

## Session Ten:

### Revelation 2:12-17 Church of Pergamos

#### I) History of Pergamos

- A) Pergamum was a city many came to in hopes of being healed by pagan spiritualists. This city boasted of having several prominent temples dedicated to various gods such as Zeus, Athena and Dionysus. Within this ancient city was a library said to hold as many as 200,000 books making this a very literate and cultured community. From Pergamum also came Parchments (Pergamene-charta) after which the city was actually named.
- B) Historically, the Church in Pergamum was faithful to Jesus but also tolerant of false teaching and practice, like much of the Church today in the Western world. The Church had what Pastor Mark Driscoll calls *a bleeding heart syndrome*, also known as *syncretism*. This is where Christians love, sympathize with, and even wrongly accommodate non-believers to the point that they are no longer distinct as disciples of Jesus.
- C) History tends to declare that Pergamum had the least amount of Jewish presence among the other six Churches located in Asia Minor or known today as Western Turkey. The reason for this was because of the city's separated location away from trade routes.
- D) In Jesus' address to this Church He mentions them dwelling where *Satan's throne is*. This reference was most likely made because of the many pagan gods that were worshipped there. But of those pagan gods, the worst was emperor worship. The emperor required citizens to worship him as lord and savior. This worship led to the death of one (Antipas) and the suffering of many.
- E) Unlike the Church of Ephesus, Pergamum rolled out the welcome mat for the doctrine of the Nicolaitans as well as the teachings of Balaam, of which Jesus said in **Revelation 2:6** that He hated. Though they were standing faithfully against external pressures, these internal errors would kill their devotion to Jesus quickly.
- F) The mixture of pagan deities, emperor worship and occult lifestyle made it very difficult for the early Church to live in Pergamum. This eventually led to them being the first among the other 6 Churches to have a martyr. Jesus recognizes this when He says in **Revelation 2:13** "... in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr..."

#### II) Jesus' Address to the Church of Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17)

- A) **Revelation 2:12-13** "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, these things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. 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."
  - 1) Jesus first **Addresses** the human leadership of the Church in the same way that He has **Addressed** the other two Churches prior (Ephesus and Smyrna).

- 2) From Jesus' Address to Pergamum He then gives the **Attributes** of Himself that are specific to the Church and what they were facing.
- 3) He says to the Church of Pergamos in **Revelation 2:12** *"...These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword..."*
  1. Pergamos is the only Church that Jesus gave just one **Attribute** of Himself to. This **Attribute** is coming in the form of a strong rebuke for the ministry's tolerance of immorality and demonic activity within the ministry.
  2. **He who has the sharp two-edged sword (Rev. 2:12)** = This is a reference to the convicting power of the Word of God. Jesus is coming to them as God who speaks truth and commands those that lead His Church to speak with the same level of truth as He.
    - (a) **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."*
    - (b) **Revelation 19:13** *"He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word Of God."*
  3. Jesus is coming to this ministry with a threat of judgment if they don't turn a corner, repent and take a stand for truth. Jesus requires that His Shepherds stand for what He stands for, loving what He loves and hating what He hates. Jesus will never co-exist with pagan deities (*co-exist, meaning agree with and endorse as right ways to God*).
- 4) Jesus now begins to **Approve** this ministry for some of the positive things going on within. He says to them in **Revelation 2:13-14** *"...I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. 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."*
  1. He **Approves** their faithfulness to Him in the midst of great external pressures which led to the death of Antipas, who was a faithful martyr (witness). These Christian converts in the Church of Pergamos, most likely came out from these various pagan cults which made their allegiance to Jesus challenging and very costly.
  2. The reference to *Satan's Throne* and *where Satan dwells* is most likely speaking of the emperor worship that was taking place. Of course this worship of a man, which isn't new in the Bible, would be only a precursor to the antichrist who is still yet coming.
- 5) **Revelation 2:14-15** *"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. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."*
  1. Jesus, the greatest grace Teacher of all times, makes clear through His words to this Church that He is against a message of grace which diminishes wholeheartedness towards God.

