

A SERIES THROUGH THE REVELATION

PERGAMOS: FAITHFUL BUT FLAWED | 1.20.22

I. THE CITY OF PERGAMOS (Rev. 2:12-17)

- A. The city of Pergamos was located about 55 miles north of Smyrna and about 20 miles from the Aegean Sea. Pergamum was the political capital of Asia in its day and became famous for its culture, science and learning. Pergamum is often described as a royal residence, a university town and a pagan cathedral city.
- B. Parchments, which were dried animal skins used for writing, were first invented in Pergamos (*the very meaning of their name*). Within some number of years this educated and cultured city had a local library containing over more than 200,000+ volumes. Pergamos was a very wealthy city but unfortunately, they honored dead and lifeless gods instead of the true and living God.
- C. Within the city there was a massive acropolis that stood near 1,000 feet tall and was visible from nearly every direction. On top of this acropolis stood a 100-foot-tall statute of Zues, the savior god. Alongside Zeus there was also Athena—the god of victory, Dionysos—the god of the royal family and Asclepius—the god of healing. It's common that among wealthy cities you will find a passion for health, for what is wealth if you don't have your health?
- D. The shrine of Asclepius (æ's'kli:piæss) attracted people from all over the known world coming to Pergamos in hopes of being healed. The sick would spend the night in the darkness of the temple, where non-poisonous snakes were left to roam. If you were touched by one of these snakes you were considered healed and free to leave as if God Himself had healed you.
- E. Pergamos lead the way in emperor worship. In 29 B.C. they built a temple in honor of Augustus becoming the first city with a dedicated temple to the occult worship of an emperor. Historically the Church was faithful to Jesus while at the same time tolerant of false teaching and practice.

II. THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS (Rev. 2:12-17)

- A. **Revelation 2:12-13** *“And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos write, these things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: I know your works, where you dwell, where satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where satan dwells.”*
 - 1. Jesus begins this letter by ADDRESSING the spiritual leadership and giving them both encouragement and correction concerning the various things taking place within the ministry.
 - 2. Pergamos is the only Church that receives only one ATTRIBUTE from Jesus. This attribute is going to come as a sharp rebuke to a people that aren't rightly handling the Word of God in their midst.
 - 3. These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword = Jesus is reminding the Church He has authority over His enemies through the punishing power of His word. Jesus commands those that oversee His Church love truth in the same way that He does.
 - a. **Hebrews 4:12** *“For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart...all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him...”*

b. Revelation 19:13,21 *“He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God...And the rest (untold millions/billions who took the mark of the beast) were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who on the horse...”*

4. For a Church struggling deeply, Jesus still has several things to APPROVE within the ministry. He speaks of three specific things;
5. Where you dwell = The language of this phrase speaks of a people whose residence is permanently planted in a specific place. Jesus isn't overlooking the fact that this Church is living in a difficult place to hold out the word of life. *There's no geographic pass from Jesus, but there is understanding.*
6. Where satan's throne is = This phrase is highly debated. It seems best to see that Jesus recognizes the pagan deities being worshipped in their city along with the worship of human emperors. This city was said to be the center of emperor worship for the whole of Asia, which is most deplorable: *worshipping the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:20-32).*
7. And you hold fast to MY NAME, and did not deny MY FAITH, even in the days in which Antipas was MY FAITHFUL MARTYR (witness), who was killed among you, where satan dwells = The Church was praised for PUBLICLY holding fast to the Word of God in the midst of difficult, challenging and adverse times.
 - a. Antipas literally means 'against all' and it's very possible that on the Lordly day, when you were to burn incense to the Emperor that he was against all, alone and by himself and because of his resistance He was put to death.
 1. Though Antipas only appears in this single verse, Jesus makes clear that He saw his love and devotion to Him and tethered Himself to Antipas (**Rev. 1:5**—the faithful martyr/witness).

B. Revelation 2:14 *“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the Children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitians, which thing I hate.”*

1. Jesus issues a serious ACCUSATION against this Church by changing His commendation of them to His condemnation of them. The Church was giving a public defense for the word of God while at the same time privately agreeing with false doctrines.
2. Jesus is contrasting the doctrine of Antipas with the doctrine of Balaam. Antipas was faithful with God's word both publically and privately. Balaam on the other hand said one thing publically and did another thing privately (**Numbers 24, 25; 31:36; 2nd Peter 2:15; Jude 11**).
- a. The doctrine of Balaam is a set of teachings that promotes paganism, idolatry and immorality.
3. You also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitians, which thing I hate = One of the things that makes Jesus' accusation against this Church so sharp is that what was taking place, was inside the Church, not outside the Church. They were holding onto something, not working to get free from something.
 1. God treats the weak, yet sincere believer very differently than the rebellious, insincere believer.

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- b. The Nicolaitans were working to find a compromise between the Christian life and the cultural customs of their day. They were attempting to include as much of the culture into God's kingdom that they could.
- C. **Revelation 2:16** "Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."
1. Jesus, the Great Shepherd of our souls, doesn't end with an accusation, but always gives ADVICE on how we can get free from the various things that entangle us.
 2. I will come to you quickly = There's some discussion about whether this is a local coming of Jesus to this Church in judgment, or the second coming of Christ. I think it's best to see it as a local coming in judgment.
 3. And will fight against you with the sword of my mouth = The sharp sword of verse 12 is now taken up as the sword of His mouth.
 - a. The Greek phrase for "sword" spoke of one of the most fearsome weapons in the ancient world. It was a slightly curved, long bladed sword that was attached to a pole and was said to be able to slice through most any armor.
 - b. *"The sword of My mouth is not just a forensic condemnation. Making war with it suggest conquest by force as in **Revelation 19:11-21**. The victorious warrior depicted in this later description of Christ's advent overcome through means similar to what are pictured here."* -Robert Thomas, Revelation 1-7, Pg. 197
 1. This is the same word used when Simeon spoke to Jesus' mother Mary saying, "...behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign...yes, a sword (Romphia) will pierce through your own soul also..." (**Luke 2:34-35**).
 - c. Jesus would love for the Church in Pergamos to fight against their own sin through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, but if they are unwilling, He Himself will come and fight against them.
 - d. Many today see a distant and disconnected Jesus, but this passage alone declares His commitment to having purity and wholeheartedness without compromise.
- D. **Revelation 2:17** "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."
1. Jesus offers an APPEAL to anyone who will listen to Him, obey Him and walk out what He is *attempting* to work into them. To a people living outwardly, they would now have to obey Him inwardly.
 2. Jesus reassures those that will listen to Him, have the ASSURANCE of reward if they respond rightly to Him. This reward comes at the price of loving Jesus on His terms, not their own.
 3. I will give some of the hidden manna to eat = I believe the hidden manna speaks of access in the age to come to greater revelation of Jesus and His heart (**Exodus 16:32-34; Matthew 6:9-13; John 6; Rev. 11:19**).
 - a. To those that will search for Him with all their spiritual senses (*faith*), He will thoroughly satisfy them in their natural senses (*sight*) with Himself.
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4. I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it = I believe this to speak of a name that will embody the way that we have loved Christ in this age.
 - a. Stones throughout both the Old and New Testament spoke of memorials, or stories of what God had done. Just maybe, this stone will tell the story of how that person loved God while they were on earth, when no one was watching. Names throughout the Bible speak of destiny, or the story of a person's, past, present and future (**Joshua 4; Matthew 6:5-6; 1st Peter 2:5; Revelation 21:14, 19-20**).
5. We are given the assurance, if we overcome, God will honor and reward our labor of love that we have done in His name.