

## RETURNING TO THE ORTHODOXY OF THE CHURCH

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

### The Church in Thyatira

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:18-29; 22:16; 2 Pet. 1:19

- I. **As a sign, the church in Thyatira prefigures the Roman Catholic Church, which was fully formed as the apostate church by the establishing of the universal papal system in the latter part of the sixth century—Rev. 2:18.**
- II. **The church in Thyatira tolerates the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess—v. 20:**
  - A. Jezebel, the pagan wife of Ahab, is a type of the apostate church; the Roman Catholic Church became the same as this woman, bringing many heathen practices into the church—1 Kings 16:31; 19:1-2; 21:23, 25-26; 2 Kings 9:7.
  - B. The three women in Matthew 13, Revelation 2, and Revelation 17 are the same person:
    1. In Matthew 13:33 a woman takes leaven (signifying evil, heretical, and pagan things) and hides it in three measures of meal (signifying Christ as the meal offering for the satisfaction of God and man).
    2. This woman is the great harlot of Revelation 17, who mixes abominations with the divine things; in 2:20-23 the same woman is called Jezebel.
    3. These three women all refer to the Roman Catholic Church, which adds leaven to the fine flour, which is the harlot riding on the beast, and which is Jezebel corrupting Christianity.
  - C. In Revelation 2:20 the Lord indicates that the apostate church is a self-appointed prophetess and teaches and leads the Lord's slaves astray:
    1. The apostate church presumes to be authorized by God to speak for God; she demands that people listen to her rather than to God.
    2. According to the principle in the New Testament, the Lord never allows a woman to teach with authority—1 Tim. 2:12:
      - a. In the same way, the church itself must not teach, because in the eyes of the Lord the church is in the position of a woman; only the Lord Himself is the man, the One who has the right to teach and the right to say yes or no, right or wrong.
      - b. The Roman Catholic Church is a teaching woman; the apostate church herself teaches, causing her people to listen to her rather than to the holy Word of God, and her adherents are drugged by her heretical, religious teaching.
- III. **According to Revelation 2:24, the apostate church teaches “the deep things of Satan”:**
  - A. *Deep things* mean “depths,” as in Ephesians 3:18, and it figuratively denotes mysterious things.

- B. The apostate church has many mysteries or deep doctrines; these are the deep things of Satan, the mysterious teachings of Satan, the satanic philosophy:
  - 1. The apostate church teaches the satanic mysteries; the deep thought of Satan, Satan's concept, has saturated the apostate church.
  - 2. The apostate church has become the embodiment of Satan:
    - a. The proper church is the Body of Christ (1:22-23), but the apostate church is the embodiment of Satan.
    - b. Christ indwells the church, but Satan indwells the apostate church in a subtle way through the teaching of the deep things of Satan.
    - c. The apostate church teaches mysteries but not the mysteries revealed in the New Testament concerning God's economy—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:3-5, 9; 5:32.
    - d. The religion of the synagogue, the world under Satan's throne, and the philosophy of the satanic mysteries are all used by Satan to damage and corrupt the church—Rev. 2:9, 13, 24.
- C. "Anyone who has a heart for the Lord and for His recovery must thoroughly know this apostate church" (*Life-study of Revelation*, p. 165).

**IV. "These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze"—v. 18:**

- A. The apostate Roman Catholic Church strongly emphasizes Christ as the son of Mary; thus, here the Lord, protesting against the apostate heresy, says that He is the Son of God:
  - 1. Christ's being the Son of God implies the expression of God, the issue, or the coming out, of God—John 1:18:
    - a. Concerning God's existence, Christ is the complete God as God's embodiment; concerning God's issue, His coming out, Christ is the Son of God.
    - b. Christ as the embodiment of God is related to His existence, whereas Christ as the Son of God is related to the expression of God.
  - 2. The purpose of the Gospel of John is to testify that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God—20:31:
    - a. *Christ* is the title of the Lord according to His office, His mission, and *the Son of God* is His title according to His person—Matt. 16:16.
    - b. His person is a matter of God's life, and His mission is a matter of God's work; He is the Son of God to be the Christ of God.
- B. In dealing with the apostate church, the church in Thyatira, the Lord refers to Himself as the One who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like shining bronze:
  - 1. The apostate church needs the judging of His searching eyes and treading feet.
  - 2. "All the churches will know that I am He who searches the inward parts and the hearts"—Rev. 2:23.

