

Revelation

The Churches

CHURCH 4: THYATIRA

Revelation 2:18-29



BACKGROUND

The church at Thyatira is fourth along the route. The church was located in the ancient Greek city which is situated in modern-day Akhisar in the Manisa Province of Turkey. It was a thriving trade hub known for its dyeing industry (purple dye) and trade guilds, situated in the Lycus River valley between Pergamos and Sardis. See Acts 16:13-15



INTRODUCTION

A man named Gareth Lee started legal action back in 2014 after a Christian bakery refused to make him a cake with the slogan "Support Gay Marriage". The family firm Ashers said the slogan contravened their Christian beliefs. Mr Lee won his original case and a subsequent appeal in the UK courts. (BBC, Jan 2022)

1. Do you agree with the bakers' decision not to fulfil the order?
2. How easy is it to stand for your beliefs when it may lead to loss of employment, hefty fine or worse?

THYATIRA

The Church at Thyatira operated in a city dominated by trade guilds - unions of workers like bakers, tanners, potters, and bronze smiths. These guilds held pagan banquets with food sacrificed to idols and associated immoral activities, creating a dilemma for Christians. Refusal to join in these activities could lead to being kicked out of the guild, leading to the loss of livelihood and social standing. Many Christians joined in the festivities in order to maintain their income.

THOUGHTS

1. What does Rev 2:19 tell us about this church?
2. Rev 2:22-23 describes the fate of Jezebel, her followers and children. How do you feel about what is being said here?
3. What do you think it means that "I will impose no other burden on you" in Rev 2:24?
4. What do you think about the reward in Rev 2:26-7 for those who refuse to compromise? See Psalm 2.
5. "A church can be active and loving, yet still face condemnation." Do you agree with this statement?

APPLICATION

1. Do you think we are quick to praise the good at MPBC?
2. What do you think is the key message of Thyatira for the modern day church?
3. One commentator states, "You can have Jezebel or you can have Jesus, but you can't have both." Do you agree with this comment?



Revelation



THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

In modern day Akhisar in Turkey we find the remains of Thyatira, a prosperous manufacturing city on a major road.



THYATIRA

Location: Considered weak and unimportant, Thyatira was established by the King of Pergamos to provide a buffer from invading forces.

The Longest Letter: Despite being the least significant city politically or religiously among the seven churches of Revelation, the message to Thyatira is the longest.

Worship of Apollo: The chief deity was Apollo, “son of god” (often identified with the sun god Tyrimnos). Artemis was a key deity and there was also Emperor worship.

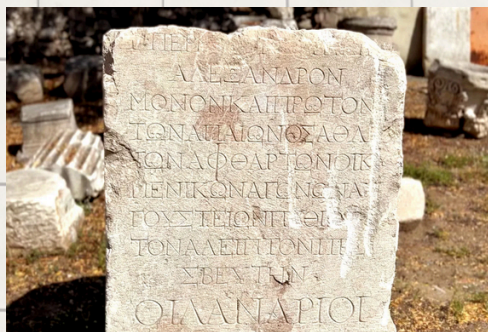
The Guilds: Inscriptions mention the following: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths. (Wikipedia, 2026)

Guilds & gods: If you belonged to a guild, the god became your personal god. The God of Israel became the “guild god” for several trades, including dye makers and stonecutters. Each guild was dedicated to Tyrimnos.

Christianity: The city was home to a Christian community until 1922, when the Orthodox Christian population was deported.



Ruins



Marble Remnant



The Basilica

Lydia (Acts 16) should be considered a woman of status, very likely an independent business owner. Her Greek background would suggest that she was a former polytheist believing and behaving as a Jew. A pivotal figure in the expansion of the early church.