

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

FROM EDEN TO ETERNITY

## The State of the Church

Pastor Christopher Miller – September 23, 2020

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Revelation 2:12-17 – The Letter to the Church in Pergamum

Please stand for the Reading of the Word

Revelation 2:12-17 “And to the angel of the Church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. <sup>13</sup>“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. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup> So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup> Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. <sup>17</sup> 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.”

## THE CHURCH OF PERGAMUM

The Church of Pergamum was found in the Capital City of Asia until right at the end of the First Century AD. This city was known for its devout paganism and worship of Greek Deities; this posed a great issue because it was the Roman Empire that took advantage of religious practice by demanding that all religious groups cooperate with the Roman Leadership. It is this context of paganism and religious practice that opens the door for Christ to state that this city is where “Satan’s Throne is”, noted in verse 13. It is not completely understood why the text is noted this way nor what this actually means; but it can be easily ascertained that Satan has a spiritual stronghold there due to its idolatry and demonic practices.

After the Roman Emperor Diocletian's failed attempt of religious persecution against the Church, Constantine succeeded him as the Emperor of Rome and Constantine was open to the ideologies and influences of Christianity. It was this that ultimately led to a self-proclaimed vision that God had given him of conquering by the sign of the Cross thus the shields of the Roman Military all became emblazoned with the Sign of the Cross. Whether or not Constantine was a Christian or not, which is open to debate, he at the very least had some strange views and concepts based upon the Christian Belief System.

After Constantine became emperor, he began passing edicts that protected Christians, the Christian Church and even began to intermingle Church and Politics and Government by providing finances for the Church as an institution. It was from this time forward that a government backed religious institution began to take over pagan temples and institute pagan practices to be culturally relevant and accepted. Sounds familiar to our modern day doesn't it?

And it is this influence of paganisms that has slowly spread its roots over the years and even into our modern times. The Church began to shroud itself in mystery and ritualism, losing its fire and evangelistic fervency. If we were to study this mysticism concept and the use of ritualism, we will find that this was actually birthed out of Babylonian mysticism.

Here are a few examples:

1. The Chaldean Tau (an elevation of a T on a pole) It was later changed into the sign of a Cross.
2. Celibacy of priests and nuns - This has no scriptural context of application - A counterpart of the “vestial virgins” of paganism.
3. Prayers for the dead - 300 A.D. - Necromancy
4. Worship of Saints and Angels - 375 A.D.
5. Worship of Mary - 431 A.D. - Title of “Co-Redemptrix and Co-Mediatrix”
6. Priest began dressing differently than laity - 500 A.D. - Robes and Hats, etc. The same spirit of the Pharisees.
7. Doctrine of Purgatory - 593 A.D. - Talked about this Sunday with Paradise and Hell being on the same plane of existence.

And it was from 312 A.D. the Church became more Roman and less Christian. The truth of the matter is that the Roman Catholic Church is hard pressed to trace its origin beyond 312 A.D; I do not bring up this matter to be offensive but to provide a historical fact. Until that time the Church was a collection of local churches working together! As the Church became accepted, rich and powerful, it was suggested that the world was getting better and that Christ’s kingdom had been ushered in. Many even thought this to be the Millennial Reign. Because of this misconception, a

## great heresy spread through the Church: REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY!

Many believed that because of Israel's unbelief that they had been "cast off;" therefore, all of Israel's promises were now given to the Church. Unfortunately, it would be 1,400 years later before the coming of Christ would be re-emphasized! And with all of that said, what can we learn from all of this? The name "Pergamum" translates to mean "Marriage" or "Elevation" but as a Church, Pergamum married the world and its authority and was elevated to a place of acceptance by the culture around it therefore resulting in a decline of power and anointing.

### 1. Commendation - Verse 12 - 13

- a. "And to the angel of the Church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. <sup>13</sup>' '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."
- b. I Know Where You Live (Rev. 2:13)
  - i. We have already seen the evil of this city
  - ii. Satan's seat was there
- c. You Still Remain Faithful (Rev. 2:13)
  - i. Many outstanding leaders were produced at Pergamum
- d. You Did Not Deny My Faith (Rev. 2:13)

## 2. Condemnation Verse 14 (A) and Verse 15 (B)

### a. The Doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2:14; Num. 22-31)

- i. .<sup>14</sup> 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. (Now who is Balaam and what is Christ referring to?)
- ii. Balaam was a prophet of God introduced in Numbers 22 and you can read more about him in Numbers 22-31. Story condensed is this; Balaam was commanded by Balak to prophecy curse over the nation of Israel but Balaam could not because He could not prophecy curse over something God had blessed.
- iii. Balaam could not curse the people of God; so, he devised a plan to remove them from the protective hand of God—mix them with the world! Balaam gave Balak the secret ingredients to destroying the Anointing. Mix Godliness with Worldliness.
- iv. And Pergamum went down the same road as the Israelites when they began to intermarry with other pagan groups and cultures.

- v. Pergamum was a Church that had remained faithful, yet became worldly by accepting and adapting some of its pagan practices!
- vi. This Church can be best described by a coin that resides in a museum in London. It was stamped during the early days of Constantine's reign. One side has Christian emblems. The other side has emblems of heathen gods!
- vii. During the time when Christians took over some of the pagan buildings, the pagan names were chiseled off of idols and the names of Christian saints were inscribed.
- viii. You can't take worldly things and wash it with religious soap and call it clean.

b. The Doctrine of Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:15)

- i. **“<sup>15</sup> So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”**
- ii. Though the Ephesian believers rejected this doctrine, Pergamum fell into its trap!
- iii. Nicolaitanism is the doctrine of strong Ecclesiastical hierarchy ruling over the laity.

### 3. Counsel

#### a. Repent or be Judged (Rev. 2:16)

- i. **“<sup>16</sup>Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.”**
- ii. **“Well Pastor God doesn’t judge anymore, it’s all about Grace and Love and Acceptance”**
- iii. **The Bible says that Judgment will begin at the House of God and His judgment comes in many forms. As in this case Jesus said that He plans on paying this church a visit and if they refuse to repent then he’s going to judge them with the sword of His Mouth!**

In closing, Lacey if you will come...

### 4. Challenge:

#### a. Hidden Manna (Rev. 2:17)

- i. **<sup>17</sup>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.”**
- ii. **Hidden manna is a symbol for the spiritual food provided by God in His Word!**

- iii. This is an individual feeding, just as the Israelites had to go out daily and individually gather their manna.

b. White Stone (Rev. 2:17) (second half of verse 17)

- i. “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.”
- ii. To understand this symbolism, we must look at an ancient custom.
- iii. White is a symbol for purity or righteousness.
- iv. In ancient time, a white stone meant acquittal. For example, if a man was tried in court, the jurors would signify their verdict by laying down a white stone indicating their decision to acquit the man of the crime.
- v. Acquittal = The judgment of a jury that a person is not guilty of a charge!
- vi. We are guilty; but, when Christ died guiltless for us, He ascended to the Father and laid a white stone on the throne of God, turning the judgment seat into a mercy seat.

A great lesson can be gleaned from the study of this Church and this time of Church History. Many aspects of this Church exist even in this final period of Church History. Ecclesiasticism and Worldliness have a strong grip on this modern day organization. Repentance is the only key to overcoming this strong delusion. There is only one person who will usher in the Kingdom of God and that person is the King of that Kingdom - Jesus Christ.

If you need prayer for anything tonight, lift your hands...