**V. In Revelation 2:26-28 we have the Lord's promise to the one who overcomes:**

- A. "To him I will give authority over the nations; and he will shepherd them with an iron rod"—vv. 26b-27a:

1. To reign with Christ over the nations in the millennial kingdom is a prize to the overcomers—20:4, 6.
  2. This promise of the Lord strongly implies that those who do not answer His call to overcome degraded Christianity will not participate in the reign of the millennial kingdom.
  3. In the millennial kingdom, the ruler is a shepherd—2:27.
  4. In Psalm 2:9 God gave Christ authority to rule over the nations; in Revelation 2:26 Christ gives the same authority to His overcomers.
- B. “To him I will give the morning star”—v. 28:
1. Concerning the types of Christ, the Bible begins with Him as light and ends with Him as the bright morning star—Gen. 1:3; Rev. 22:16:
    - a. The morning star appears in the darkest hour, after midnight and prior to dawn.
    - b. This indicates that Christ will appear as the bright morning star in the darkest time, prior to the close of this age.
  2. As the bright morning star, Christ will appear privately to the overcomers, who are watching, preparing, and waiting for Him:
    - a. He will secretly give Himself as the morning star to those who love Him and who watch and wait for Him so that they may have the priority to taste the freshness of His presence at His coming back after a long absence.
    - b. This will encourage them to earnestly seek the Lord’s presence and be watchful so that they will be able to stand before Him in the secret part of His coming—Luke 21:36; Matt. 24:43.
    - c. We must make ourselves ready for the secret appearing of the Lord as the morning star.
  3. According to 2 Peter 1:19, if we take heed to the word of prophecy, the day will dawn within us, and the morning star will rise in our hearts:
    - a. To take heed to the prophetic word is to pay attention to the living Word and enter into the Word until the morning star rises within us and something from the heavens shines over us.
    - b. We need to come to the sure Word and open up our whole being to the Word until Christ as the morning star rises up in us and shines over us.

### **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

#### **THE DEEP THINGS OF SATAN**

Revelation 2:24 says, “But I say to you—the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they say—I put no other burden upon you.” *Deep things* means “depths,” as in Ephesians 3:18. It figuratively denotes mysterious things. The Roman Catholic Church has many mysteries or deep doctrines. Against the suffering church there was the synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9); with the worldly church there was the throne of Satan (v. 13); and within the apostate church there are “the deep things of Satan.” The religion of the synagogue, the world under Satan’s throne, and the philosophy of the satanic mysteries are all used by Satan to damage and corrupt the church.

We have seen that the church suffered persecution from the synagogue of Satan and that she eventually became worldly, dwelling in the place where Satan dwells and where

his throne is. All this is the subtlety of the enemy. It all originates with Satan. But here in the fourth church there is something more serious than this. It is not merely a matter of the synagogue of Satan, the place where Satan dwells, or where Satan's throne is. Now Satan has come into the church and has saturated the church with himself. In the apostate church are the deep things of Satan, the mysterious teachings of Satan. This is the satanic philosophy. The apostate church does teach the satanic mysteries. This indicates that the deep thought of Satan, Satan's concept, has saturated the apostate church. Eventually, this church becomes the embodiment of Satan. The proper church is the Body of Christ, but the apostate church is the embodiment of Satan. Christ indwells the church, but Satan indwells the apostate church in a subtle way. Satan always acts in a subtle way. When he first came to man, he came in the form of a beautiful serpent. Yet that was not merely a serpent—it was Satan. Satan always takes on a good form. No one would imagine that Satan could put on the “church” as his form. But in the epistle to the church in Thyatira we see that this is the real situation of today's Christendom. Christendom has become an organ of Satan. Although it has the name Christ in it, actually within it there is Satan himself. We all must see this.

