

WHAT DOES JESUS WANT TO SAY TO OUR CHURCH?

Part Six – The Church of Pergamos—A Licentious Church

Revelation 2:12-17

INTRODUCTION:

1. Pergamos was a thriving capital city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) north of Smyrna and about 20 miles from the Mediterranean Sea.
2. It was an extremely wicked city where pagan worship was a way of life.
3. This pagan worship consisted of:
 - a. Emperor worship (Caesar). Pergamos was a territory of Rome.
 - b. Pagan gods of Greek mythology. In fact, the city was believed to have been built by Hercules.
 - c. Sacrifices offered to these gods, then, eaten by the worshiper.
 - d. The use of young women as temple prostitutes with whom the worshiper entered into the most vile and immoral acts man could devise.
4. It was in this atmosphere that the little church at Pergamos was built, and it is to this church that the third letter from Jesus Christ is directed.

I. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS (VERSE 12)

A. It is likewise addressed to the Pastor. Why?

1. God's plan is always to work through His called-out man.
 - a. The Pastor leads God's flock as a shepherd.
 - b. The Pastor feeds the flock (Acts 20:28).
 - c. The Pastor watches over the flock.
2. The term "elder" (presbyteros) speaks of the dignity of the office; the term "bishop" (episkipos) refers to the duties of the office and the term "shepherd" (poimene) relates to the ministry of feeding and protecting.

B. The word "Pergamos" means "marriage".

1. This city was married to sin.
2. It was married to worldly activity.
3. It was married to Satan.

C. Christ is represented as the One who has the sharp, two-edged Sword.

1. This Sword is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).
2. It is sharp.
 - a. It is sharp enough to cut the shackles of sin from the sinner.
 - b. It is sharp enough to cut away pride, jealousy, lust and other sins from the Christian.
 - c. It is sharp enough to cut through the stony heart of the rebellious person.
 - d. It can reshape your life, if you will be a doer of the Word (Luke 11:28; James 1:22).
3. It has two edges.

- a. It is effective upon the sinner.
- b. It is effective upon the saint.
- c. It does its work regardless of how it falls. "My word shall not return void."
(Isaiah 55:11).

D. All churches, all ministers, all Christians will be judged by the standard of God's Holy Word (John 12:48).

II. CHRIST COMMENDS THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS (VERSE 13)

A. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest."

- 1. God has a complete record of all our works: faithful and unfaithful.
- 2. God knows all of our circumstances ". . . where thou dwellest."

B. "Where Satan's seat is." Satan had set up his earthly throne in this city.

- 1. They served in Satan's capital city.
 - a. He was ruler of that city.
 - b. The citizens were his subjects and he was their god.
- 2. It was a hard field, but this is where the gospel needed to be preached and a church needed to be established.

C. "And thou holdest fast my name and has not denied my faith." Though unpopular, they upheld the name of Jesus Christ and His Word.

- 1. They were doctrinely sound.
- 2. They were right about salvation.
- 3. Yet they were worldly in action.
 - a. "Dwellest" means permanent dwelling place.
 - b. At one time this church had stood true in spite of persecution, but now it was a compromising church.

D. "Wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." This faithful servant gave his life rather than to give in to Satan's attack.

- 1. Thank God there are some who remain faithful unto death. Antipas is believed to have been the Pastor.
- 2. Satan could not destroy the church by making martyrs of men. They grew stronger under persecution.
- 3. So, Satan tried a new tactic on the church at Pergamos.
 - a. He introduced worldliness into the church.
 - b. Its work resulted in:
 - (1) A lessening of their spiritual life.
 - (2) They ceased to look for the coming of Christ.
 - (3) They ceased to win souls.
- 4. Satan was now dwelling among some of the church members.
 - a. The great danger for Baptists is not denying the faith.

- b. The danger is the acceptance of worldliness into the church: smoking, gambling, drinking, immorality, all kinds of tattoos and body piercings, everything but separated living and soul-winning.
- c. Sound doctrinal sermons on Sunday accomplish very little without a separated church membership who will win souls to Christ and live for Jesus Christ all the rest of the week.
- d. It is because of worldliness and compromise as well as the apathy of Christians that churches are dying across America.

III. CHRIST REBUKES THEM FOR COMPROMISE (VERSES 14-15)

A. “. . . them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.” A doctrine of compromise was introduced into the church there at Pergamos.

- 1. In Numbers 22-31, we are introduced to the two-faced prophet, Balaam.
- 2. The doctrine of Balaam can be summed up as:
 - a. Popularity seeking. He would not go to wicked King Balak for money; but to please him. He did go to him when God had forbidden him to.
 - b. He caused the Israelites to inter-marry with the Moabites (heathen) and to tolerate their sin and pagan worship (Churches often tolerate sin to please people).
- 3. How many Christians today are practicing the doctrine of Balaam?
 - a. It is a stumbling block before other Christians.
 - b. It is open and willful sin in the sight of God.

B. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans . . .

- 1. This doctrine taught that the Church was to be ruled by a group of rulers or hierarchy, a clique. The meaning of this doctrine is to be ruled by the people instead of being led by the Pastor, or even to have a group of professed believers “lord it over” the people and lead them astray.
- 2. Notice God hates this doctrine.
 - a. What God hates, Christians ought to hate.
 - b. This church tried to combine Christian theology and pagan philosophy. It cannot be done and be right with God and His Word!

IV. CHRIST’S INVITATION AND PROMISE TO THIS CHURCH (VERSES 16-17)

A. “Repent” (verse 16).

- 1. This is the only road to recovery from sin and escape from ruin.
- 2. Every form of compromise will be judged by God and His Word. God never accepts compromise.

B. “Hear what the Spirit saith . . .” (verse 17). Listen to God and obey Him.

C. The promise of a white stone and hidden manna is given to all who stand true: “to him that overcometh”.

- 1. This promise is to the overcomers. This means:
 - a. To overcome world temptation.
 - b. To overcome trials and circumstances.

- c. To be faithful unto death.
2. "Hidden manna" – They will spiritually feast upon the Word of God (hidden truths).
3. "White stone" – The Urim (white stone—diamond) was worn around the priest's neck and was used to discern the will of God.
4. The faithful Christian will have daily communion with God and direction from God for every detail of their life.

CONCLUSION: Tell how to be saved. Christian friend, let's be a church that always stands upon the Word of God! Amen?! Let's be true to God's Word and never compromise its truths! Amen?! Let's listen to God and always obey Him in everything! Amen?! Let's stay faithful to God and be one of His overcomers! Amen?!