

# The Church of Pergamum

Scripture: Revelation. 2:12-17

Pergamum or Pergamos was the Provincial capital of Asia! The oldest city in Asia. Pergamum was the first to erect temples to Caesar Augustus and Zeus!

Comparing Ephesus vs Pergamum is like comparing New York vs Washington DC.

Parchment leather started in Pergamum! The word parchment is derived from the dressed skins, which are leather on which books were written. It was a technological revolution. Before that, it was written on papyrus material which would fade! It's the second-largest library next to Alexandria, Egypt!

At the end of the Hellenistic period, in 197 BC, the city Smyrna suddenly cut its ties with the King of Pergamum and instead appealed to Rome for help. Smyrna created a cult of Emperor Worship to establish a bond, and the cult eventually became widespread throughout the Roman Empire.

In 133 BC, when the last king of Pergamos died without an heir, his living will confer his entire kingdom, including Smyrna, to the Romans. It officially became the Roman province of Asia, making Pergamum the capital.

Letter to the church of Pergamum starts with the usual phrase:

Rev.2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: "

Word of God is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword! (Hebrews 4:12)

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17)

Word of God is a sharp double-edged sword!

It will cut through any situation, and against any king's will, and establish God's will in our lives.

## 1. Satan's Throne!

**Revelation 2:13** "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

It was perhaps an altar, believed to be dedicated to Zeus, that apostle John referred to as "Satan's Throne" or to the Roman Caesar's throne that demanded emperor worship!

In those days, people were not killed for not worshipping idols, but they were put to death mercilessly for not accepting Emperor worship, and not worshipping Caesar. Even Daniel's story has to do with Emperor worship!

Yet, the church of Pergamum held fast to the name of Christ and did not deny Him! It stood firm against all odds!

They stood against the emperor's worship, but one of their members or leaders, Antipas, a faithful saint was killed! Yet the church did not run! The church is not exempt from tribulations. If it happens to our Lord, the green tree, it will happen to dry trees like us! It is better to expect tribulation and be well prepared than not expect it and be caught off guard!

The church must go through Tribulation also. Those who preach the prosperity gospel, and those who think, all is well will always be in for a rude awakening someday!

**John 16:33** "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation but take courage; I have overcome the world."

The church built on rock-solid foundation, will weather any storm! But the church that is not prepared for tribulation will be swept away!

**Matthew 7:25** "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."

## **2. Pergamum church stood firm for The Lord, but yet our Lord Jesus had some things against this church!**

**Revelation.2:14,15** "But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So, you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Another sin: covetousness, greed for worldly possessions and power. But it was all about Balaam's sin of the spirit and not of the flesh! He outwardly listened to The Lord and obeyed The Lord. But inwardly his heart was filled with evil!

Lord told him not to go to Balak and curse the people of Israel. But Balaam was bent on pleasing Balak and not God! Reluctantly, the Lord said, go with the princes.

Donkey rebukes Balaam!

The Pergamon church was accommodating people who were teaching false doctrines. We must stop anyone who preaches false doctrines! We cannot condone and close our eyes to anyone who promotes false doctrines within the church. Purity in the church comes first. Then comes the growth. Don't accommodate all kinds of

people with false doctrines to grow your church! Jesus does not want cancer within the body of the church!

Balaam blessed Israel instead of cursing. But deep in his heart, he wanted to do what Balak told him to do so he could gain glory, popularity, and wealth! We also tend to burn with lust, power, and money but pretend to obey God! Balaam advised the king to mislead Israel through sexual idolatry, and some Israelites fell for it!

What were Pergamum's false doctrines?

Some were encouraged to eat food offered to idols and encouraged sexual immorality, probably temple prostitution!!

Corinthians subtly taught this: food for the belly, and the belly for the food!

**1 Corinthians 6:12,13** "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

Nicolaitan sins also must be the combination of sexual idolatry and eating food offered to idols. It could also be the horrible doctrine that encourages fresh living because we are under grace, and we will be forgiven always!

### **3. Turn back to the Lord and repent!**

**Revelation 2:16** Therefore repent, or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Jesus will come personally and whip or punish those members swiftly. He is not going to wait too long! Church is the bride of Christ. He does not want anybody to tarnish His church! Are you saying in your heart, Oh I am saved by grace only, and so my loving Jesus will understand my weaknesses, and I can continue my sinful lifestyle as long as I want to? No! Not within the church.

**1 Corinthians 3:16,17** "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."

### **4. Great Reward for those who overcome.**

**Revelation 2:17** "To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, God wants us to overcome our temptations and come out victorious.

Christian living is all about overcoming temptations, trials, and tribulations. We must be willing to give up our desires and passions of this world to overcome these tests!

Hidden Manna!

There is a fable about the prophet Jeremiah hiding the ark of the covenant! He would come when Messiah comes and have a feast of the hidden manna kept in the Golden pot!

Pergamos saints are promised Heavenly Manna because they refuse to commune with the demons at the idolatrous meals and sexual temptations.

## **5. Special personalized special reward too!**

Revelation 2:17b. I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

1) The white stone symbolizes acquittal - not guilty! Church may stand guilty before the rulers of this world, but we are not guilty before The Lord if we repent and receive Christ through faith!

2) contestants in the Greek names were given a white stone, and their names were written on it. They were traded for an actual reward later.

3) Special invitation gesture to special functions. It is more like a pass. Jesus' special invitation to His wedding banquet and our official status of being called the children of God!

God not only gives us eternal life but also special new names for His children!

New names were given to Abraham from Abram, Sarah from Sarai, Israel from Jacob, and Peter from Simon!

All these new names were given at their real transformation experience!

Abraham and Sarah at the peak of their faith

Jacob to Israel after He wrestles with God!

From Simon to Peter when He came to Know Him personally!

Let us also draw close to The Lord so that we may receive a unique, personal name from The Lord!

Jesus rejoiced over those who did not worship the emperor and were willing to stand for Christ alone.

## **Conclusion:**

Our Lord rejoices over the church that stands firm, despite pressures and temptations from Satan's throne!

Our Lord rejoices over the church that will not put up with false teachings that are contrary to the Word!

Our Lord Jesus is eager to bless us! He rejoices over those who overcome trials, temptations, and tribulations!

Our Lord rejoices over those who do not walk according to the fleshly way of Nicolaitans.

Our Lord rejoices over those who do not walk in the greedy way of Balaam.

Our Lord has made great promises to those who repent and return to Him. Their names will be written on the white stone (book of Life?) and they will be given Heavenly Manna to eat which is Jesus Himself, the word of God, the bread of life!

**Daniel Israel**

**8.4.24**