The deep things of Satan, being the satanic philosophy, are subtle. In the apostate church there are many so-called mysteries. All the mysteries taught by this evil church are satanic philosophies. One of their philosophies is that if you do not add things to the truths of the Bible, it will be difficult for people to accept them. The Lord, being wise, likened this to the leaven put into the fine flour that makes the bread easy to eat. The apostate church says that if people do not have a Christmas, it will be difficult for them to accept the truth regarding the birth of Christ. The mass is the leaven added to the fine flour. This is subtle and evil.

If you think that it is too strong to say that this evil woman is the embodiment of Satan, I would ask you to consider Revelation 17:4 and 5. Verse 4 says, “And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication.” This evil woman does have a good appearance: she is gilded with gold, precious stone, and pearls, the very materials with which the New Jerusalem is built. While the New Jerusalem is solidly built with these three precious materials, this evil woman is merely gilded with them. To be gilded means to wear a facade, to be superficially attractive, to have a pleasing or showy appearance that conceals something evil. Her appearance is attractive outwardly, but she is detestable inwardly. This woman also has a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication. In typology, gold signifies the divine nature. Apparently, this evil woman holds something of God, but actually she is inwardly full of abominations. In the Bible abomination mainly denotes two things—idolatry and fornication. These two things are abominations in the eyes of God. Apparently, this woman is very attractive, being gilded with gold, pearls, and precious stone and holding a golden cup. If you have no insight, you will be cheated by her. But we must have the insight to see through her. When we see what this woman is inwardly, we realize that she is filled with abominations and filthiness.

Verse 5 says, “And on her forehead there was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” The Lord searches the hearts of people and knows what is within them. He has insight and sees inside this evil woman. The Lord calls her, “The Mother of the Harlots,” meaning that she is the source of all spiritual fornication. Therefore, it is fair to say that she is the embodiment of Satan. We need the insight to see through her outward appearance. This is why we have the two-edged sharp sword, the word of the Holy Bible.

We thank the Lord for His sovereign grace. Because His grace is sovereign, He can save

us in any environment. Many have been saved even in the evil environment of the apostate Catholic Church. No one can say that the Catholic Church does not preach the Bible. In China, many heathen Chinese learned the name of God, the name of Jesus, and a few verses from the Bible through the teaching of the Catholic Church. The evil thing, however, is this: after people are helped by this apostate church, they are frustrated from going on to know the Lord in a genuine way. Some who, through the Lord's sovereign grace, were saved when they were in the apostate church spontaneously loved that evil thing. Many of them would say, "If this is evil, then how could I have been saved through it?" Therefore, although many former Catholics have come into the church life, deep within, some of them may still sympathize with this evil woman. They do not hate her as the Lord does. Read the epistle to Thyatira once again. The Lord has no sympathy with Jezebel because that evil woman has been thoroughly saturated with Satan, the evil one. Satan is in every fiber of that wicked woman.

We should have nothing to do with this apostate church. It is not the Body of Christ. It is not the church of God—it is the embodiment of Satan. It is subtle and evil. If you would see even more about the apostate church, read Brother Nee's book *The Orthodoxy of the Church*. Anyone who has a heart for the Lord and for His recovery must thoroughly know this apostate church. Once we know her, we would not appreciate anything related to her. Rather, we must declare that she is the great harlot, the great Babylon, and that we must desert her.

As we shall see, the book of Revelation indicates that this great harlot has some daughters. We must be thoroughly enlightened about the apostate church. Once we are enlightened, we shall know where we must be as far as the church is concerned. We are in the Lord's recovery. We are in the Body of Christ, the church of God, and we have nothing to do with Jezebel, the evil woman, the harlot, the great Babylon. And we have nothing to do with her daughters.

