

Thyatira



4: Thyatira

BACKGROUND ON THYATIRA

- Not particularly important, beautiful, or wealthy city
- Now inland, not on coast, but on trading route
- Compared to other cities, way down the scale on many levels
- Began as *Pelopias*, then called Semiramis (a goddess of Babylon), followed by Euhippia.
- Dedicated to protecting Pergamos, would be sacrificed if necessary to protect much grander, more valuable city of Pergamos.
- **Not known for religious significance.** Had normal temples to Apollos, Artemis, and other gods of the day, but were more focused business aspects of the city.

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BACKGROUND ON THYATIRA

- Not a special center for emperor worship. No great risk of persecution to believers, unlike other cities in Asia Minor.
- **However, there was one major stumbling block to those believers.** Thyatira was a bustling center for manufacturing and marketing, and well known for its dozens of trade and craft guilds. A guild (union) for every trade. Trades most common here were woolen workers, dyers, linen workers, potters, leather workers, bronze workers and slavers.
- Paul's first convert in Europe was **Lydia, a Thyatiran who sold purple cloth** in Philippi (Acts 16:14). (purple cloth of Thyatira was well known, and very expensive)

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BACKGROUND ON THYATIRA

- Trade guilds a major problem to believers in Thyatira.
- To be successful here you **had to belong to appropriate guild and participate in “meetings,” which often became orgies.**
- Each guild dedicated to its own pagan patron god.
- Common for guilds to have lavish ceremonial meals together. Meat came from animal sacrificed to guild's god.
- Frequently became wild parties full of sexual fornication.
- Easy to understand why Paul talked so often about not eating meat sacrificed to idols, and linked that practice to sexual immorality. Leading pastime of world of his day. **MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK TO BELIEVING CHURCH.**

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BACKGROUND ON THYATIRA

- Everyone doing business in Thyatira had to belong to guilds.
- Expected to participate in "parties." ***HAD TO DO BUSINESS THE WAY THE WORLD DID BUSINESS!***
- What to do? Some, like Nicolaitans (*and early Roman church*), suggested OK to participate in orgies and idol worship since the physical body was evil anyway, and it was the spirit that would live forever, so why not just have fun? (roots of Gnosticism).
- Jezebel may have been a "secret gnostic." To the faithful such an idea was pure blasphemy, but their livelihoods were at stake.
- Real problem in Thyatira was not from outside, but from INSIDE the church: **COMPROMISE and TOLERATION.**

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DESCRIPTION OF SPEAKER

"... the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass..." The Son of God is Almighty God Himself, eyes like a flame of fire may indicate anger, indignation, all-seeing, and combined with blazing feet "like fine brass" (in a furnace, white hot, brass symbol for judgment) indicates One who sees all, is the judge of all sin, and is full of righteous anger. What He saw happening in Thyatira to HIS daughter, the Church, was a cause for righteous indignation!

He is not happy!

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COMMENDATION (What they did well)

"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first..." Jesus knows:

1. their **works** (*the deeds they were doing for Him*)
2. their **love** (*faith was not just label, had a relationship with Jesus*)
3. their **service** (*serving God, not man*)
4. their **faith** (*believed steadfastly*)
5. their **patience** (*endurance in belief, pressure to conform to world*)
6. their **increasing works** (*doing more and more works for Him, lives shaped more and more into His image - "good works" of our lives indicate living lives that reflect Him*)

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CRITICISM (What they didn't do well)

"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."

- Don't know if woman referenced here has same name as original Jezebel, or name used to equate this person to original seductress
- OR merely calling the general seduction of believers away from God as the work of "Jezebel."
- Behavior of this current Jezebel is as bad in God's eyes as the original. She is leading the church astray. She is mixing truth with error, light with dark.

