

Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey

Part 2: Lydia - Thyatira - Revalation



Notes.

Paul visited Derbe, Lystra, Iconium which lie on the ancient trade routes between the Roman and Parthian Empires to the east. There were roads that linked all the cities along the Asia Minor coast as well as up through Ankyra to Byzantium on the Black Sea. The more populated cities were along the southern trade route and would have also afforded access to a greater number of Jewish outpost synagogues. The Holy Spirit not allowing Paul to take the southern route, he likely followed minor routes north-west through Tyrianum, Polybatus, Amorium, Pessinus and Dorylaium which would have taken them to a corner in Asia Minor where Bithynia, Phrygia, and Galatia met.

Again, God not allowing Paul to go through Bithynia and thereby joining back up with a major trade route to Byzantium to the north, they ended up heading due west through Mysia not stopping until they reached Troas on the west coast. Here they met up with Luke. That night Paul's vision of a man asking for help in Macedonia, led the group to cross the Aegean Sea, possibly bringing Christianity to Europe for the first time.

Acts 16:11-15 ¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:16-21 ¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her. ¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

Notice the narration starts using "we". This is an indication that Luke has now joined their party.

Lydia from Thyatira is converted.

Some local Romans try to shake down Paul and company using a propheticess.

Thyatira History

Thyatira was located about thirty-five miles southeast of Pergamos and was originally established by the Lydians. Later under the control of the Greek Seleucus' Empire, the kingdom of Pergamon (a Greek state) ruled much of the western part of Asia Minor. During the rise of Rome, the area of Pergamon initially had a vassal-like relationship with the Roman leadership for a few hundred years. Philetaerus and his extended family were the last to rule the independent Greek state when it was finally completely conquered by the Roman Empire around 130 B.C. ushering in an era of peace and prosperity.

Before Roman control, Thyatira was an outpost border city located on an alluvial plain between the **Hermus** and **Calcius** rivers and had no natural geography to defend its position. Its sole purpose was to act as the first line of defense in front of a hostile advancing army, to hinder their movement while the kingdom's main forces were mustered deeper behind the battle front. Thyatira was captured, destroyed, and rebuilt many times with its population being never weary of sacrifice. Archaeological evidence suggests that the control of Thyatira frequently changed hands between Pergamean and Syrian rule and that no lasting growth, like that of Ephesus and Pergamos that were further behind the front lines, was ever possible before 130 B.C.

Note: Smyrna was located on a deep inlet of the Aegean Sea at the mouth of the river **Hermus**. This location allowed Smyrna to use the local river systems to transport goods far into Asia Minor, including Thyatira. Smyrna remained a major seaport vying with Ephesus and Pergamum for the title "First City of Asia." Large quantities of purple and scarlet cloth are still shipped from Thyatira to Smyrna today.

1st Century Thyatira ("the one who has eyes like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine copper.")

The trade guilds in Thyatira were more organized and in far greater numbers than in any other ancient Asia Minor city. Archaeologists have found coins with inscriptions that mention numerous types of industry in wool, linen, leather, bronze and coppersmiths and workers trained as potters, tanners, bakers, slavers and dyers. Each industry had its specific guild and it was these that would have been connected with the idolatrous practices outlined in John's letter to the city (Revelation 2:18-29).

These trade guilds would operate autonomously with each setting their own rules for membership. In a typical guild's fellowship meal the food was first sacrificed to idols before the banquet and often devolved into immoral revelry after. It is not clear at what level guild activities required participation by their members. We know labor unions of today present a unified front regarding worker conditions and political support. We know that Rome required that its citizens show allegiance to the emperor. Often requiring its citizens to state that the emperor came before all other gods.