2. It's here that Jesus moves from His Approval of them to His **Accusation** of them. Just because they were faithful to Him under external pressure, doesn't mean that He is going to pat them on the back for gross internal errors.
3. The majority of the warnings about false teachers in the New Testament weren't related to external teachers, but to internal teachers.
  - (a) **Jude 4** *"For certain men have crept in (into the Church) unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."*
  - (b) **2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:1** *"But there will be false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction."*
4. These doctrines (Balaam and the Nicolaitans) were being tolerated by leaders within the ministry, and causing the very erosion of the foundation upon which it was built.
5. The Jesus of Western culture is a Jesus that doesn't have enough backbone to address issues within His own ministry. But here we see the Jesus of the New Testament taking up issues without hesitation. The God of Truth requires truth within His Shepherds.
  - (a) **The Doctrine of Balaam** (Numbers 22:1-15; 25:1-9; 31:16) = The Doctrine of Balaam is a set of teachings that promotes paganism, idolatry and immorality. It's a teaching that approves eating meals in fellowship inside pagan temples, offering worship to strange deities.
    - (i) Paul addressed people who were taking his Gospel and perverting it as well in **Romans 6:1-2** saying *"What shall I say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"*
  - (b) **The Doctrine Of The Nicolaitans** = This Doctrine is often referred to as Antinomianism which basically reduces the grace of God to lawless *freedom in Christ*. It's a perverted grace, or distorted grace message which reduces Jesus' call of wholeheartedness to passivity.
    - (i) Jesus uses the same words here as He does in **Revelation 2:6** when He spoke to the Church of Ephesus saying *"...the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate..."* The modern teaching of grace is often distorted, empowering people in a life of sin, under the banner of Jesus' blessing.
    - (ii) **Titus 2:11-12** *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age..."*
    - (iii) According to Titus and the overall testimony of the New Testament, the grace of God should empower us to become free from sin, not empowered to continue dwelling in it, as the Doctrine of Balaam was teaching.

6) **Revelation 2:16** *“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against you with the sword of My mouth.”*

1. Jesus, the Great Shepherd of our souls, doesn't leave us only with an Accusation, but now gives **Advice** to become free from bondage and sinful teachings.
2. The sword of **verse 12** is now taken up in the sword of His mouth with a commitment to fight against them with it, if they refuse to take seriously their sinful situation. Jesus would love for them to fight their sin with the help of the Holy Spirit, but if they refuse, He Himself will get involved and through judgment, fight against them.
3. Many today see a distant and disconnected Jesus, but this passage alone declares His commitment to having purity and wholeheartedness without compromise within His Church. His commitment to them was that He would come quickly.
4. The post crucified Jesus, in His resurrection has no problem entering into contention with spiritual leaders inside His Church and calling them into holiness and separation from sin and sinful, destructive doctrines.

7) **Revelation 2:17** *“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.”*

1. From Jesus' Advice to them He gives them a final **Appeal**. To this ministry that was loving Him externally by being faithful in the midst of persecution, but struggling internally by being tolerant of gross sin, must listen to the Holy Spirit's words to them with a hearing ear and then respond both rightly and aptly.
2. Jesus finishes His words to this ministry by giving them **Assurance** of reward IF they will repent and love Him on His terms not their own. Many people love a cultural version of Christianity but reject a Bible based Christianity.
  - (a) The promise of reward is for those who stay clean in a dirty world, who stay Christian in a pagan culture and those who keep straight in a crooked day.
    - (i) **Hidden Manna** = The promise of receiving hidden manna from Jesus is made to those who overcome their sin by repenting and loving Jesus in the way He has loved them (wholeheartedness).
      1. I believe that the hidden manna can mean much, but at the end of the day, it seems to speak of greater revelation of Jesus and His heart (**Exodus 16:32-34; Matthew 6:9-13; John 6**). This seems to be similar to the promise of being satisfied by Him from **Matthew 5:6** based on our hunger for Him.
    - (ii) **A white stone** = The promise that the overcomer would receive a white stone with a name written on it that nobody knows but he who receives it can mean many things. But it seems to speak of two primary things.

- (iii) Stones throughout both the Old Testament (**Joshua 4**) and in the New Testament (**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:5; Revelation 21:14, 19-20**) spoke of memorials, or stories of what God had done. Just maybe, this stone will tell the story of how that person loved God while they were on the earth, when no one was watching (**Matthew 6:5-6**). Names throughout the Bible speak of destiny, or the story of their past, present and future!
- (iv) The other possibility is that this stone represents a pet name between God and the receiver. *Pet name* meaning an endearing name that's spoken only between God and that person.
- (v) Personally, I have endearing names that I call Jennifer (my wife) at home that no other person alive will ever hear or know. And if someone did hear it they might think it was silly or frivolous, but when she hears it she feels my tenderness behind it. This stone might be something like this. It's personal whatever it is specifically.