

Revelation Ch. 2 - Pergamos

V:12a *"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write;..."*

- Dear Pergamos..... The "Imperial church"

Background:

- Pergamos: represents church history from 314-590 AD

Edicts of Toleration:

- Diocletian was the last of the Roman emperors to engage in open persecution of Christians, he was the most violent, but the struggle between Roman heathenism and Christianity was in it's final throes.
- It is described in The History of the Christian Church by Phillip Schaff, as *"the crisis of utter extinction or absolute supremacy for each of the two religions."*
- After Diocletian, Galerius, the real author of the persecution was brought to his senses by a terrible disease and put an end to the slaughter just before his death with the *"Edict of Toleration"* in 311 AD.
- Galerius did this in connection with Licinius and Constantine who were each Emperors of different parts of the divided Roman Empire.
- Part of this edict stated that he would now grant Christians to hold their religious assemblies, provided they did not disturb the order of the state. To this he added the instruction that the Christians *"after this manifestation of grace"*, should pray to their God for the welfare of the emperors, of the state, and of themselves, that the state might prosper in every respect, and that they might live quietly in their homes.
- This edict virtually closed the period of persecution in the Roman Empire.
- A couple of years later in 313 AD, Constantine issued a 2nd edict: The second edict went beyond the first of 311; it was a decisive step from hostile neutrality to friendly neutrality and protection, and prepared the way for the legal recognition of Christianity, as the religion of the empire.
- The 2nd edict ordered that any confiscated property be restored to the victims at the empires expense, but the most significant part was stated in the beginning. The proclamation that *"every man had a right to choose his religion according to the dictates of his own conscience and honest conviction, without compulsion or interference from the government. Religion is worth nothing except as an act of freedom. Forced religion is no religion at all."*
- Later, Constantine consolidated the Roman Empire through military action.

- Later, successors to Constantine enforced the Christian religion to the exclusion of every other, including their orthodoxy to the exclusion of every other form of dissent, which became a crime against the state.
- Pergamum: marriage. (perverted marriage)
- There were 3 royal cities, which competed with one another.
 1. Smyrna: great commercial center.
 2. Ephesus: great political center.
 3. Pergamum: great "religious" center.
- Paganism un-limited, moving away from Christ.
- Pergamum was the administrative capital of the Roman province of Asia, and is where Emperor worship started in 29 BC
- There were many great temples there including one to Caesar Augustus built in 29 BC
- As a "royal city" Pergamum became a winter retreat for the emperors, and was also a fortified city / stronghold.
- Pergamum had the greatest library in the ancient / pagan world containing over 200,000 volumes. The city got its name from parchment "permeamena". Alexander gave the library to Cleopatra who took it to Alexandria around 330 BC
- Pergamum was home to "the great altar of Zeus" which was the largest altar in the world and one of the 7 great wonders of the ancient world. Possibly the throne of Satan referred to in **Rev. 2:13**.
- According to Hislop / The Two Babylons, Pergamum picked up the religious / pagan mantle dropped by Babylon becoming the center of pagan worship.

V:12b *"...These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;"*

- Pergamum needs a little surgery - God's word is the scalpel that He would use.

Hebrews 4:12 *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

- Jesus identifies Himself in relation to the Word of God, in relation to who He is.

John 1:14

- **John 1:14** “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- Why does Jesus identify Himself to the church in Pergamos with this specific attribute?
- What is their weakness or their need? He is the “becoming One” – whatever we need Him to be.
- The Word of God is the answer / cure for all the false religions, and for man's sins.

2 Peter 1:2-3 “²Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³according as His diving power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue:”

- Though Ephesus had left it's first love, and Smyrna was suffering attacks internal and external. Both churches had maintained sound doctrine and practices despite the efforts of false teachers to subvert and control them. Pergamum is a different story.

2:13 *"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

- Satan's throne is in the world.

Matthew 4:8 “Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.”

James 4:4

Ephesians 2:2 “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

- 3 commendations:
 1. Jesus notes their circumstances, being in the same city where Satan has his throne, a difficult place to be a believer in Christ, all in the presence of the pagan worship, new Babylon etc.

Matthew 16:13-18 choices

2. Yet, you remained true to my name. They were faithful in their defense of the deity of Christ.

Arian heresy: denied the deity of Christ (Aryanism).

Pelagian Heresy: denied original sin, total corruption of human nature, the denial of grace.

Gnostic heresy: Denying that Jesus came in the flesh, and because He was only a spirit – only spiritual things mattered, the flesh was of no consequence and they could do whatever they wanted in the flesh.

1 John 4:2-3 “²Hereby know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

3. Did not renounce their faith, they stayed true to the doctrines of Christ. Some or at least one, Antipas even stood the test to the point of death.