Pagan gods worshiped in Thyatira

The principal deity of Thyatira was the ancient Lydian sun-god Tyrimnos (son of Zeus) also known as Apollo in Greece. During Roman times the worship of Apollo / Tyrimnos was joined with the emperor's worship cult. Coins were minted in Thyatira displaying the emperor alongside Tyrimnos in order to elevate him to the title of son of Zeus. Of lesser importance was Boreitene, a goddess identified with Artemis, the sister of Apollo. Thyatira also paid homage to the goddess Sambethe or Sambethe, a Sibyl (from the Greek Sibylla or oracle, **prophetess**) **Note: (Revelation 2:20)** who claimed to speak for Apollo. Apollo has been recognized as a god of archery, music and dance, truth and prophecy, healing and diseases, the Sun and light, poetry, and more.

Dilemma for Thyatiran Christians

Worshiping Christ the son of the one true God would mean that being an active member of a guild might require sinful behavior. Not the least of which could be participating in activities that recognize Apollo and the emperor as the sons of Zeus. Very confusing for folks that have no New Testament text from which to refer.

1 Corinthians 8

¹Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. ²Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. ³But whoever loves God is known by God.

⁴So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” ⁵For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), ⁶yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

⁷But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food, they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. ⁸But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

⁹Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol’s temple, won’t that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. ¹²When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

Philippians 3:17-20

¹⁷Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Notes:

Roman citizenship required worshipping the emperor.

What about eating food sacrificed to pagan idols?

Paul’s letter to the Church in Corinth was written about 8 years after the conversion of Lydia.

The city of Corinth had a temple of Apollo constructed around 550 B.C.

It is not a sin to eat sacrificial food, but causes the weak mind to think of the other god. We are only as good as the company we keep.

Role model - Be a bright light, be conscious of how your actions, while not sinful, may weaken brothers and sisters.

The Philippian letter is a couple of years after the Corinth letter.

Citizenship and Eating are big issues in Philippi and Thyatira.

Guild Gatherings

The event of 'food sacrificed to idols' (verse 20) that took place at the guild gatherings would have been offered to Tyrimnos (Apollo), the local deity and the one who was titled 'son of god (Zeus)' by the worshippers. Thus, the true 'Son of God', Jesus Christ, would have been an affront to the state religion and more specifically the religion of Thyatira, which worshipped Apollo, the son of god (Zeus), and the emperor who embodied son of god (Zeus).

Revelation 2:18-29

¹⁸ “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

¹⁹ “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. ²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. ²⁴ But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come. ²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

(Rev. 2:18) By reminding the Thyatirans of His unique divine Sonship, Jesus elevates His own words over and above the authority of anything that would have, as its origin, the cult religion that existed in their city.

(Rev. 2:19-20) The Thyatiran Church is commended for their good works and patient endurance but for those who continue to tolerate (recognize and respect, even accept) the sinful activities of the guilds God is going to cause them great tribulations and kill their children. Jezebel (not likely her name) was a prophetess styled after Sambetha who advocated tolerance for guild festivities and their practices. She may have argued that a guild's patron deities need not be taken seriously. After all, everyone had to earn a living! Jesus used the name Jezebel to remind us of strong-minded Queen Jezebel described in 1 Kings 16 who corrupted God's people.

(Rev. 2:24-29) But for those who don't tolerate this prophetess and her directives, you are not required to do anything more than continue to what you are doing. Hang-tite until I return and we'll all go to Heaven.

Lydia from Thyatira or The Purple Lady from Lydia

[Homer](#) speaks of the dyeing of red and purple cloth as being characteristic of Thyatira. She was a God-fearer or a non-Israelite (not a Jew). She sold garments and adornments dyed purple or Turkish Red. Whether created with the Thyatira Madder root or the Murex snail found on the Mediterranean coast, the products she sold were very expensive.

Does the act of selling expensive items mean the seller is rich? The costs to produce Royal Purple were very high. Just like accommodating 4 travelers for a couple of days means you have a large house. Nor does the fact that you work, mean you don't have a spouse. Some speculate that she started the Church in Thyatira but it seems more likely that Paul had plenty of opportunity to do that.