, your love and faith and service, and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her; I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come.

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself 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.'

THYATIRA | Cultural Background

to the angel of the church in Thyatira... (2:18)

Our fourth address is to the faith family in, and I quote a sentiment echoed across all scholarship on the subject, “*the least important of the seven cities to which John is instructed to write.*”¹ A city which history has passed over—built over—and all but forgotten. There are no ruins of Thyatira in museums; instead, you’ll find scatterings across parks and vacant lots in the modern-day city of Akhisar, Turkey.

Unlike Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum, Thyatira could not boast of being the most influential, the most beautiful, or the most significant. It was not the leading city in politics, economics, education, culture, civic pride, religion, or the like. Though Thyatira could not claim top billing in any one area, it was, nevertheless, a prosperous city. By all accounts, it was a city with plenty of jobs, plenty of space, and plenty of stability. A city organized geographically and socially around business.

Located along multiple trade routes, Thyatira was home to a host of artisans and industries from bakers and painters and tanners to potters and workers in wool and linen and metal (chiefly copper). It was the home of Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth worn by royals and the wealthy. The same Lydia who moved to Philippi, where she met Paul and became an apprentice of Jesus, as Luke recounts for us in Acts 16. Because it was a trade city, Thyatira became known for its many trade guilds, or trade unions, which shaped the city’s economic and social life. Different guilds controlled different “squares” or districts in the city’s structure, providing associations for mutual profit as well as a social fabric in which the artisans’ lives were weaved.

Most of these trade guilds paid homage to the city’s gods, Apollo and Artemis, who, along with Ceaser, were marked as “the Sons of Zeus” on the local coinage. Like any good networking group, these guilds were not all business but also communal, throwing parties and festivals to honor their trade and the gods of their craft. While our modern minds picture debauchorous pagan parties in which every participant, caught up in the gyrations of cultic worship, is partaking in every form of lustful and twisted perversion and gratification, the historical data suggests a much milder picture. Indeed, honor was paid to the divines for the industry’s prosperity, and the unused parts (usually the good parts!) of sacrificial offerings made a delicious meal. Still, the parties were focused as much on social business as they were on the spiritual. Of course, as we all know, a work party or conference, even today, can quickly degenerate. And Thyatira, we can be sure, had its fair share of parties going too far. Yet, regardless of the level of debauchery, the collusion of faith and work and friends made participation in the guilds a rather delicate subject for the first century Jesus follower. Community and work melded together in Thyatira, and the separation of people from profit blurred.

“though [the trade guilds] were not obligatory,” writes commentator Grant Osborne, “few workers failed to belong, for the guilds were centers of social life as well as commerce. Both physically and sociologically, the guilds were at the heart of civic life, [and] their feasts were the heart of the social (and commercial) life of the city. **To refuse to participate meant the loss of both goodwill and business.**”² And certainly, a much harder go at prosperity. So, while there was “no threat of persecution [hanging] over the Thyatiran church,”³ there was

¹ J.L. Trafton, *Reading Revelation: a literary and theological commentary*, 41.

² G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 151-152.

³ William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 112.

the issue of living like Jesus in the roles and relationships of everyday life. What would it look to follow Jesus' way amid the way of work/community?

Stuck in a reasonably good city, with a sufficiently good economy, the faith family of Thyatira had to navigate fidelity to the way of Jesus amid the economic and social constructs of ordinary life. Jesus makes his fourth address to this group, a community made up of women and men from across all the segmented city groups. A family of faith living enmeshed in their city's economic and social structures and under the spirit of their cultural moment, living amid one kingdom while loyal to another. To this particular family of faith, in the least significant city of the seven, Jesus writes his most lengthy correspondence.

WHO JESUS IS (Person) | v. 18

To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. (2:18)

Let me point it out again, Jesus' addresses always begin by acknowledging the complex reality of the church's existence. The church is both the seen people and the unseen spirit/angel. The church is never just what we see, and neither are the other constructs of our everyday lives. Even in the ordinary locale of Thyatira, there is more going on than our eyes can see. Luckily for the church, Jesus' eyes penetrate much deeper than our perceptions.

