



Empowering People to Change the World

The Church at Pergamos: Doctrinal Compromise

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The Church of Smyrna-Pergamos-Doctrinal Compromise Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction:

- Revelation is the only book of the Bible that promises a specific blessing to those who study this book.
- This is our 3rd theme from this 3rd church.
- In our first study with Ephesus, we were being called to our “first love.”
- In our second study with Smyrna, the struggle was with suffering.
- In Pergamos, the struggle is with spiritual, doctrinal, and moral compromise.

Pergamos is about 100 miles north of Ephesus and about 50 miles north of Smyrna, following the mail route of that time.

- It is about 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.
- One of the greatest libraries in the world: a Library of over 200,000 volumes was in Pergamos; only Alexandria was bigger.

Chapter 2:12

**And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,
These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:**

- Pergamos literally means to be “elevated through marriage.”
- They are being married to this world, they are compromising with false doctrine and holiness.
- This is the Roman capital and the “right of the sword” (capital punishment) would have come from this city.
- The Roman governor’s palace had the power to kill.
- Jesus wanted them to know: only Jesus has the two edged sword!

- **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. NKJV**
- Jesus commends Himself as one with a “two edged sword” because the Word is the key weapon against heresies, and heresies abound in Pergamos...
 - It is a sharp sword that can cut through any hardened heart...this sword can break through stone!

 - It is a two-edged sword that cuts both ways – Old Testament blade-it can cut with law and the commandments of God, New Testament blade-but it can also cut with the grace and love of the gospel...it can bring deep conviction and repentance, and it can heal and seal the wound...
 - For those in rebellion—we preach the Law; for those burdened down by the Law—we preach grace. We need both!!

I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.

- 1000 feet above the city was the Acropolis in which there was a coliseum that held around 10,000 people, and the largest altar in the Roman Empire...the Altar to Zeus, not a temple but an altar.
- At this time the worship and burning of incense is to the Emperor. (no longer Zeus)
- There is also the worship of Asclepius.
- The Temple Asclepius or the Temple of the gods was the hospital, the largest in the world.
 - It was 5 acres!
 - Millions of people came to this “hospital.”
 - All over the world, people came here to seek healing from the god **Asclepius.**

Asclepius was a greek hero and god of medicine in ancient Greek religion and mythology.

- **Asclepius** represents the healing aspect of the medical arts;
- His daughters are Hygieia ("Hygiene", the goddess of health, cleanliness, and sanitation), Laso (the goddess of recuperation from illness), Aceso (the goddess of the healing process), Aglæa/Ægle (the goddess of beauty, splendor, glory, magnificence, and adornment), and Panacea (the goddess of universal remedy).
- **Asclepius** was one of Apollo's sons, sharing with Apollo the epithet *Paeon* ("the Healer"). The rod of Asclepius, a snake-entwined staff, remains a symbol of medicine today. Those physicians and attendants who served this god were known as the Therapeutae of Asclepius.
 - The Temple taught that healing occurs through diet, stress relief, exercise, sacred water, and medicine (herbs and spices); a very holistic approach-remarkably modern!
 - The healing was mainly from sacred water-drinking and bathing; there is evidence that the minerals really were medicinal.
 - **They called the snake of the pole, Soter, which means savior.**
 - Demonic counterfeit of the savior
 - The snake was thought to be an animal that could resurrect itself from the dead (sheds its skin...gone in the winter, returns in the spring)
 - The sick person was to sleep in the Temple and let the snakes slither over them, supposedly healing you!
 - Interesting that two kinds of people were not allowed in the Temple: No pregnant women or old people!! (hedging their bets; half of women lost their babies at that time)
 - When you were cured you had your name written on a white stone or colonnade.

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.

- You have still kept the faith...you have kept the basics.

Who is Antipas?

- Antipas was evidently one the first martyrs in Pergamos.
- There is a tradition that Antipas was placed into a large bronze pot, no water in it, and the heat was turned up and baked him.
- Antipas means “against all” called by God to stand against all.
- They are commended for holding fast to the name of the Lord and not denying the faith even under great persecution.
- God see’s all of the Antipas’ today who are standing against compromise.
- I was at Isaac’s sports banquet at Univ NE Omaha a few weeks ago and sat next to a medical doctor from southern Sudan and he told me the horrific stories of what the Moslems did to the Christians in Sudan...
- Jesus now moves into the doctrinal and moral compromises of the church at Pergamos.

Vs. 14 (The Doctrine of Balaam)

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.

- Do you remember the story of Balaam?
- **2 Peter 2:15 - They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.**

- **Jude 11 - Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.**
 - In Numbers 22-25 we have the story of Balaam, infamous prophet...not a Jew, but a Babylonian, gentile prophet.
 - Balak, the king of Moab saw the people of Israel approaching the Promised Land and having victory over every land, and they were even slaughtering the giants of the land.
 - Archeologists have found the ruins of these giants with 18 foot ceilings, 10 foot doors, 12 foot beds.
 - Balak knows he is about to be defeated and so he hires Balaam to prophecy for him...to curse the nation of Israel.
 - But Balaam goes to the mountain with the nation of Israel and blesses them! 3x he does this! Beautiful prophecies.
 - Balaam looks at Balak and says "I can't curse God's people, every time I open my mouth blessings come out."
 - Balaam understands that these people are under God's blessing and protection.
 - But what we can do is get God's people to come out from under God's blessing and covering! We can't remove it from them, but we can get them to come out from it.
 - So, he showed Balak how to cause the nation of Israel to compromise: This is the teaching...get thousands of women dressed up in seductive ways and you send them out to the Israelite men and say, "Hey big boy...come with us and we'll show you how to worship the way we worship in Moab."
 - Thousands of Israelite men began to sacrifice to idols and entered into sexual immorality.
 - Judgment came from God!!

