

We are looking at the 7 Ltrs to the churches in Revelation

**Today it's the 3rd church - Pergamum
Which is - The **COMPROMISING Church****

& so - **like a whiplash** - the **church goes** from

Being **PERSECUTED** by the **World** - **Last Message**
to **MARRYING** the **World** in - **This Message**

Today we see the **beginning**
of **Spiritual Polygamy** in the church

It's the **Church** that **MARRIED the World**
While still being **Married to Jesus Christ**

Let's Pray

Pergamum was – The **Capital of Asia**
Home of the **Regional Roman Ruler**
Center of **Roman Emperor Worship**

a **Huge Cultural Center** - **known** for the **mountain**
of **"Parchment Books"** either **written** or **copied** there

The Library in **Pergamum** was **2nd only** to **Alexandria in Egypt** -
It **Boasted** over **200,000 parchment rolls** (books)

**Pergamum attracted the finest minds
of Learning, Culture, Government, & Medicine**

And **the Church** there - was **about** to **enter** a **NEW BATTLE**

Not the **Frontal Attack** of **Persecution**
like the **previous 200 years**

But the **Seductive Attack** of **Infiltration & Compromise**

And - if you've **ever asked** - **WHY** are there **certain things** done in
churches today that **CANNOT be found** in the **Bible**

The letter to **Pergamum** **sheds light** on that **question**

First – **Let me EXPLAIN**

The **PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVE** - of these **7 Letters**

These 7 Letters – were **written** to **7 ACTUAL Churches**

But in a **Very Prophetic Way**
the subject of these **7 Letters**

MIRROR – Very **Closely**
the **events** of **7 Time Periods** in **Church History**

Here is **how** the **Historians SEE**
this **Prophetic View** - in these **first 3 letters**

LTR #1) “Good Church, But You’ve Abandoned your First Love”

Directly **Addresses** the **church** history from the **Resurrection** (33 AD) to **approx 100 AD** – (The **time** of the **Apostles**)

LTR #2) “Faithful in Suffering”

Directly **Address** the **severe persecution** the church **experienced** – at the **Hands of ROME** - from (basically) **100 AD to 300 AD**

LTR #3) “Spiritual Polygamy”

Directly **Addresses** the **historical events** of the **300’s AD** – **This** is when **The Church - Married the World**

Some of the **things** that **BEGAN** in **today’s LTR** (& the 300’s) **Really took over** the **church** in the **Next LTR** (Thyatira)

But – the **Spiritual Polygamy** – that we **SEE IN** the **church today** – **Began HERE** – in **THIS LTR** - & **in the 300’s AD**

Here’s what **we learn** by **comparing** the **church history** **between** the **last Ltr** (to Smyrna) & **this Ltr** (to Pergamum)

& **our enemy LEARNS** from his **Failures** !!

In the **previous church** period (Smyrna) our **enemy learned** that **direct persecution** actually **made** the church **grow stronger**

He learned – that if you **Stomp on a Fire**
it **only makes** the **Fire SPREAD** - & **GROW**

& **So Now** - **Learning** from **his mistake**
of **Persecuting** the **church** – in the **previous 200 years**

Now The **enemy employs** a **SCARY** new **tactic**
that he is **STILL** having **great success** with - **TODAY**

in **Pergamum** the **enemy** said

If I can't **stomp them out** with **PERSECUTION** -
I will **water them down** with **COMPROMISE**

If I can't **get the WORLD** - to **CRUSH THEM**
then **I'll get THEM** - to **MARRY** the **WORLD**

& **Jesus** is going to **tell this church** - **WAKEUP !!**
Before you **Experience** my **JUDGMENT**

Revelation 2:12 (NLT)

12 “Write this letter to the angel (messenger) of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword:

Every time **THIS Greek word** for **Sword** is **used**
It **Refers** to the **Judgment of God**

& **what Jesus** is **saying** by **this description** of **himself** is –
I am ready to bring Judgement

& Jesus does begin with Commendation –
But when you look closely – you see

This was Commendation – For PAST EVENTS

when this church was experiencing Persecution
like our previous church in Smyrna

Revelation 2:13(a) (NLT)

13 “I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne . . .

Again – Jesus says – I KNOW

I KNOW the circumstances you are living in

In Pergamum - There was a MASSIVE Altar to ZEUS
(King of ALL Greek gods) - that sat on the top of the Mountain

& it was designed to LOOK like a THRONE from below

It was also - the Capital of Roman Emperor Worship

So - Jesus is saying - SATAN had a Place of AUTHORITY
(a throne) in Pergamum

(again) Revelation 2:13 (NLT)

13 “I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused (past tense) to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan’s city. (during the persecution of the previous period)

Jesus is saying - I KNOW you "HAVE BEEN" Faithful – In the PAST

BUT . . . NOW . . .

