

The Church at Pergamum Revelation.2.12-17

July 7,2024

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

13 "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. 15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

PERGAMUM

City:

- Approximately 65 miles (100 km) north of Smyrna, pop'n 100,000
- Wealthy
- Asia's foremost city for emperor worship
 - 3 temples dedicated to the emperor cult
- 2nd largest library in the world (200,000 volumes) (1st in Alexandria, Egypt)
 - Parchment first developed and used in Pergamum
- Known for 40' (12 meters) altar to Zeus

Church:

- Known for faithfulness despite severe persecution
- Some (at least one) have already died for their faith (Antipas v.13)
- Issues with false teaching

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

- Rome granted Pergamum the power of capital punishment, symbolized by the sword
 - Christians reminded they are citizens of a greater Kingdom whose Ruler has ultimate authority to execute judgment
- two-edged sword church's failure to discipline will bring His direct intervention

¹³ "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

- Headquarters of the Roman Government in Asia
- Prominence of emperor worship
- In Smyrna the Jews were the cause of persecution (synagogue of satan)
- In Pergamum the pagans were the cause of persecution
 - Demanded conformity to idolatrous cultural norms (see ex of Laos, p.31)

Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

- Believed to be the first martyr of Asia
- Died for not renouncing faith in Christ
- Identified with Christ (faithful witness, 1.5)

"We know from a letter from the Roman governor Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan, dated around A.D. 111, that accused Christians could avoid death only by cursing the name of Jesus." **Phillips, p. 112**

- Hence, Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith.
- Would not acknowledge or declare another lord
- Would not forsake/renounce central biblical doctrines
 - Deity of Christ
 - His atoning sacrifice
 - Salvation through faith in Christ alone
- *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. Gal.1.8*

¹⁴ But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Balaam: (Nicolaitans similar)

- *Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD. Num.31.16*
- *Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing... 2 Pet.2.15*

These practices would help fit in with current culture, easing severity or avoiding persecution!

¹⁶Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

When we sin repentance is needed:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Is.55.7

If we don't judgment comes:

- *The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. ...¹⁹And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. ²⁰He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah... 2 Chron.36.15-21*

Note: though "some among you" hold to these doctrines the church is required to repent.

- *...let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. Neh.1.6*
- The sin for some is participation, for others toleration of that sin in the fellowship:
- *And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. 1 Cor.5.2*

¹⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

Hidden Manna:

- Symbolizes the provision of God through Jesus:
 - *As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." Jn.6.57-58*
- The Lord provides something much better than the feasts of idols!

The White Stone:

Significant uses of the white stone:

- Given to the most outstanding athletes
 - Indicating that Christians are victorious in Christ, sharing in his glory
- Token of admission to special events, feasts
 - Though barred from pagan feasts, included in the great feast of the Lamb of God
- Marker for acquittal in courts of law (black stone = conviction)
 - Where Satan ruled faithful Christians accuse and condemned
 - White stone symbolizes justification in Christ and assurance of eternal life

A New Name:

- The Name of Christ as Lord, truly known by the faithful
- Indication of the believer's intimacy with the Lord:
 - *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*
Jn.10.27-28
- Also signifies holy duty and calling:
 - *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* 1 Pet. 2.9

WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH TODAY?

... so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs. 2 Cor.2.11

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 2 Cor.11.13-14

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. Gal.1.8

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Josh.1.8