Jesus, always, "introduces himself with a description from [chapter 1's] vision **that most suits the situation of [that specific faith family]**."⁴ No church represents Jesus fully, yet every church is represented by Jesus perfectly for their time and place. In this case, chapter 1, verses 14 and 15,

His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace (1:14b-15a)

To pick up and understand the relevance of Jesus to the context of this faith family, we need a few dots connected to what would have been familiar passages and pictures for the first century Christian (especially ones with Jewish background).

The first thing we notice about Jesus' self-description is that he adds to the image of chapter one the title, "the Son of God." We read or hear that title and glance over it, for it is common for us to refer to Jesus in this way. However, he doesn't call himself the Son of God in any other place in the Revelation. "the Son of man," yes, for it was the most common self-reference of Jesus, but not "Son of God." So, perhaps Jesus wants us to pick up on the uniqueness of the title so that we might remember where we'd heard it before.

Just in case you don't remember, Jesus' title takes us to Psalm 2. As we read this psalm, notice Jesus references several phrases, ideas, and images throughout his letter to Thyatira.

PSALM 2

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? [Why does life with God sometimes feel like a battle?]

*The kings of the earth [people with authority over the nations, kingdoms, and cities in the seen realm of reality] set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, **against the Lord and against his Anointed**, [opposition is a theme in all the letters, there is always something and someone not just doing things differently, but actively in opposition to the way of Jesus] saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and*

⁴ G.K. Beale, *The book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text*, 239.

cast away their cords from us.” [Let’s not be bound by God but be free to pursue what we desire and how we desire to gain it. Again the common issue in all the churches so far.]

*He who sits **in the heavens** [who is above and operates in the unseen realm of reality] *laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.* [Do we think life on our world be better? Do they think they can win?] *Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have set **my King** on Zion, my holy hill.”* [There is a King of kings, God’s King. Who is he?]*

*I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “**You are my Son**; [this is the King] *today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will **make the nations your heritage**, [your inheritance, under your authority and rule and care which has been God’s intention from Genesis 11 (see Deut. 32)] and the ends of the earth your possession [for the blessing of the nations (Gen. 12)].**

*You shall **shepherd** [some translations say “break” or “rule”] them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” [Repeated nearly verbatim in Rev. 2:27.]*

*Now, therefore, **O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.** [Repent. God always gives an opportunity for repentance, for warning and wisdom to be heralded and honored and also refused. As Jesus did the “Jezebel” in today’s letter.]*

*Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. **Kiss the Son**, [Whose, son? God’s Son] *lest he be angry, and you perish in the way [die in your sickness, as Jezebel and her followers/children do: Rev. 2:22-23], for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

So, Jesus’ self-description as the Son of God is the image of a King of kings claiming his heritage, the nations (peoples and structures) and the earth (places) as his own to rule (shepherd) them in a way that breaks their rebellion and protects what is his. In a city where the coinage depicted the “sons of Zeus,” the divine Apollos and the ruler Caesar as sons of a god, kings of trade (business), and people (community); Jesus is *the* Son of *the* God. King of kings coming to claim his heritage, his kingdom which encompasses all kingdoms.

The second part of the description says Jesus has “eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.” Here we go to the “professional” prophet Jeremiah and the “layman” prophet, Daniel. Both prophets, one speaking to the people of God in their abandoning of God’s ways as pastor priest and one speaking as civic leader priest to a nation that at best was apathetic towards Israel’s God and at times in direct opposition to Him. To Jeremiah 17 first.