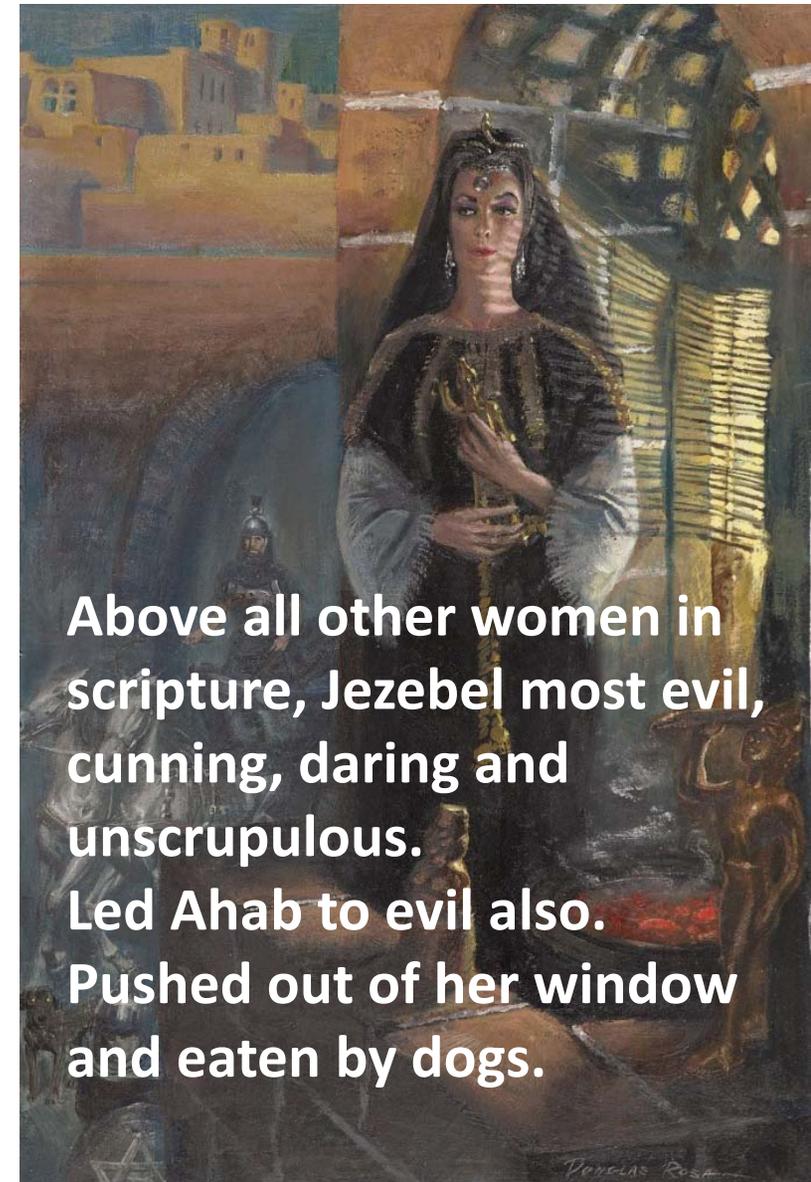


Who was/is Jezebel?

- Probably not real name of person in this letter. Jesus uses character of people to “name” them.
- In Israel, time of kings, pagan Jezebel (daughter of king of Sidon, town in current Lebanon) married King Ahab, northern Kingdom of Israel.
- Made worship of Baal popular
- Baal fertility god, worship involved immoral and licentious practices (including temple prostitutes)

Jezebel...

- Jezebel spread degraded worship in Northern Kingdom (*She supported over 800 prophets of Baal, who ate at her table. Tried to kill Elijah after encounter with 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel*)
- Ushered in worst time in history of kings of split kingdoms of Israel
- Incredibly wicked, ruthless and immoral (*seducer of the people*) tried to kill all prophets of God, allowed no one to stand in way of getting what she wanted



Above all other women in scripture, Jezebel most evil, cunning, daring and unscrupulous. Led Ahab to evil also. Pushed out of her window and eaten by dogs.

“He who has an ear...”

- Beginning with Thyatira, continuing in remaining 3 churches, the closing statement of "***He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches***" now AFTER message to overcomer.
- In first three, before this promise. May indicate in first three churches (*throughout history also*), church addressed still capable of repenting and making things right again.
- However, from Thyatira onward (*Dark Ages to today*) seems "Church" would not repent, but promises are applicable to remnant of true believers who would hear and repent - **individuals, not the church at large.**
- In last four letters to churches, messages to the overcomer are also associated with second coming of Jesus.

“He who has an ear...”

THYATIRA 2:26-28 *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.””*

SARDIS 3:5-6 *He who overcomes shall be **clothed in white garments**, and I will not blot out his name from the **Book of Life**; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””*

“He who has an ear...”

PHILADELPHIA 3:12-13 *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the **New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven** from My God. And I will write on him My new name. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

LAODICEA 3:21-22 *To him who overcomes I will grant to **sit with Me on My throne**, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

“Church and State”

