

# Morning Star Focus

Long Beach Alliance Church • October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come... and I will give him the morning star.  
~Revelation 2:25 & 28 (NASB)**

## 1) The Military City Of Thyatira

- A) Thyatira was one of the least prominent cities in Asia Minor. The city engaged worship through the Imperial cult & other varied cult temples (Artemis, Apollo). The city possessed a large retired and active military presence. Thyatira was located on the primary trade routes in Asia Minor, producing a diverse working city of great wealth.
- B) The large military presence in Thyatira resulted in an abundance of trade guilds.\* Since participation in the semi-religious trade guilds was expected (often required), pressure on followers of Jesus Christ was often acute.
- C) The guilds were a central feature of the social and economic livelihood of Thyatira. Refusing to participate in guild feasts, which involved cult ceremonies and practices, devastated relationships and business success.

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\* Because of the military presence, a large number of highly organized trade guilds were in Thyatira. The guilds included each craftperson (especially shoemakers, sellers/buyers of dyed wool, and bronze smiths) who each belonged to their respective guilds. Though the guilds were not absolutely required, few workers failed to belong, since the guilds were the center of social life as well as commerce. In fact, towns (like Thyatira) were laid out in squares, each guild controlled its portion of "squares." Lydia, "a seller of purple fabrics" (Acts 16:14) was from Thyatira, which was well known for its rich dyes (from the madder root, rather than shellfish). Religious life was especially influenced by the guilds. Each guild had its own patron god or goddess, and the frequent feasts of the guilds were religious in character. The pressure on Christians to participate in the idolatrous lifestyle of the people was intimately linked to the existence of the guilds in Thyatira (*Revelation*, by Grant R. Osborne, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament, pgs. 151-152).

## 2) The Messy Church Of Thyatira

- A) Drawing on vivid judicial symbolism (Revelation 1:14-15, Daniel 7:13, 10:6), Jesus presses His intense flaming eyes of judgment and glowing bronze foundations of moral purity, revealing His insight and presence, in the church (2:18).
- B) Thyatira is strongly commended for exemplary actions of love AND faith AND service AND perseverance (2:19). In direct contrast to Ephesus (note 2:5), and unlike all others, Thyatira is commended for increasing in faithfulness!
- C) Simultaneously (!), the church is actively tolerating false “Jezebel” teaching (cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 16:31-33; 21:25-26; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 9:22), marked distinctively by sexual immorality, compromising worship, and open rebellion (2:20-21).
- D) References to so-called ‘prophetic teaching’ (2:20), public rebellion (2:21), public judgment (2:22-23), and well-known Satanic teaching (2:24) seem to specifically emphasize the public teaching ministry allowed within the church.

## 3) Overcome By Holding Fast To Faithful Living

- A) Focusing on the many in the church who live faithfully (2:19), Christ adds no burden, simply calling on His faithful to “hold fast until I come” (2:24-25). Faithful living pleases Jesus Christ, even in the midst of a broken church culture!
- B) Those who are faithful are the overcomers (2:26). These speak out against false teaching (Jezebel’s), living faithfully according to the authority of Jesus Christ in His church.
- C) These faithful overcomers in the church will reign with Jesus THE Christ (Messiah, cf. Psalm 2) in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 2:26-27). This is already Christ’s authority, in which His true followers will share (cf. 20:4-6).
- D) Finally, Jesus assures His true followers they will receive the “morning star” (2:28), probably a reference to Himself and the dawning of a new Messianic age which comes to all who listen to the voice of God’s Spirit in the church (2:29).

# maps & pictures of thyatira



Map of the seven churches of Revelation (2:1-3:22). The book of Revelation was written by John, probably shortly after his exile on the island of Patmos (small island on the map to which John was exiled, just left of this note) to seven churches which may have been under John's previous leadership. Thyatira is circled on the map.

Archaeological park at Thyatira. Archaeological remains from ancient Thyatira are scant, found primarily in this small archaeological park in the center of the Turkish city of Akhisar. Here we see arches, columns, and bases of a portico.



Greek inscription at Thyatira



Basilica at Thyatira. The exterior walls of a public basilica (from the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century) would have stood to a height of 16 feet.



# Growth Group Homework



## Powering Up

1. What observations from this weekend's message on "Morning Star Focus" did you find to be the most interesting or challenging? Share your answer.
  
2. **Would You Rather..?** Your Growth Group leader will go around the room asking different "Would You Rather..?" questions to everyone in your group. Be sure to explain your answer, and feel free to chime in and agree/disagree with your friends! Have fun 😊!



## Digging In

Have someone in your group read the short letter to Thyatira found in Revelation 2:18-29, and answer the following questions.

1. Thyatira's church tolerated false Jezebel-type teaching. This false teaching led people in the church to participate in activities which resulted in idolatry and sexual immorality. In the Bible, these two concepts are almost always mentioned together. Where you find idolatry, there is usually sexual immorality. Likewise, where you find sexual immorality, there is usually idolatry. Why do you think these things are related in the Bible?
  
2. The Jezebel-teachers and followers rebelliously refuse to repent (2:21), bringing a prediction of future judgment (2:22-23) "unless they repent" from their deeds (teaching which leads to sinful living – immorality & idolatry). Who are Jezebel's "children" (2:23)? Hint: These are the products of spiritual adultery (2:22), not physical adultery. Think of a figurative meaning first, and think of a literal meaning only if the verse demands.



3. Since we have come to the conclusion of Revelation 2, let's review the descriptions of Jesus at the beginning of each of the first four churches we have studied thus far: (2:1 – Ephesus; 2:8 – Smyrna; 2:12 – Pergamum; and 2:18 – Thyatira). What do these descriptions reveal about Jesus?
  
4. Read Revelation 1:12-18 out loud in your group. What are the characteristics of Jesus which have become significant to you as you have studied these first chapters of Revelation? Why is this particular description of Jesus so important?



## **Connecting To Life**

1. If Jesus Christ were writing to Long Beach Alliance Church, what do you think He would say? What characteristics would be most important for our church family? What would Jesus commend? What would Jesus constructively criticize? What would be the characteristics of the overcomer, and what would be their reward?
  
2. If Jesus were to write to you personally, what would He have to say to you? Are there some things in your life which you feel need to be overcome to live more faithfully? You don't have to answer this personal question out loud in your group, but if you are ready to share with others what you feel God is commending/critiquing/calling you to overcome, I believe it would be a great encouragement to the group to hear your vulnerability on these items which relate to the churches of Revelation.