JEREMIAH 17:1-13

*The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved **on the tablet of their heart**, [Where is there sin? While I am sure there are actions of sin, the home of sin, the stronghold of sin, is in the heart.] and on the **horns [that is power and works] of their altars [the unseen spiritual forces whom they are following]**, while **their children** [those who submit to their authority] *remember their altars and their Asherim, beside every green tree and on the high hills, on the mountains in the open country [i.e., works what they are being led to practice: Rev. 2:20].**

Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your high places for sin throughout all your territory. [What you wanted to gain through these practices will be taken away, and hard times, tribulation, will befall you (Rev.2:22).]

You shall loosen your hand from your heritage [There is that word again. But it is not just to God's Anointed, but "your" legacy. His people's inheritance. The word spoken to the King of kings is assumed to also be for God's people. They too were meant to partake and participate in the heritage] that I gave to you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.

[What's ultimately the issue?] Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. [Same issue in Psalm 2.] He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

[What is the solution?] Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. [The people of Thyatira do not trust that following God's way, the way of Jesus, will get them what they want and need. They think that in order to live, they must live within the structures (and spirit) that their cultural moment makes available. Seeking first not his kingdom and his righteousness but the basics and pleasures of life—which by the way He says he gives! And again, where does the issue reside?]

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick [the source of their sickness is not God but their heart (2:22-23)]; who can understand it?

I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds. [There is no being self-deceived in relation to God, no infection that won't be exposed, no way of living that won't prove whose way you are following. No walking the wrong way in which you won't be encouraged to turn around.]

Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool. [You will get what is the inevitable end of a way that is opposition to the good of God's way. The result will be that of Psalm 2, no good, something laughable, that is foolish.]

A glorious throne set on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. [Again, those who do trust in the Lord get to rule, take part in the heritage as Rev. 2:26 says.]

O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth [i.e., die], for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water.

Jesus having eyes aflame means he penetrates to the home of our issue and transforms it. Eugene Peterson says that “Holiness gets inside us, and when it gets inside us, it changes us. Christ’s gaze penetrates and purifies. He doesn’t look at us; he looks into us. We are not a spectacle to Christ; we are invaded by him.”⁵

To be invaded by Jesus, is to be consumed by him, as the writer of Hebrews says,

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

(Heb. 12:28-29)

George MacDonald once said on this subject, “It is not that the fire will burn us if we do not worship...but that the fire will burn us until we worship...yea, will go on burning within us after all that is foreign to it has yielded to its force, no longer with pain and consuming, but as the highest consciousness of life, the presence of God.”⁶ **Jesus searches our hearts and minds until we can live like him in the relational authority over the world He has made for us to live and move and have our being, as he does** (vs. 26-27).

Two passages in Daniel help us to recognize the graciousness of Jesus’ x-ray ruling. The first is Daniel 2, where Daniel is describing and then interpreting a dream of Nebachnezzar (the earthly ruler of a kingdom opposed to God’s people and his rule). Notice the description of the “great image” and how it differs from Jesus’ image and take note of why that matters.

DANIEL 2:31-35, 42-44

*You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, **its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.** [Verses the bronze feet of Jesus. Bronze being a mixture of iron and copper.]*

*As you looked, a stone was cut out **by no human hand**, and it struck the image **on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.** Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. **But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.** [The stone, which was not made of human hands, proved to be both stronger and the source of the great image’s downfall.]*

*And as the toes of the feet were **partly iron and partly clay**, so the kingdom shall be **partly strong and partly brittle.** [There is no denying that the mixed kingdom has its apparent strengths and advantages.] As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will **mix with one another in marriage**, [we’ll come back to the importance of this marriage and mixing with Jezebel shortly] *but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.**

⁵ Eugene Peterson, *Reverse Thunder: the revelation of John & the praying imagination*, 34.

⁶ George MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 44.

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever [breaking in order to rule, so that the goodness of God's kingdom should fill the earth].

