



CHURCH OF PERGAMUM

<p>12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the <u>sharp two-edged sword</u>.’</p>	<p>*In the local Roman government, the proconsul was given the 'right of the sword', power to execute people according to his will. So, the words 'sharp two-edged sword' would remind the church in Pergamum that Jesus has the ultimate power and authority.</p> <p>What happens in our lives when we forget that God is sovereign?</p>
<p>13 “‘I know where you dwell, where <u>Satan’s throne</u> 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.</p>	<p>Encouragement</p> <p>*Satan’s throne could refer to any worship of the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses; perhaps the Roman Emperor, or the altar to Zeus, or the worship of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, whose symbol is a serpent.</p> <p>*Antipas is mentioned by Tertullian, a second century Christian theologian, and there is an inscription from Pergamum with his name, but not much else is known about his life or martyrdom.</p>
<p>14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the <u>teaching of Balaam</u>, who taught Balak to put a <u>stumbling block</u> before the sons of Israel, so that they might <u>eat food sacrificed to idols</u> and practice sexual immorality. 15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.</p>	<p>Rebuke</p> <p>*The teaching of Balaam became a way to refer to teaching that caused people to compromise the truth. King Balak offered the prophet Balaam riches if he would curse Israel, but Balaam could not do it. However, Balaam worked out a sort of compromise. He advised Balak to have the Midianites intermarry with the Israelites so that they would worship other gods which would then compromise their worship of the one true God. (Numbers 22-25; 31:16).</p> <p>*The Greek word 'skandalon' can refer to a stumbling block or a snare.</p> <p>*Paul taught that eating food sacrificed to idols was not wrong if it didn't offend another follower of Jesus (1 Corinthians 8:4-13). However, it was sinful if it was part of an act of worshipping idols (1 Corinthians 10:18-22). In this verse, eating food sacrificed to idols is mentioned in association with the practice of sexual immorality. Both of those things were part of idol worship.</p>



<p>16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and <u>war against them with the sword of my mouth.</u></p>	<p>Warning</p> <p>*Jesus is not just telling those who follow false teaching to repent. This is a command to the whole church. We cannot harmonize biblical teaching that leads to godly living with corrupt doctrine that leads to immoral living. Jesus fights against that and so should we.</p> <p>*The phrase 'the sword of my mouth' refers to the power of Christ's word, in this case a power to punish unrepentance.</p>
<p>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 <u>manna</u>, and I will give him a <u>white stone</u>, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'</p>	<p>Hope</p> <p>*We see a contrast here of those who compromise with pagan worship by eating food offered to idols, and those who don't who will enjoy manna from heaven.</p> <p>*This could be a reference to the manna in the golden jar inside the Ark of the Covenant. It was believed that Jeremiah hid the Ark in a cave on Mt. Nebo at the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 B.C. The Jews believed that it would remain there until the Messianic age when God would again feed his people with it (see 2 Maccabees 2:4-8).</p> <p>*White stones were sometimes used in jury cases to indicate a 'not-guilty' vote. Also, white stones were given to victors of athletic contests. The stone would be their 'ticket' to enter the awards celebration after the event was over.</p> <p>What trophies or rewards have you received? How did those affect your identity or how you view who you are? What do Jesus' words here say about the identity of the 'one who conquers'?</p>