Something is happening in the Church
that has my Sword of Judgment - at the READY

Revelation 2:14 (NLT)

14 "But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin.

The story of Balaam & Balak goes back to Num 22
(& the TALKING DONKEY)

Balaam was a profit for HIRE - He Prophesied for **PAY**

& Balak (the enemy of Israel) –

Gave **Balaam MONEY** to **curse Israel**

& Balaam tried to **curse** Israel - But he **couldn't** -

every time he opened his **mouth** - only **blessing** would come **out**

& so Balak - who had **paid** the **big money** - **GOT MAD**

So **Balaam** says to him - **Listen** – God won't let me CURSE Israel -
but **here's** what **you can do** to **destroy them** just the **same**

if you will **bring** the **women of Moab** into the **camp** of Israel

& use them to **entice Israel** into **Sexual Sin** & **Idol Worship**

that will destroy them – *From the INSIDE* –
just as much as if they'd been cursed by God

& so Balak seduced Israel into COMPROMISE with the World

& in the end - it cost 24,000 Israelites their LIVES
as God Judged the nation for their sin

So the teaching of Balaam – is the Enemy's SUBTLE ATTACK
of bringing COMPROMISE into the Church

& Our Enemy found out in Pergamum

Bringing COMPROMISE into the church from the Inside
Brings Far More Destruction - than Persecution from the Outside

Instead of trying to STOMP OUT the FIRE

In Pergamum – the enemy POURED
the WATER OF COMPROMISE – *Into the church*

**COMPROMISE Puts out the Fire of your Faith
Just Like water puts out a Camp-Fire**

THAT - is what was happening in the church in Pergamum

& Prophetically what happened during this period of History

The church of "Pergamum" –
who was at one time the Faithful Bride of Christ

had MARRIED a 2nd Bride - THE WORLD

& they became - Spiritual Polygamists - Believing they could be
Married to the Lord - AND - Married to the World

& we see a TON - of this SAME Spiritual Polygamy
In the Church – TODAY

Jesus cont's in V.15 - & says - NOT ONLY have you
COMPROMISED with the World - But

Revelation 2:15 (NLT)

15 In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching. (the same teaching as Balaam – of bringing COMPROMISE into the church)

Remember back in Ephesus (1st Church) Jesus COMMENDED the
Church for HATING the Works of the Nicolaitans (*HE also hated*)

Well now, by the 3rd church period (& the 3rd church)
what the church once HATED - the church now EMBRACES

This word "Nicolaitans" means Literally - "Ruling over People"

The Nicolaitans developed a class of Priests
TO RULE OVER the 'REGULAR PEOPLE' (the 'lay' people)

This was the **Exact Same Structure**
used in the **PAGAN temples**

AS the **Church married** the world

They **also married** this **Pagan Religious Structure**
of the “**Priesthood**” ruling **over** the **PEOPLE**

Even tho Jesus Himself **SAID** - when **telling** His **Disciples**
to **NOT** be like the **Religious Leaders**

In Matthew 23:8–9, 11 (NLT)

8 “Don’t let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters.

9 And don’t address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven is your Father.

...

11 The greatest among you must be a servant.

The **NT** is very **CLEAR**

the **only difference** between the **leaders** & the **church** –
is that the **Leaders** will face **stricter judgment**

There is **NEVER** an **ELEVATION** of the **PRIESTHOOD**
over the **PEOPLE** - **anywhere** in the **NT church**

YES – a **Pastor** is called
to **LEAD & SERVE** the **people**

But **AS** an “**Under-Shepherd**” of **Jesus Christ**

**The ELEVATING of the Priesthood OVER the people
began HERE – in the 300's**

**& was prophesied by Jesus
in the Letter to the church in Pergamum**

**Here's how CHURCH HISTORY played out during the 300's
(the time period represented by this church)**

In the previous 200 years - There had been
10 Roman Emperors - who Persecuted the Church

The last of which died in the early 300's - (Diocletian)

When he died - 2 Generals started fighting
For the Throne of ROME

One of them was named CONSTANTINE

**History says - the night before a big battle for the Throne -
Constantine saw a vision In the sky**

It was of a CROSS - with the inscription - ***BY THIS SIGN CONQUER***

& That night - one of two things happened

1) Some say Constantine became a Christian

**2) Some say the vision was - The Devil beginning his plan
to take the church down – From the INSIDE – with Compromise**

There is NO historical evidence of Constantine
ever becoming what the Bible would describe as – A Christian