* Antipas is not mentioned anywhere else.

- Commended for maintaining true faith and preaching it in the name of Jesus under extremely trying circumstances, against much temptation and compromise. A faithful remnant.

V:14 *"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."*

- Numbers Ch. 22
- 2 points of rebuke:
 1. Toleration of the doctrine of Balaam.
 2. Toleration of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.
- The "doctrine" of Balaam is not different from the "error" of Balaam in **Jude 11**, or the "way" of Balaam in **2 Peter 2:15**.
- The doctrine of Balaam was how to corrupt Israel through intermarriage with non Jews - Moabite women, being un-equally yoked **2 Cor. 6:14**, introducing Israel to both idol worship / spiritual fornication and fornication / sexual immorality within the church.

2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

- Worshipping God in an un-prescribed way is spiritual fornication. We are called to worship God in the spirit and in truth, not with idols or works of the flesh.

Galatians 1:8 "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Exodus 20:25 "And if thou wilt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou has polluted it."

Leviticus 10:1-2 "¹And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not. ²And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."

Mark 7:6 "... well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth Me with their lips, but their hear is far from Me."

John 4:23-24 "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Romans 8:4 **Galatians 5:25** **Philippians 3:3**

- During the time period represented by Pergamum, the un-converted world came into the church. If you can't beat them, join them, then kill them from the inside. (Ecumenism)
- Compromise, they allowed false teachers to remain in the church, not necessarily embracing their teachings, but that was just a matter of time.
- Many were professing to be Christians but were not acting like it.

V:15 *"So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate."*

- The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, hated in Ephesus was embraced in Pergamum.
- Christ hates it! He's not luke warm on the subject.

1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

- In any priesthood, where there is a spiritual hierarchy over the people, in our minds this puts some men closer to God than others, God wants us all to be close to him. He wants us to come directly to Him in Christ Jesus.
- He doesn't want anyone standing in the way! He died to give us access to the throne of God.
- The curtain / veil in the temple was torn upon Jesus' death on the cross, nothing stood between us and Him, that is what he died for and we should honor that.

Matthew 27:51 "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;"

V:16 *"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."*

- More surgery!
- Only two possible responses to sin: repentance or rationalization.
- Repent! The only cure was / is repentance, a changing of our hearts and minds, a complete turning away from.
- From an attitude of compromise to insistence on doctrinal and moral purity.
- Repent for the sin of harboring and listening to the Balaamites and Nicolaitanes in their church.

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- Otherwise Jesus will fight against them / us with the sword of His mouth.
JUDGEMENT.

John 12:48 "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one to judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Revelation 19:15 "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

- We are to recognize the word of God as the final authority on **all** matters, not a church, or men, or the world.
- "Rhema" word as opposed to "Logos". – surgery with a scalpel, or a sword?

2 Timothy 3:16-7 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2 Peter 1:20-21 **John 14:26**

V:17a *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;..."*

- To us....

1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 ²³"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"

2:17b *"...To him that overcometh ..."*

- To the true Christian, we overcome by the blood of Jesus, He is our righteousness, our victory is in Him!

Romans 8:37 "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

- We aren't the overcomers, Jesus did it, not us. Victory was won by Jesus; we share in it as his disciples.

1 John 5:4-5

1 John 5:4-5 ⁴“For whatsoever is born of god overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.”

John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

2:17c *"...will I give to eat of the hidden manna,..."*

- Hidden manna refers to Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life as He is revealed in the Word of God.

John 6:35 "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

John 6:47-48 ⁴⁷Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am that bread of life."

- Believers must eat that bread, partake of that spiritual food that is the Word of God to grow and have spiritual strength.
- "Hidden manna" was manna that was placed in the ark of the covenant so the Jews wouldn't forget who fed them during their years in the wilderness.

2:17d *"... and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."*

- It was a custom of Asia Minor to give a "tessera", a cube or rectangle of either stone or ivory with words or symbols inscribed upon them, considered an intimate gift.
- The white stone was actually the stone of acceptance or approval used in voting. A white stone was a "yes" vote and a black stone was a "no" vote.

* In some private clubs, or public forums people got "black balled", rejected.

- Jesus will give us a white stone, accepting us. We have been accepted by God through Christ Jesus. Praise God!
- Christ will give each believer a new stone,(an intimate & personal gift) with a new name to each of us, different names for each of us, we are each a new creation in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

- Two evils had begun to creep into the church.
 1. Idolatry
 2. Priesthood
- Pergamus is historically the beginning of a church state system under Constantine in 316 A.D. - The beginning of the Roman Catholic Church, paganism / Babylon joins the church.
- The result of ecumenism.