The mixture of iron and clay can not hold, but bronze (the mixture of iron and copper (which is a commodity of Thyatira)) is sure. To a city/kingdom that is by all appearances stable, Jesus is the one who reveals their instability and establishes a firm base. As Eugene Peterson describes, "Iron is strong, but it rusts. Copper won't rust but is pliable. Combine the two in bronze, and the best quality of each is preserved, the strength of iron and the endurance of the copper. The rule of Christ is set on this base: the foundation of his power has been tested by fire."⁷ It will not only last but overcome.

Now to Daniel 10, which combines the two features of Jesus and tells us why he has come.

Daniel 10:2-12

In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks [because of the difficulty and lengthiness of being in one kingdom and loyal to another, for the longing of seeing God's kingdom restored and whole.]. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, **his eyes like flaming torches**, his arms **and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze**, [i.e., Jesus of Thyatira] and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

And he said to me, "O Daniel, a man **greatly loved**, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for **from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.**

Because they sought Jesus, were humble and hungry for the rule and reign of Jesus, His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, this is how Jesus revealed himself—the Son of God with eyes aflame and feet firmly established in this world. And we know they were hungry for God's kingdom like Daniel from the way Jesus encourages them.

⁷ Peterson, 35-36.

ENCOURAGEMENT | v. 19

I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. (2:19)

Jesus is “thoroughly acquainted with the labors of love the believers in Thyatira have shown to God and to their neighbors.”⁸ Their “works” are love, faith, service, and endurance. We’d typically only classify “service” as “work.” Still, Jesus knows that loving as he loves and holding fast to faith in God’s rule and purposes when it would be easy to grab on to something else is no idle task. “The Christians in Thyatira,” contends commentators, Kistemaker and Hendriksen, “visibly demonstrated love to their neighbors and faith and trust in God. [Thus, they were blessed as Jeremiah 17 contends the persons who trust are.] Their service to others and their quiet endurance were exemplary in the face of hardship and opposition.”⁹

James, Jesus’ brother, calls loving God and loving neighbor “a royal law.”

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well. (James 2:8)

The men and women of Thyatira are doing well; they are acting royally, taking part in their heritage by participating in Jesus’ kingdom in the midst of another; *already*. And they were not merely sharing in Jesus’ work and witness; **they were growing, maturing** in their following of Jesus! Again, Kistemaker and Hendriksen argue, “The church could receive no greater praise than that given in the words ‘your last works are greater than your first.’ This means that their works of love, faith, service, and endurance were constantly increasing.”¹⁰ And as the apostle Peter reminds us,

“if these qualities are your and are increasing, they keep you from becoming ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:8)

Unlike Ephesus, who stagnated because they lost their first love, the women and men of Thyatira were becoming more and more like Jesus in their “works.” They looked and lived more like Jesus, letting their faith shape their everyday living with God, one another, and their ordinary roles and relationships within their community, city, and jobs. What higher compliment could you receive from Jesus?!

And still, Jesus has something against them. None of us, even the mature (and maturing), are ever without the need of a heart check, for there is always something going on in and around us that we cannot see; but Jesus can.

⁸ Kistemaker & Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 137.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

ADMONISHMENT | v. 20-25

But I have this against you, that you *tolerate your wife* Jezebel, who calls herself a **prophet** and is teaching and **deceiving** my servants to *practice* sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. (2:20)

Okay, a lot is going on here in this chunk of the letter. More than we have time to parse out, but let me say a few things. First, just like in the last addresses, where the real-time trouble-makers within the community of faith are described with reference to a memorable OT story, so too are the insiders causing trouble in Thyatira.

Second, there is no literal Jezebel, nor is it likely the leader of this group was a woman—though not impossible for women prophets were not unusual in the church in the first century. The gender of the Greek word used for *prophet*, though, has nothing to do with the gender of the prophet.

Third, and probably most apparent to you, is that the phrase, which in most of our English translations reads, “that women Jezebel” is most accurately translated as “your wife, Jezebel.”

