

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 7 Feb 2010

## Past Imperfect Future Tense! - the message of Revelation

### A Message for the Church - Thyatira! Rev 2



#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

##### Introduction :

The overview of Past Imperfect Future Tense. Sometimes we need to pause and take a step back, to catch a sense of what is really going on. The bigger picture. **Key question** : *Does your group have a sense of why we are looking at Revelation*

*this term?* Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the details of what we are doing we don't always appreciate how it fits with what God is saying to the church now. Consider the example of the musicians on the titanic, the difference between playing in order to minister to panicking passengers or playing oblivious to the fact the ship is sinking. **Key question** : *How does this term's theme and all that God is beginning to say to us through it fit with the work of the church groups you are involved in?*

##### Thyatira background :

Today we visit Thyatira. Of all the seven churches mentioned in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, Thyatira would have been considered the least important in the eyes of the world. Yet, of the seven letters, the one to Thyatira is the longest of all (229 words in the Greek compared with 147 to Ephesus, 98 to Smyrna, 147 to Pergamum, 142 to Sardis, 194 to Philadelphia and, finally, 187 to Laodicea).

Thyatira lay in an alluvial plain between the Hermus and Calcius rivers. During Roman control, Thyatira derived its strength and wealth from being in a central place for communications. This city was known for its textiles and dyeing trade, particularly indigo dyeing. 'Purple' in the ancient world was a sign of high rank because of the very high cost involved in obtaining the dye. Most 'purple' dye was extracted from oysters, but the dye used at Thyatira seems to have been extracted from the roots of certain plants which yielded a rather redder end product. Acts 16: 14-15 says: "One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple, who was a worshipper of God."

##### The Guilds :

Each industry had its specific guild. There was a guild for wool workers, linen weavers, tanners, and dyers. No merchant or trader could really hope to prosper unless he was a member of his trade guild. The trouble was with the meetings. In the guild's fellowship meals, food was first sacrificed to idols and, after the meals, orgies were a frequent occurrence. Yet these were the meals where business deals were done.

##### I know your deeds :

The letter starts with a dramatic description of the awesomeness of Jesus. He begins with a commendation to the church, "I know your deeds" in other words they have not gone *unnoticed*. **Key Questions** : *Are there times when you feel under-appreciated and undervalued? Is that because you are assuming no-one not even Jesus sees it? Is it because you want greater approval from others? Look up Colossians 3:23-24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men". Is it really that simple?*

##### Pressures to compromise :

The pressure on Christian merchants in Thyatira is clear. **Key Questions** : *Is this something you can relate to? Is it something you are facing now?* Tertullian wrote about Christians who made their living in trades connected to pagan idolatry. They would justify this by saying, "This is my living, and I must live." Tertullian replied *Vivere ergo habes?* "Must you live?" **Key Questions** : *Is this too harsh or simple discipleship?*

##### Who is Jezebel? :

it seems to be most reasonable to understand the name Jezebel as a pseudonym used to refer to one woman and that it was used to signify that the sin of this individual in the fellowship was like that of her namesake in the OT. I Kings 18:4 - Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord. - She played hostess to the prophets of both Ba'al and Asherah (I Kings 18:19). She murdered Naboth to steal his land (I Kings 21:5-16) 'There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab, *whom Jezebel his wife incited.*' (I Kings 21:25) : Ahab is culpable for what he allowed himself to be led into.

##### Dealing with rebellion :

Thyatira was criticised for tolerating a seriously rebellious troublemaker in its midst. Jezebel is often used as a term referring to those causing trouble and dissension in the church body. **Key Questions** : *What is the essence of a 'Jezebel'? What is 'rebellion'? (e.g. Which of these : disagreeing with the vicar? ? Running a teaching programme different to the current one? Undermining church projects you disagree with? Teaching something contrary to normal interpretation of scripture? Character assassination? What examples can you think of? ). How should a church deal with rebellion?*



#### **Witness: Before discussion, read the Bible passage and ask God to help you**

**discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer and ministry.**

Use the sections above as reference points and work through the related key questions.

Pre-read the bible passages before the session. Select which ones would be relevant to look up during the session.