

Revelation 2:18-19

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rev/rev-2/revelation-218-19/>

Jesus, the one who will slay the wicked, greets the church in Thyatira and commends them for their continuance in faith and good works.

The fourth of seven *churches* that have letters written to them in Revelation 2-3 is *Thyatira*, which is referred to by scholars as the corrupt *church*. It is not that the whole *church* is corrupt, but rather that there is corruption within the *church*.

Revelation 1:2 said that God communicated the message “by His angel to His bond-servant John.” There, the word translated *angel* comes from the Greek word “angelos,” which means “messenger.” In that context, the messenger referred to Jesus, who gives God’s message to John.

Here in Revelation 2:18, as with the greeting to each of the seven *churches*, the word *angel* is also the Greek word “aggelos” which means “messenger.” Following the instructions for blessing in Revelation 1:3 to read, hear, and heed, it can be inferred that the messenger here is the person, the messenger, who is going to read the letter to the church in *Thyatira*. It seems unlikely that there is a heavenly *angel*/ messenger that John is referring to, but rather a human messenger who will deliver the letter from John to the people of *Thyatira*. Therefore, Jesus the “messenger” gives a message to John, which he is instructed to write and deliver to the seven *churches* of the Asian province by means of human “messengers.”

The letters to each of the *seven churches* starts with a greeting, but it is more like a “memorandum” greeting format such as “To: all office employees” rather than the more formal greeting that is seen in the Pauline letters.

Here, Jesus is describes as having *eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze*. Later in Revelation 19, Jesus is also described as having *eyes like a flame of fire*:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes *are* a flame of fire...From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron...And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence...and the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.”
(Revelation 19:11-12, 15, 20-21)

He who has the *eyes like a flame of fire* is coming to set things right on earth. The Psalms are full of people crying out to God, asking Him how long it will be until things are made right. Like in Psalm 94, which says:

“How long shall the wicked, O Lord,
How long shall the wicked exult?
(Psalm 94:3)

God has promised that He will slay the wicked, and the imagery of Jesus with *eyes like a flame of fire* foreshadows that coming promise.

The *feet of burnished bronze* repeats the same image we saw in Revelation 1:15, which describes Jesus’s feet looking like *bronze* “when it has been made to glow in a furnace.” This could evoke the image of Jesus emanating so much light that the sun is unnecessary, as described in Revelation 21:23. Jesus is the light of the world now spiritually. He will eventually be the light of the world literally. It is from this foundation of light and truth that He will judge the earth, and all wickedness it contains.

Therefore, the memorandum version of the introduction here would be something like “From: The One who will slay the wicked and be the light of the world.”

Next, the letter transitions to the commendation portion, where the *church* is praised for what they are doing right. In the section following, they will be corrected for what they are doing wrong and invited to repent and improve. In this case, on the positive side: *I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.*

As a reminder, this is written to the believers in the city, those who are a part of the *church*, so there’s not a question of whether or not the recipients of the letter have *faith* in Jesus. Therefore, there is more focus on works or *deeds* than there might be in a letter to unbelievers. *Faith* is important, but once an unbeliever has initial faith and is born again, then the question is whether that faith is being put into action in order to grow and mature. The believer’s *faith* needs to affect everything they do. As James 2 says, faith that isn’t being put into action is of little usefulness:

“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works?”
([James 2:14—for more, read our commentary](#)).

Consistent with this biblical theme, the church in *Thyatira* is praised by Jesus for their *deeds*, that they accompany their *love and faith* to manifest itself in *service and perseverance*. This sort of application of faith makes it useful, which is what Jesus desires of His followers.

Specifically, the believers in Thyatira are praised that *your deeds of late are greater than at first*, which means that they are continuing to improve in their application of faithfulness. They have developed longevity and were not just acting on a momentary spur of passion for the gospel. Rather, they have been growing in their capacity for good *deeds* as they grow in their *faith*, which is a good sign of a healthy believer. To grow in faith is to grow in *deeds* that stem from the obedience of faith. This is good, and Jesus commends them.

Next Jesus will correct them and point out an area in which they need to focus particular improvement. It is worth noting the objectivity of all these “performance appraisals” being done

by Jesus on the seven churches. Each is assessed for their strengths and weaknesses. They are commended for their strengths, and encouraged to continue. They also have their weaknesses identified and are exhorted to improve in that area. There is no apparent concern taken by Jesus as to whether the believers in the church might be offended. As Jesus will say in the last letter “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

Biblical Text

¹⁸ “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: ¹⁹ ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.