Again, this phrasing would help the hearer connect the dots back to the actual Jezebel, who was married to Ahab, the king of Israel. **She was married to the earthly royal meant to act royally on behalf of God (because he'd been given authority (v. 26)) for the sake of the nations.** The very thing the Thyatirans are praised for doing. The Thyatirans were acting royally like the royal Ahab. And like Ahab, they too were being incited by their wife “Jezebel” (someone they had entered a union with, an insider) to mix kingdoms (1 Kings 21:25-26) to blend loyalties. Like Ahab, they were ultimately be led to serve two masters, and, as Jesus said, that never works out well (Matt. 6:24).

Jezebel—and I think this is important and plays into the ever-present theme of seen and unseen in this letter—was the princess of Sidon, a people and place whose lineage traces back to the Canaanite peoples who were in collaboration with divine beings that were in opposition to the rule of God; the very ones whom the Psalmist says were trying to shake off his yoke. So, Ahab, the one ruling on God’s behalf, joins himself to a person and people who are not just into “their truth,” or living a different but neutral way, but who was active in opposition to the one who gave Ahab his position. And Jezebel was no dummy. She knew, as did Balak and Balaam, that the way to overthrow God’s kingdom—i.e., keep and expand their own—was not by direct force, but by seduction and deception—build a little alter here, let her priests and prophets (she had 850 or so), mingle with theirs, and we can coexist in harmony. That is until she had twisted the heart of Ahab and Israel in a way that gave her the authority and gall to go directly at the prophets of God. So through marriage, as Daniel said, the kingdoms mixed, and once they mixed, there was no foundation to stand on—for God’s people.

There is no indication that Jezebel was a harlot or even promiscuous. While ancient religious worship often had—at least for some—a sexual layer; the inclusion of it was to point to the union of physicality and spirituality—the joining together of body and soul with the divine or Spirit. And throughout most of our scripture, that concept of a spiritual and physical union in the sometimes practiced sexual immorality of idol worship was metaphorical, a metaphor for adultery (notice that word in vs. 22), the cheating on God, with

other gods, other ways. In other words, they were submitting themselves to the authority and leadership of something/someone less than God—and is manifested in the way they related to others “her works” (2:22b).

I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they **repent of her works**, and I will strike her children dead [kill them with death, the end of our her sickness becomes their end too].

And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

(2:20-23)

Unlike the way they were relating to God and others in the way of Jesus, relating to God in others in the way of “Jezebel” was a denying of God (Jeremiah 17 and Psalm 2) and using of others—for pleasure, gratification, or identity.

God shows his patience by revealing himself, and thus, the people's hearts aligned with the similar spirit to Jezebel's so that they might repent. Turn specifically from “her works,” which are ways of life opposed to the way of Jesus, including love, faith, service, and endurance. What appears mature but is ignorant and arrogant blending. They don't, and so, they suffer the consequences of all that try and live life their own way since Adam and Eve: death.

The issue in Thyatira was not much different from the issues in the other cities we've looked at: the accommodation of the way (works) of Jesus—a life that looked like the life Jesus both taught and lived—with the way (works) of the cultural moment. And again, notice that it is not the people who are the enemy (though they suffer the same fate as the one they follow—which is sad)—but the force behind their issue and the entanglement (impurity) of their hearts and minds.

There is a difference, though, and the difference in Thyatira is two-fold. One, they “tolerated” this teaching, which is called “deception.” And by the way, this is the only place in the Revelation where the church is deceived. Usually, the ones deceived are the outsiders. The Greek word used for tolerate is more robust than what we initially hear. It is more kin to the idea of passive affirming. They are allowing something to happen out of laziness or unwillingness to stop it. The issue (the heart and unseen forces issue) exists because they let it exist in their midst. And part of the reason may be the second difference.