What we DO know is - Constantine won the Battle

And he immediately made Christianity
the State-Sponsored Religion of ROME

The entire Roman Army
was forced to be Baptized as Christians

& the UN-Holy Alliance - of Church & State - was BORN

The Gov't that was killing Christians the previous year
All of a Sudden – was EMBRACING Christianity

& the Church - BOUGHT IT

The Church traded PERSECUTION for POPULARITY

The Church traded SUFFERING for SILK SHEETS

& suddenly - the church was FORMALLY Married to the World

& THEN – Beginning in the 300's and taking off in the 400's

> Pagan Temples became Christian Churches

> Pagan Festivals were turned into Christian Festivals

> Pagan Priests became Christian Priests

> Pagan Idols were LEFT in the temples
but they were renamed - as Christian Idols

> The Rituals used to worship the Pagan goddesses were renamed to worship the Queen of heaven

> & Constantine took the title "Pontifex Maximus" (*the Greatest Pontiff*)

& the Leader of the church that started during this time STILL HOLDS that title TODAY

Constantine became the EMPEROR of ROME
AND – The HEAD Of The CHURCH

& suddenly there was a Christian World Empire

& the Paganism of the Roman World was Instantly Married to the Christian Church

Now (to me) – This is Very SCARY Historical Truth

But the Bigger Truth - is a Very CLEAR WARNING

<p><u>About</u> The <u>church</u> - <u>Thinking</u> we can be <u>Married to Christ</u> AND be <u>Married to the World</u> - at the <u>SAME TIME</u></p>

THAT IS the Warning here

& it is a WARNING for ALL who have Ears to HEAR

& Pls Hear me when I say - There IS an Answer

Jesus gave the church in Pergamum the answer

& he gives US the SAME ANSWER today

Revelation 2:16 (NLT)

16 Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them (those bringing compromise into the church) ***with the sword of my mouth.***

REPENT - Recognize your Sin - & TURN BACK to Jesus

If **NOT** - Jesus **WILL** come **Suddenly** & **JUDGE**
those who are **Marrying The CHURCH** - with the **WORLD**

IF we **will have** an **EAR to Hear** what the **Spirit Says**
We can **TURN** from our **COMPROMISE**

We **can** Turn **FROM** the **World** - & Turn **TO Christ**
& **He** will **Accept** us - & **Embrace** us with **Open Arms**

Revelation 2:17(a) (NLT)

17 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven . . .

Our Enemy Tempts us - & Deceives us

to **PUT OUT** the **FIRE OF OUR FAITH**
with the **WATER OF COMPROMISE** with **the World**

But **if we** will **Repent - & Remain True** to **the Lord**
Jesus will **give us - HIMSELF** - as the **True Bread of Life**

& then - At the End of Revelation 2:17(b) (NLT)

17 . . . And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.

No Scholar knows for sure what Jesus means here

But **In the courts** of that day - **Those Judging** a **matter**
Held **TWO stones** at the end of a **Trial**

Putting down the **BLACK** stone Meant **CONDEMNATION**

Putting down the **WHITE** stone Meant **ACQUITTAL & FREEDOM**

So the **White Stone** may **very well**
Represent our **Eternal Acquittal** & **Eternal Freedom**

<p><u>But</u> it's the <u>NEW NAME</u> that speaks so <u>highly</u> to <u>those</u> who will <u>overcome</u> the <u>Temptation of the world</u></p>

(again) V.17 says - ***on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it***

NAMES mean **A LOT** in the **Bible**
& **there** are **different names** for different **levels of Intimacy**

- > **People** who **don't know** me - may call me **Mr. Shepardson**
- > **Some people** may use my **Legal Name** - **DAVID**
- > **My friends** call me **DAVE** - > **My Close Friends** call me **SHEP**
- > **But my Children** call me **DADDY**

> & my Grandchildren call me POP-POP

> & my WIFE might have a name for me that I can't SHARE with you
Because it's too intimate

& JESUS Knows you MUCH MORE intimately than that

& if you will CLING to Jesus- & OVERCOME the World's Temptation

Jesus will give you His Abundant Life

ALONG WITH - the White Stone of Eternal Acquittal

& on that stone - a Personal Name - that He Alone has for you
that no one will know - Except you & Him

That is a Reward - of Eternal Relationship with the Lord

In the end you can only be married to ONE Bride Groom -
either JESUS CHRIST - Or THE WORLD

You CANNOT be Married to BOTH - So

1) STAND Strong in your Faithfulness to Christ Alone

2) RECOGNIZE the Subtle Deceit of the World

3) REPENT of Being a Spiritual Polygamist

& Your REWARD will be - Eternal LIFE

& Eternal Relationship with the Lord of GLORY

Let's Pray