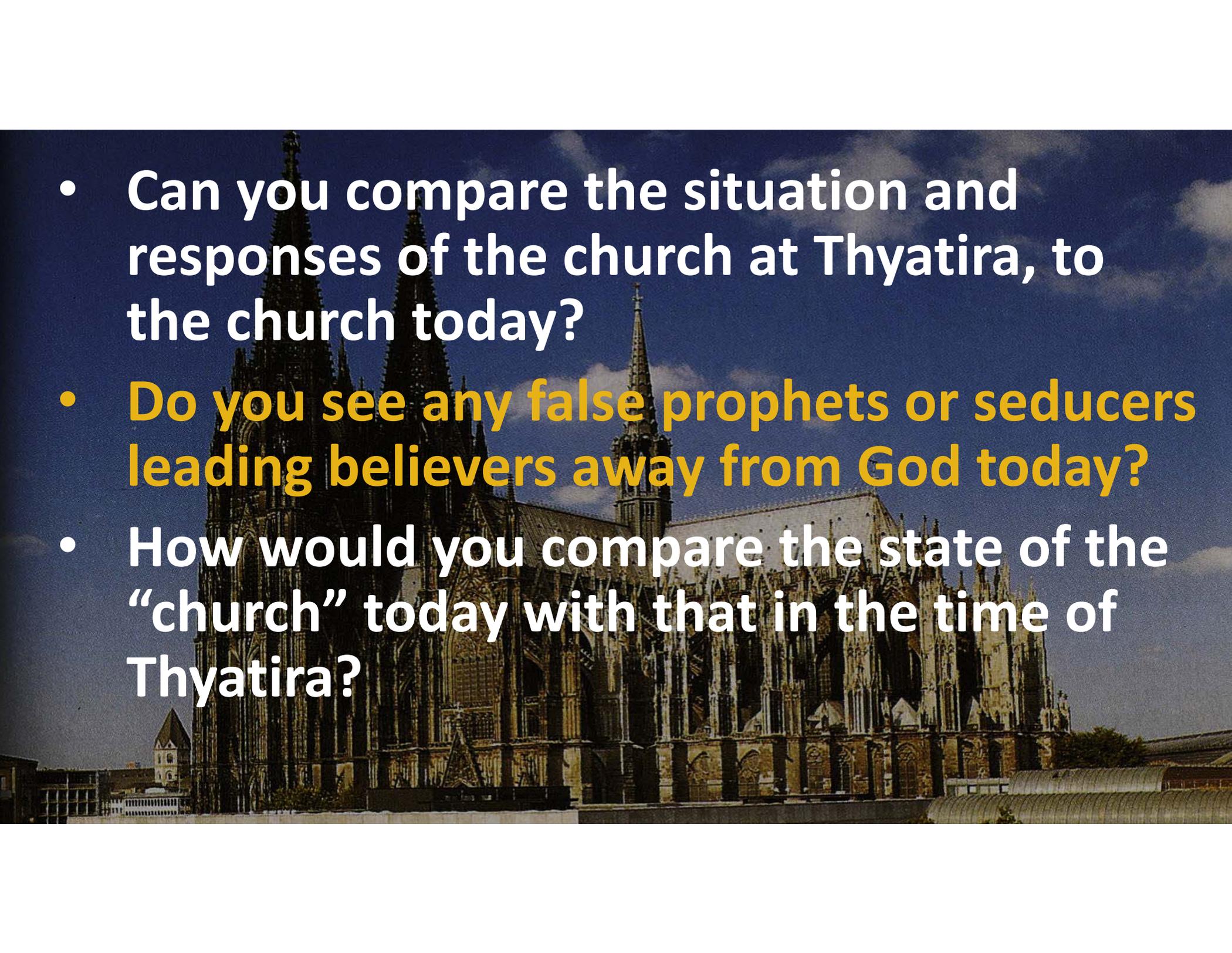
Thyatira often referred to as compromising “corrupt” church. From this point on the organized “church” existed in corruption...possible the messages to overcomers are for individuals, not the church as whole, which is now “mixed” with paganism, and completely corrupted.

378 AD, Damasus, the bishop of Rome (pope) took on title and office of **Pontifex Maximus** (high priest) of Babylonian religion (*now mixed with Christian faith*). (*previously reserved for Roman Emperor*) **Roman church now officially combined with paganism, has never really been separated.**

Rites, rituals, ceremonies, titles, vestments, other "mysteries" of Roman church including celibacy of priests, nuns, image worship, veneration of saints, adoration of the host, papal infallibility, transubstantiation and more, all come from pagan religious rites originated in Babylon, moved to Pergamos, eventually housed in Rome.

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Symbolic Age	State Church (Constantine to 1 st Pope) 313-590 AD
Speaker	<i>“He who has the sharp two-edged sword.”</i>
Praise	Works, steadfastness, held to faith (He knew where they lived, Satan’s throne)
Problem	False teachers in their midst
Counsel Or Warning	Repent OR He will fight them (those spreading false teachings, not whole church) with Sword of His mouth
Promise	Hidden manna to eat, white stone with unique name known only to holder and Jesus (eternal sustenance, acquittal, free pass to heaven, unique love from God)
Nutshell	False doctrines, not testing teachers, not remaining <u>separate</u> from world; COMPROMISING, TOLERATING EVIL

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- Can you compare the situation and responses of the church at Thyatira, to the church today?
 - Do you see any false prophets or seducers leading believers away from God today?
 - How would you compare the state of the “church” today with that in the time of Thyatira?