- It appears that there were teachers in Pergamos that were teaching the people that it was acceptable to merge idolatry with their Christianity, even allowing a little fornication into their Christian lives.
- Now we may not have little idols in our home, but what you give your heart to is what you worship:
 - Your career
 - A relationship
 - Pride
 - Drugs
 - Pleasure
 - What you give the most of your life to is your idol, your god
 - **The first commandment says (Exodus 20:3) You shall have no other gods before Me.**
 - “Before me,” means before my sight, before my presence.
 - No other gods! None!
 - America is full of idols: We have sacrificed 50 million unborn babies to the god of pleasure.
- Have you entered into sexual immorality? Are you morally impure? Are you sleeping around? Are you living with someone who is not your wife/husband?
- Sexual immorality is a perversion of God’s plan! God has a divine order for the home and for relationship and we have perverted it.
- We have sowed the wind and reaped the worldwind with AIDS, STD, Abortions, and we are reaping this stuff...the music videos, RAP music, and the minds of our young people are being programmed with sex, sex, sex! Imagine being a teenager and your mind being bombarded with this stuff.
- Pray for America...pray for our teenagers!

- The church is embracing this stuff...many mainline churches are being torn asunder by ordaining homosexuals.
- We have churches today that teach that the Bible is not inerrant nor authoritative...doctrine of Mariology...etc.
- Jesus is saying “Stop It.”
- If you are doing this here! We say “Stop it!” Jesus says “Stop it!” It is at heaven’s expense that Jesus says “stop it,” He loves you!

Vs. 15

Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

- Second time in the New Testament Jesus says he hates something...both times it is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.
- The doctrine was similar to the doctrine of Balaam.
- Irenaeus, the great church father, said that Nicolas was a deacon of the church (Acts 6:5), who was a false believer, was used by satan to lead the church into false doctrine.
- It is said that he led the people into immorality and assaulted the church with sexual temptations.
- Clement of Alexandria wrote, “They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence.”
- The name “Nicolas” means “one who conquers the people” and I explained earlier in our study of Ephesus that God hates the deeds and doctrines, who conquer the people.
- When your relationship with God is cooling and you are not being led by the Holy Spirit, you start to depend on others to guide you.
- If you set aside the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, who do you want in the pulpit? You want the professional “Marry’em and Bury’em Guy”, a Medicine Man, you hire them to be your religious link to Almighty...natural process!

- Who tore the veil at the Temple when Jesus died? It was 80 feet high! No priest could have done that! God did it.
- The Holy of Holies is now open to all of us...there is no Priest between you and God! There is no one between me and my kids. I don't have anyone between us...these are my kids and have fun with them and drive them crazy.
- God doesn't want a man standing between us and Him! It is a personal relationship with Him.
- Not someone who tells you to call them "Most Holy, Most Reverend Father."

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

- Always the right answer! Repent...turn from your error, or God will come do the fighting!
- Two types of governors in Rome. The **Evas Gladia** could pronounce the "death penalty." A lower class did not have this ability.
- Jesus is saying, "I have the **Evas Gladia**, I can pronounce life and death."

Don't forget→You are an Overcomer!

Vs. 17

He who has an ear, 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*.

- This is a promise only for those who overcome.
- **1 John 5:5 - Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

- **Revelation 12:11 - And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. NKJV**
- As true believers, we are overcomers, but those who have snuck into the church, who are holding these doctrines, God will make war against them!
- God is making war against churches with false doctrine, who have compromised with sexuality, who are ruling over the people.
- Hidden manna - A Jew understood this.
 - 16 years in the wilderness they ate of the Manna.
 - Some of that Manna was put in the Ark of the_Covenant.
 - Jewish apocryphal mythology maintained that the pot of manna in the ark (Ex. 16:4, 31-34) was hidden by Jeremiah, or taken by an angel to heaven, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., where it would remain until the Messiah should come. (Macabees 2:4-8).
 - Jesus is the true Manna! Jesus is the true bread from heaven. (7:16; Ps. 78:24; 105:40; Jn 6:31-35, 48-51)
- White stone-Juries who voted for acquittal cast a white stone in an urn...you and I have been given a new name! Your new name is "God's son...Follower of Christ...Disciple" the blood of Christ has covered you;
- **You are fully acquitted; no matter what you have done in the past, you are fully and completely vindicated and set free to follow Christ.**
- **Victors in the Olympics in Greece would receive this white stone. Jesus is proclaiming that if we will overcome, He will reward us with this beautiful stone of victory.**