

A Journey Into the Heavens
Pergamos - The Compromising Church
October 14, 2015

In this lesson we will continue our study of the seven churches in the book of Revelation with the church at Pergamos. We began our study of the seven churches at Ephesus, and then last week we studied the church at Smyrna.

I. The _____ (2:12)

The ancient city of Pergamos was about 700 miles north of Smyrna and 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. On the site of Pergamos today sits a town called Bergama, which has a population of about _____ which is a vast difference from its heyday of more than _____. While Ephesus and Smyrna were commercial sites, Pergamos was a cultural and religious center. Pergamos was home to four major pagan temples:

1. The Temples to Athena
2. The Temple of Asclepius (the god of healing, whose insignia was the entwined serpent on a staff).
3. The Temple of Dionysus (or Bacchus)
4. The Temple of _____ (which had the largest altar in the world and was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World).

Pergamos was an intellectual center with a university that had a library of about 200,000 volumes. That does not seem to be such a large library by our standards today, but remember in John's day there was no printing press - all books were written by hand. Because of all of this, Pergamos was an important city in John's day because of its religious, cultural, and intellectual influence.

II. The _____ (2:13)

Like the believers in Smyrna, the Christians at Pergamos had suffered persecution and at least one of them, Antipas, had been martyred (vs. 13). Nothing more is known of the incident, for Antipas is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

Twice in verse 13 Christ says _____ dwells in Pergamos. He says this city is even where Satan's seat is. This in fact refers to Pergamos being the center of Pagan worship and also promoted emperor worship. This was a place where you could "take your pick" of the gods. Therefore, to declare Jesus Christ was the one true God and Savior who demands total and exclusive obedience would certainly provoke severe _____.

However, an even greater point should be made of the statement, "even where Satan seat is." So many think of Satan as presently being in Hell, but that is not the case he is very active in our world! (I Peter 5:8) It is clear that in the city containing Satan's throne there was loyalty to Christ, however there are some exceptions as we will see.

III. The _____ (2:14-15)

Though Ephesus had left its first love and Smyrna was suffering horrible persecution, both churches had maintained sound doctrine, and all efforts to subvert the purity of the gospel had failed. On the other hand according to verse 14 Pergamos had been infiltrated by the Doctrine of _____

What is the doctrine of Balaam? We must go back to Numbers 22-25 to find Balaam was a prophet for hire. He was hired by Balak, the King of the Moabites, to curse Israel, but each time God stopped him. Since Balaam was unsuccessful in cursing the Israelites, he decided to corrupt them. Therefore, he advised Balak to seduce the Israelite men. (Numbers 25:1-2)

As a result of this idolatry and fornication, which was caused by compromise, _____ Israelites died (Numbers 25:3-9 & 31:16). Therefore, we find the doctrine of Balaam was a lowering of the standard of separation God expects from His people and a compromise with the world.

In Revelation 2:15 Christ says that in the believers at Pergamos there were also those who adhered to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Though the identity of the Nicolaitanes is uncertain, the Greek word literally means "laity conqueror." Some believe this refers to the fact some false teachers arose, claiming to have special divine authority. Though no one knows for sure what Nicolaitanism is, one thing we do know is that Christ hates it. He does not hate the people, just their deeds.

IV. The _____ (2:16)

Christ's clear command is _____. They were to repent from compromising with the world. There is no other alternative to continued compromise with the ways and the standards of the world - there must be divine judgement.

As we discovered in Revelation 1:16, the sharp two-edged sword coming out of Christ's mouth is the Word of God. (John 12:47-48) God judges not only the lost but also the believer by the standards of His Word. The Word of God will sharply judge all compromise and all sin!

V. The _____ (2:17)

Again there is the call to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The Word of God gives us some interesting thoughts in verse 17 for us study.

The “hidden manna” is obviously a reference to the golden pot of manna which was placed in the Ark of the Covenant for a memorial of God’s gracious _____ for Israel in the wilderness. (Exodus 16:32) However, that manna was only a symbol of the hidden manna to come. (John 6:57-58)

Christ also said in Revelation 2:17 that the overcomes will receive a “white stone.” White stones were used in ancient courts of justice when a vote was taken as to the guilt of an accused person. When the jury expressed their verdict, they did so by casting stones into an urn - black stones for “guilty” and white stones for acquittal. Therefore, if the explanation is used, the white stones in verse 17 would represent that the believer is being acquitted of sin, because of his or her faith in Jesus Christ!

White stones were also used as “tickets” to gain admission to special social events. If we take that standpoint then of course that would gain us entrance to the marriage supper of the Lamb!
(Revelation 19:6-9)

The letter to the church at Pergamos reminds Christians of all times it is God’s purpose to keep His children _____ from all evil and all compromise with the world, whether it is moral or doctrinal.