

The Church at Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

I. Introduction:

A. The Church at Pergamos or Pergamum

1. 2nd section of Revelation contains messages from Jesus to 7 churches in Asia Minor.
2. The 1st two messages of Jesus were to the churches at Ephesus & at Smyrna.
3. The messages pattern was: **a.** Commendation **b.** Condemnation **c.** Warning **d.** Promise

B. Historical context

Pergamum was the capital of Asia Minor for > 400 years. The city was known for the following:

1. – Great library
 - a. The city of Pergamum had library that was 2nd only to the one in Alexandria, Egypt.
 - b. Parchment was invented in this city because of their competition w/ library in Egypt.
 - c. Papyrus rolls were the instrument of choice upon which to be written. Egyptians enacted an embargo & refused to ship papyrus to Pergamum.
 - d. They invented parchment from harder animal skin which then replaced papyrus.
2. – A great religious center
 - a. The citizens of this city fancied themselves as the keepers of Greek culture.
 - b. They had shrines & alters to Athena, Asclepius, Dionysus, & Zeus. (Pagan city)
3. – Political center
 - a. Pergamum was the administrative city of the Roman Empire in Asia Minor.
 - b. Therefore, Caesar worship was particularly strong in this city.
 - c. Christians refused to call Caesar “lord” which subjected them to severe persecution.
4. – Great medical center
 - a. Asclepius was known as god of healing. Temples to Asclepius were like hospitals.
 - b. The sick from all over the Roman Empire travelled to Pergamum seeking healing.
 - c. Symbol for Asclepius is serpent wrapped around a rod similar to medical symbols.

II. Introduction to the Church in Pergamos (Revelation 2:12)

A. The sharp two-edged sword

1. Jesus introduced Himself as having sharp 2-edged sword. He reminds He is in charge.
2. Being the administrative center of Roman government in Asia Minor meant the Roman leaders had the power of life and death. (They had what was called power of the sword.)
3. Roman government was not ultimately in charge.
4. Jesus is sovereign over His creation, governments of this world, & His church.
5. Application: In the 21st century, Jesus is still in charge.

B. This sword is the His Word. (Hebrews 4:12)

- *The Word of Jesus has power for two great purposes.*
 1. – Power unto salvation
 - a. According to **Romans 1:16**, the gospel message is the power of God unto salvation.
 - b. The Word of God convicts us of sin and draws us to saving faith in Jesus Christ.
 2. – Power unto judgment
 - a. Jesus is the judge before whom all men and women must one day stand.
 - b. The saved will stand before Jesus where they will give account of their Christian life

c. The Lost will stand before Jesus at Great White Throne judgment & be condemned.

III. Commendation (Revelation 2:13)

A. Where Satan's throne is.

1. Jesus said he was well aware they dwelled or lived in the very place of Satan's throne.
2. This has to do w/ Asclepius, god of healing, sometimes referred to as *Asclepios Soter*.
3. *Soter* is a Greek word meaning deliverer or savior. They called this pagan god a savior because of his supposed healing powers. Satan is an imitator of the true and living God.
4. Satan sought to imitate the true Savior, Jesus Christ, with this pagan deity.
5. Application: The human race is broken by sin.
6. Jesus is the only one who can heal us spiritually, emotionally, and physically.
 - a. – The forgiveness and pardon of sin (Heal our spiritual brokenness)
 - b. – Joy and Peace (Restore true purpose & value in this life)
 - c. – Physical life (Give us a new resurrection body) Jesus conquered sin, death, & grave
7. Satan's Deception: Satan will try deceiving us into thinking we can find what we need in this world, including forgiveness & healing, in something other than Jesus (**Jn. 10:10**)

B. Hold fast my name.

1. The commendation: They didn't deny Christ even when facing persecution & death.
2. That means they wouldn't bow to Caesar as lord. Wouldn't profess Caesar as lord.
3. Because they refused to call Caesar lord, some like Antipas were executed.

IV. Condemnation (Revelation 2:14-15)

A. False doctrines- *Jesus condemned this church for allowing & embracing false doctrines.*

1. – Doctrine of Balaam
 - a. Doctrine of Balaam is found back in Book of Numbers. The prophet Balaam taught King Balak how to defile Israelites through sexual immorality w/ pagan women.
 - b. These pagan women led the people into immorality and idol worship.
 - c. Jesus said the same sins were in the church in Pergamum. He condemned these sins.
2. – Doctrine of the Nicolaitans
 - a. 2nd time we've seen this false doctrine. It was present in the church at Ephesus.
 - b. This doctrine was form of license saying, since we're saved, we can do as we want.
 - c. This was a willing compromise with the world. Jesus said he hates this doctrine.
 - d. Application: Jesus still hates it when we compromise with the world.

V. Warning (Revelation 2:16)

A. Repent

1. Jesus called them to confess their immorality, paganism & compromises w/ the world.
2. Jesus called them to turn away from these sins and live according to His Word.

B. Judgment

1. If they chose not to repent, then judgment would come "quickly."
2. The sword of His mouth is His Word. Jesus would pronounce judgment upon them.
3. Application: Jesus is saying the same thing to every lost person today.
4. Judgment: For all who reject Jesus in this life there remains only judgment.

VI. Promise (Revelation 2:17)

A. For the overcomers (1 John 5:4) Two promises given.

1. – Eating of the hidden manna
 - a. The bread always represents the body of Christ. We will have a new body, like His.
2. – White stone with a new name
 - a. The new name identifies our acceptance in Christ. We are a new creation in Christ.