In this epistle the Lord indicates that He will judge Jezebel. In 17:16 we are told that during the great tribulation the Lord will allow the Antichrist to kill and to damage this apostate church. At that time, religious Babylon will be torn down. But before that time, this apostate church will go on according to prophecy. Revelation 2:25 indicates that the apostate Catholic Church will remain until the Lord comes back. (*Life-study of Revelation*, pp. 162-165)

#### **CHRIST AS THE MORNING STAR TO BE GIVEN TO THE OVERCOMERS**

Revelation 2:28 tells us that Christ will give the morning star to the overcomers. The New Testament reveals that Christ, who is signified by the heavenly luminaries, the lights, is the bright morning star (22:16). Concerning the types of Christ, the entire Bible begins with Him as the light (Gen. 1:3) and ends with Him as the morning star, a luminary. The morning star appears in the darkest hour, after midnight and prior to the dawn. This indicates that Christ will appear as the bright morning star in the darkest time, prior to the close of this age.

His appearing as the morning star (Rev. 2:28) and His appearing as the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2) will not be at the same time. The former occurs before dawn, and the latter occurs after the dawning of the day. As the Sun of righteousness after the dawning of the day, He will appear publicly to all the people on the earth. As the bright morning star before the dawning of the day, He will appear privately to the overcomers, who are watching, preparing, and waiting for Him. While people are sleeping soundly in the night, He will secretly give Himself as the morning star to those who love Him and who watch and wait for

Him (Rev. 2:28), that they may have the priority to taste the freshness of His presence at His coming back after a long absence. This will encourage them to earnestly seek the Lord's presence and be watchful so that they will be able to stand before Him in the secret part of His coming, when He will come as a thief (Luke 21:36; Matt. 24:43). Christ as the morning star will be given to the overcomers as their first reward, the earliest prize (Rev. 2:26-29). We must make ourselves ready for the secret appearing of the Lord as the morning star.

The "Star out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17) and the star appearing at the Lord's birth (Matt. 2:7, 9-10) consummate in the morning star in Revelation 2:28. No star is as bright as the morning star. At the darkest time, within the overcomers there is a star shining. The overcomers will have and enjoy the particular light, Christ as the morning star.

At the beginning of the New Testament the star was outside of religion (Matt. 2:1-6), but at the end of the New Testament the star is within the church. If we would see the star today, there is no need for us to look to the sky, as the Gentile magi did. Today the star is in the church and among the churches. Jesus Christ, who is the morning star, is walking today among the local churches. To see the star, we must come to the local churches. If we are for religion, we will not be able to see Christ as the star. But if we are in the genuine local church, we will see the star. When we are in religion, we have the sense of being in darkness, but when the Lord brings us into the churches, we see the bright star. The heavenly star today is in the local churches.

According to 2 Peter 1:19, the morning star is associated with the Bible. Peter tells us to take heed to the prophetic word. If we take heed to the word of prophecy, the day will dawn within us, and the morning star will arise in our hearts. To take heed to the prophetic word is to pay attention to the living Word. It is not simply to read the Word; it is to enter into the Word until something arises within us. We may call this the dawn, or the morning star. In 2 Peter 1:19 the term *morning star* in Greek is *phosphorus*, a light-bearing substance. A piece of phosphorus can shine in darkness. Christ is the real phosphorus shining in today's darkness. However, the Word cannot shine over us unless we take heed to it. We must take heed until something begins to shine within us. That shining will become the divine "phosphorus" in our heart. Then we will have the morning star. We will be like the wise men, and something from the heavens will shine over us. We must come to the sure Word and open up our whole being to the Word—our mouth, our eyes, our mind, our spirit, and our heart—until Christ as the morning star rises up in us and shines over us. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 4190-4192)