

6-4-23 Churches of Revelation (Pergamos)

Revelation 12-17.

Ephesus: the loveless church, “left your first love.”

Smyrna: the persecuted church, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. (.10)”
“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Pergamos: This church had members who held the false doctrine that it was easy to profess Christ while living in sin at the same time. Also, the people were under the heavy hands of spiritual dictators who promoted themselves, not the Lord.

The church in Pergamum is the 3rd of the 7 Churches. By now you have probably noticed the pattern repeated in each of these 7 letters. First, Jesus identifies and says some things about Himself. Then He says something positive about the Church (except 1 church). Then He points out problems in the Church and tells them what to do about it (except 2 churches). Then every letter ends with an invitation and a promise for those who overcome. (believers)

Pergamos means “married,” and this church was wedded to some doctrines and practices that were wrong.

The City of Pergamum was known for 2 things:

1. It was a place of great learning. Pergamum had the 2nd largest library in the world at the time. Pergamum also had a great university. Pergamum was a center of learning and is where people came to study.
2. Pergamum was also a religious center. The Romans were pantheistic—they believed god was everywhere in everything and everything or anything could be a god. They were also polytheistic—they believed there were many gods. They did not have a problem with adding Jesus to their list until the Christians claimed that there is only **ONE** God. One of their prominent gods was Asclepius, the god of healing. No wonder Jesus says this was where Satan’s throne was.

I. The Commander.

- Read verse 12.

Jesus presents Himself to this church as the One “**who has the sharp, double-edged sword.**” This description tells us at least two things:

1. The sword of His mouth is the Word of God.

Hebrew 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.

2. The sword of His mouth tells us about the power and judgment of His Word.
 - The believers in Pergamum were being persecuted and some were even being martyred for their faith. Some government officials were misusing the power of the sword or execution. They were slaying innocent people, in particular believers who refused to deny Christ. Jesus Christ is

proclaiming that the power of His sword—the power of His Word—is far greater. He holds the power of life and death over all men. **Verse 16** warns the enemies of Christ.

II. Churches Commendations.

- **Read verse 13.**

1. They remained true to Jesus' name.

- In a religious environment where there were numerous gods, these Christians continued to lift the name of Jesus. Never let us forget that Bethel Baptist Church is not about who the staff is, what our building looks like, what style of music we do, “isms” etc....; it is about Jesus.

2. They did not renounce their faith in Jesus.

- As I told you last week, once a year every resident of the Roman Empire was required to burn incense to Caesar and to say, “Caesar is Lord.” If they did not, they were killed.”

III. Churches Complaint.

- **Read verses 14-15.**

1. **There were some that practiced the doctrine of Balaam.**

- Balak the king of Moab had heard what the Israelites had done to some of the other nations so to protect his kingdom, he sought the services of Balaam, a prophet of Israel, to curse Israel. When the king first approached Balaam, Balaam refused; but he accepted the second offer. Three times Balaam was going to curse Israel, but it always came out as a blessing. Balaam then came up with a plan that would work. He suggested that Moabite girls seduce Israel's men to intermarry and lead them to worship their gods. That is what the Moabites did, and it worked. Balaam tried to stand with one foot in the world and one foot in obedience to God. Balaam's doctrine was one of worldliness.

2. **“You also have those who hold to the doctrine (teaching) of the Nicolaitans.”**

- This teaching was one that said that there were two kinds of people in the church. There were the clergy and there were the people and the clergy had special rights and authorities that the others in the church did not have. These people who had been ordained were the only ones who could forgive sin, collect indulgences, or pray someone out of purgatory. This type of teaching still exists today; but we believe in what we call the “priesthood of the believers,” meaning the foot of the cross is level. We are all equal in God's eyes. God has gifted each one of us differently. The church in Pergamos church was a church divided into “priests” and “people.”
- Compromise with worldly morality and pagan doctrine was prevalent in the church, especially in the third century when Christianity became popular. So, compromise with pagan morality and departure from biblical faith soon corrupted the church.

IV. Churches Correction

- **Read verses 16-17.**

- The correction is simple. Repent or be destroyed!
- If you hear and choose to listen, which leads to repenting, those will be overcomers.

- For those who are overcomers, there are 2 promises given. Please recall from the last 2 weeks who the overcomers are. TRUE BELIEVERS!

1 John 5:1-5, Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

1. The overcomer shall receive some of the hidden manna.

- The same Word of God that is a double-edged sword is also our spiritual food. This food is only hidden to the non-believer. Once a person is saved, God opens His Word to us and sustains and nourishes us with the Word.

2. The overcomer shall receive a white stone with a new name written on it.

- In biblical times, they would take a thin, flat, white stone and two people who wanted to be like family took the stone and wrote a name on it only that other person knew maybe a nickname or a special affectionate, intimate name and then after they wrote those two names on that flat stone, they broke it. Jesus says, "Listen that's what I'll do for you." He says, "I'll be so close to you, I'll know you so dearly and so intimately that it will be like we are brothers like we are closest friends and I'll give you a name that you will know me so well that nobody else can know me the way that you know me." Jesus says, "I'll feed you and I will have such an intimate relationship with you that no one else on earth will have one exactly like it. I'll give you a white stone.

Conclusion:

Are you trying to have it both ways? Are you trying to mix a little worldliness with a little Christianity? It will not work!

Do you think that you are more important to the Kingdom of God than someone else? Do you think the Kingdom of God will fail without you?

Christians, if you have been compromising: Repent!