But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call **the deep things of Satan**, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come. (2:24-25)

While the Nicolaitans in Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum were a group that leveraged freedom as their means for accommodating to the culture, the group in Thyatira were leveraging “the deep things” of God

(which were actually of Satan) to deceive. In other words, they were leveraging the maturity and maturing of the Thyatiran's against them. They claimed in some way that there were more than the way of Jesus, deeper (more profitable, practical, more effective) ways of God that would free them to live well in the world that they need to discover. That Jesus' way was just the beginning, rather than the beginning, the middle, and the end. Yet Jesus says he didn't add to their burden of following him, but instead to hold fast to what they had and were doing. It is enough, more than enough, "blessed" and fruitful, to keep the works of Jesus: love, faith, service, and patient endurance. Jesus, who is King, sees our hearts and minds and has established his reign forever; is satisfied and those who keep his works get to experience what we have been gifted and created to be joyfully responsible.

WHAT JESUS GIVES (Promise) | v. 26-29

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, in the same manner I have received authority from my Father [through suffering, sacrifice, death, and life again].

(2:26-27)

Quickly, the promise is two-fold. First, to have authority over the nations, to rule in God's kingdom, in the same manner in which Jesus rules—which was through the power of God's Spirit, in submission to the Father's will, and through the loving sacrifice of his life for those who hated him, rejected him, and would rather live their lives apart from him. That's why Jesus says the one who conquers is the one who "keeps my works until the end," those same works that the Thyatiran's were doing and encouraged to hold fast too—be with, be like, and do what Jesus did until he is here again! The way of Jesus is the way that lasts, and it is proven over time.

And I will give him the morning star. (2:28)

Second, they will be given "the morning star," which is another way of saying that they will be lifted above those trying to rule now; the kingdom of mixed iron and clay that will be shattered and replaced with an everlasting kingdom of iron and copper mix (divine and Jesus follower). Whatever spirit and way are trying to get them to follow, they will have their position, authority, and place in the kingdom. Ironically enough, it is a phrase that links back to Numbers 24 and comes as a blessing from the one paid to curse. What the world wants, you get in Jesus, so don't give up and don't give in—love, have faith, serve, and endure.

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

Let's pray.

SONG #3

A CORPORATE WORD | Chris Reed

CONGREGATIONAL CONFESSION w/ COMMUNION

Father God, we stand before you in humble adoration as we set our face to the tasks and interests of another week and season as Jesus' church.

Thank you for the blessed assurance that we shall not be called upon to face them alone or in our strength alone, but that at all times, we will be accompanied by your presence, strengthened by your grace, and encouraged by your family.

Thank you that throughout human life run the footprints of **our Lord and Savior, King and Sage, Priest and Friend**: Jesus Christ, who for our sake became flesh and tasted all the different challenges of daily living as well as the end we need no longer fear.

Thank you that as we go about our work and play, in pursuit of relationships and aspirations, we can be conscious of the spiritual presence of the heavenly host.

Thank you for the saints who rest from their labors, the patriarchs and matriarchs, prophets and prophetesses, apostles, noble martyrs, for all the holy and humble, for our dear departed friends and family who have shown us your way. As we remember them, we bless and adore your great name. **We rejoice, O Father, that you have called us to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ.**

Let the awareness of this holy fellowship follow us wherever we go, cheering us in loneliness, protecting us in company, strengthening us against temptation, and encouraging us to act in love and justice.

O Lord Jesus Christ, you called the disciples to shine as lights in a dark world. In remembrance and repentance, **we acknowledge before you the many faults and weaknesses of which we are guilty**, we who in this generation represent your Church to the world. **We, as Christ City Church especially acknowledge our part in this brokenness.**

Forgive us; we pray, the feebleness of our witness, the meagerness of our giving and loving, and the mediocrity of our zeal. **Help us** live equal in measure to love received, following the One who cared for the poor and the oppressed such as we.

Let the strength of your Spirit, O Jesus, be in us all, to share the world's suffering and redress its wrongs, in the fullness of your joy. **Through Jesus' life given, we live.** Amen.

SONG #4

BENEDICTION

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)