

# LETTERS TO THE CHURCH

## *Pergamos: The Compromising Church*

### *Revelation: 2:12-17*

#### **Pergamos**

- Pergamos was a beautiful and wealthy city about 100 miles north of Ephesus
- The city was situated on top a mountain
- Pergamos was one of the cultural centers of the world
- It had the largest library in the world with over 200,000 books
- Pergamos was also the center for religious cults
- Emperor worship was more intense in Pergamos than the other cities of Asia Minor
- False teaching was also common in Pergamos
- Jesus described Pergamos as the “seat of satan”

#### **Jesus’ Identifies Himself to the Believers in Pergamos**

***Revelation 2:12-17 (KJV) <sup>12</sup> And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;***

- Jesus addresses His letter as He did in his letter to the church in Ephesus and Smyrna; to the pastor or the spiritual leader of the church
- Jesus introduces Himself to the believers in Pergamos as ***He which hath the sharp sword with two edges;***
- Jesus gave very encouraging introductions to the other churches
- To Ephesus Jesus identified Himself as “the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, and the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands.”
- To the church in Smyrna Jesus identifies Himself as “the first, the last, the One who was dead and has come to life.”
- There is *nothing* very encouraging when Jesus identifies Himself as the One with a sharp two-edged sword in His mouth
- The sword of His mouth means His Word
- In *Revelation 1:16 (KJV)* it says, “...and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: ...” means His Word
- Jesus will confront the church with His word and the church will feel the sharp edges ***Hebrews 4:12 (KJV) 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.***
- The Word of God is *sharp*; it has the power to cut through the most worldly and hardened heart
- The Word of God is a *two-edged sword*; the Word of God proclaims the Law of God and the necessity of living a holy and righteous life or else face judgement and destruction and on the other side it proclaims the love and grace of God to those who separate themselves from the world and follow after Jesus Christ
- The sword of His mouth also means the *power and judgment* of His Word

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- Jesus' Word has far greater power, He holds the power of life and death
- Since Jesus' Word is all powerful, He can take care of us regardless of what confronts us

#### ***The Commendation***

***13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.***

- As Jesus says to every church, *I know your works*, I know how you're living, I know what you're going through
- Jesus described the city of Pergamos as the seat of satan
- When a place is called *the seat*, it means something is prevalent or dominant in that area
- Jesus called Pergamos *the seat of satan* because of all the worldliness, paganism, immorality, idolatry, and temptations concentrated there
- Jesus commended the believers in Pergamos because despite the environment they lived in they refused to deny Christ, worship false gods, including Caesar, they refused to participate in any form of immorality or idolatry
- Jesus commended the believers in Pergamos because they had not denied their faith in Christ
- Jesus commended the believers in Pergamos because they withstood persecution
- A believer named Antipas was martyred for His faith in Jesus
- Jesus described Antipas as a *faithful martyr*, he was committed to Jesus until the end
- Notice the "My's" in this verse; you held fast to *My name*, you didn't deny *My faith*, and you are *My faithful martyr*
- The truth is His, the people are His, the martyrs (witnesses) are His
- Anyone that's a witness is one who's willing to live and die for their faith
- Jesus made a wonderful commendation to the believers in Pergamos

#### ***The Condemnation***

***14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.***

***15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.***

- Despite all the commendations, Jesus has a few things *against* the church in Pergamos
- The church in Pergamos held fast or embraced the doctrine of Balaam
- What is the doctrine of Balaam?

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- The doctrine of Balaam teaches *compromise*
- The doctrine of Balaam is found in Numbers 22-24
- Some of the people in the church in Pergamos were participating in the pagan feasts, immorality, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, etc. and then coming to church for worship and *no action* was taken to *confront and correct it*
- The doctrine of Balaam:
  - Is an attitude that one can be fully involved in the world and still serve God
  - Wants Christians to “forget” they are called separate and holy
  - Makes believers “indistinguishable” from the unbelieving world
  - Is a belief that a “little sin” doesn’t hurt anything; especially if there is a financial or personal benefit involved
  - Is a view that Christians *can* or even *should* compromise their convictions for the sake of popularity, money, sexual gratification, or personal gain
- A follower of the doctrine of Balaam is willing to compromise their beliefs for personal gain
- The church Pergamos also held fast to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans
- The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was pretty much the same as the doctrine of the Balaam, it was drawing back believers into the lifestyle they had been delivered from
- There were Christians in the Pergamos church that were teaching *and* living a life of compromise
- The Bible clearly teaches us that we are to have no partnership with unbelievers because it may weaken our commitment to Christ **2 Corinthians 6:14 (KJV) 14**  
***Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?***

#### ***The Command***

***<sup>16</sup> Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.***

- Jesus is pretty straight forward in what He wants the church in Pergamos to do; *repent*
- Repentance is a change of direction, attitude and behavior
- True repentance is turning *and* going the other way
- The church *must* also confront confessing believers that are living immoral lives, and have gone back to living like the world
- The church *must* discipline those who refuse to repent or chose to continue their worldly lifestyle
- The church *must* reject and stop any teaching that waters down, is deceptive, or attempts to mislead believers away from living by the Word of God
- The consequences are that Jesus will come quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth

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- Unless the believers in Pergamos repent, they will face Jesus' sword of judgment **1 Peter 4:17 (KJV) 17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?**
- When Jesus confronts the compromising believers in Pergamos, He will confront them with His Word

#### **The Promise**

**17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.**

- Jesus says, **He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;**
- Jesus is calling us to hear *each message* He has for the churches
- The danger of false teaching and immoral behavior still exist in our churches today
- To those who overcome, to those who win the spiritual battle, to those who are true believers, Jesus will give us *hidden manna* to eat
- When Israel was wandering in the wilderness, God caused manna or bread to rain down from heaven upon them
- What is the *hidden manna*?
- It is Jesus Christ Himself; the faithful and true believer will eternally feed upon Jesus Christ Himself in heaven, Jesus is the Bread of Life
- The manna is hidden means its hidden from the worldly people of this earth, Jesus is hidden from the worldly
- The overcomer is given a white stone and a new name
- There is not a clear meaning of the white stone, but the best understanding is from ancient athletics, victors were given a white stone
- The white stone was used as an *admission ticket* to the banquet of the victors
- On the white stone is a new name written on it, and no one knows what it is expect the person who receives it
- Because we overcame the sinful world around us, it gives us access to the heavenly banquet where we will eternally feast in the presence the Lord!