

## **Chapter 8**

### **The Church at Thyatira**

*“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write ...”  
(Revelation 2:18)*

In 380 AD, another Roman emperor by the name of Theodosius took the rule of Constantine a step further. He proclaimed Christianity as the official religion of Rome. This opened the door for the Church to become completely corrupt. The first Christians never imagined this day would come. It was a time when instead of dying because one was a Christian, people began to die because they weren't a Christian. Leaders of the Church suddenly became very powerful political figures. They set up the priesthood, proclaiming these to be official representatives of God. As such, the top priest was considered God's official and highest representative and his word was given equal authority to the Bible.

The time of compromise was at its height because the only way to keep from demanding that everyone who worshipped false gods was not killed was to accept them as Christians. So many pagan practices became accepted and even condoned by the Church.

Christianity was now very political. For instance, if I understand it correctly, the practice of eating fish on Friday was proclaimed as a religious rite but its true origin was found in the fact that those in the fishing industry weren't making enough money. They promised a cut in the profit if the ruling priest would do something about it. Since his word was considered equal with God's, his edict suddenly made it a holy thing to eat fish on Friday.

Many such practices took place during this period of Church history. We might ask the question, "Why didn't true believer's stop this tragedy?" The answer is that because the Bible was only written in Latin at this time, and only the well educated could read Latin, people depended on the religious leadership for the truth of God's word. They could tell the people whatever they wanted and they had no choice but to believe them. It was truly a tragic time in the history of the Church.

The congregation of Thyatira was given the description of Christ as He "who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass." It indicated that Jesus saw right through them and stood in judgment. He said that He knew their works, love, service, faith and patience, but then emphasized their last works to be more important than their first works. In other words, what they were now doing outweighed what they used to do. He accused them of allowing that woman Jezebel, to be their teacher. If you remember Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab, had taught the people to worship the false god Baal. She taught sexual immorality. She claimed to be a prophetess herself. In the end, just as had been prophesied, she was thrown from a second story window dying on the street below. Dogs had come and torn her apart.

But her teaching lived on. The congregation of Thyatira, though they would most likely have denied it, had accepted her teaching, and was even allowing her to be a recognized teacher (or at least those who held to her doctrine). They are told that God would cast her into a bed of sickness and those committing adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repented. They were further told that her children (or followers) would be killed with death (this could only mean the second eternal death), and all the congregations would know that He was the one who searches the mind and the heart – in other words, He knew their hidden acts and unrevealed thoughts. Each one would be rewarded according to his works. We know from the New Testament that salvation is not by works but by grace. However, this compromising congregation was going by works and judging by works and so they would be rewarded and judged.

Still, in this corrupt period of Church history, there were those who held true in their faith. They were told that no other burden than what they had to endure from their own people would be put upon them. They were told that if they kept His works, and held fast to His name until He came, that they would become rulers of the nations which would be dashed into pieces. They were also told that God had given Him the morning star and He would in turn give it to them. The morning star spoke of the beginning of a new day. A new day would indeed come.