

REVELATION



Letter to the Church in Pergamum

(Rev 2:12-17)

- Some 60 miles north of Smyrna, near the site of ancient Troy, was the city of Pergamum.

- Its library contained 200,000 volumes (rolls).

- Parchment gets its name from Pergamum, for the simple reason that it was invented there.
- Pergamum was a stronghold of anti-Christian idolatry.

- All the main roads of Western Asia converged at Pergamum.

- Pergamum was celebrated for the manufacture of ointments, pottery, tapestries, and parchment.

- A temple to Roma (goddess of Rome) and Augustus was erected in 29 B. C. as the first temple in the empire dedicated to the imperial cult.
- A second to Trajan and a third to Severus were built.

**Nowhere was it more
difficult for the faithful
than Pergamos
where Christianity
and Caesar worship
confronted one another.**

**2:12 And to the angel of
the church in Pergamum
write:**

➤ **These things saith he
that hath the
sharp two-edged sword.**

**The Lord describes
Himself as**

**“He which hath
the sharp
two-edged sword,”**

Rev 2:12).

A sword gives one
confidence and what better
way to encourage these
suffering saints than to let
them know that not only
did Rome have a sword but
• they had a mightier one.

➤ **One more thing, it is critical that the Christians in Pergamos fear the “sword of the Lord”**

➤ **more than the Roman sword.**

• The sharp two-edged sword

- is the word of God.

(Eph 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16)

- Being “sharp” –
- it penetrates the smallest opening, pricks the heart, lays bare the secrets.

- Being “two-edged”
 - it cuts two ways.
- Convicting of sin
and of righteousness.

- It **converts** some and **condemns** others.
- **Saves** all who accept and **slays** all who reject it.

**In view of conditions
that prevailed in this
congregation, we can
understand why the
Master came with such a
“sword”.**

• **The word of God is
a sword.**

• **Able to slay both
sin and sinners.**

- **No heart is so hard**

**but that the word of God
is able to cut it;**

- **It can divide asunder
between the
soul and the spirit.**

- **The word of God will take hold of sinners, sooner or later,**
 - **Either for their conviction or rebellion.**

➤ **No sword cuts**

so deep,

➤ **inflicts so mortal**

a wound,

➤ **as the sword of**

Christ's mouth

Words of Approval

**2:13 I know where
thou dwellest, even
where Satan's
throne is**

- **This was a church in an evil environment.**

- **In that city Satan was enthroned**

- **Pagan religion
in numerous
forms prevailed.**

Temples were erected to

- Zeus,
- Apollo,
- Dionysius,
- Aphrodite,

**There was a temple
dedicated to
Aesculapius
(s klep us),
the god of healing
symbolized
by a serpent.**

· Pergamos was especially known as a center for the worship of the deity known as Asclepios.
(s klep us),

Represented by a
serpent,
Asclepios was the
god of healing
and knowledge.

- There was a medical school at his temple in Pergamos.
- Because of the famous temple to the Roman god of healing,
- sick and diseased people from all over the Roman Empire flocked to Pergamos for relief.

- **"Sufferers were allowed to spend the night in the darkness of the temple.**
- **In the temple there were tame snakes.**

- In the night the sufferer might be touched by one of these tame and harmless snakes as it glided over the ground on which he lay.
- The touch of the snake was held to be the touch of the god himself, and the touch was held to bring health and healing." (Barclay)

**Connected with the
worship of these idols
was sensuality
in form most
degrading.**

• **“Satan’s throne”**

was a seducing power,

- **Enticing unstable souls
into pagan worship
with its immoral rites.**

(2 Peter 2:14)

- It was also a persecuting power.
- When pagans failed to seduce a Christian, they made life very unpleasant for him/her.

- **There is a fascinating historical footnote in connection with "Satan's throne" in Pergamum.**

In 1878, an archaeological team, working under the auspices of the Berlin Museum, began excavating in and around the site of ancient Pergamum.

**Almost all the heresies
from that day until our
own day flow out of a
corruption of
this basic truth,
out of a denial
of the deity of Jesus.**

- **The team unearthed several fabulous historical finds,**
- **A beautiful hillside terrace theater,**

- **A magnificent temple to the goddess Athena,**

**and--most amazing
of all--the great
altar of Zeus,
"Satan's throne"
itself!**

● **“And thou holdest fast
my name”** (2:13)

● Though the environment was evil, they were **true to the Savior.**

- They have refused to budge on the issue of who Jesus Christ is.

- They hold sound doctrine concerning the fact that Jesus is the God-man.

- Not godlike,
- Not half-man, half-God,
- But fully God and fully man
in one completely
whole person

**Some think that the
Roman governor in this
city was a most violent
enemy to the Christians;
and the seat of persecution
is Satan's seat.**

- **“And didst not deny my faith”**

- **Paraphrase:**

“You have not been ashamed of me”

• 2:13 “Even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

- Rather than worship and idol, he gave up his life.
- Proof that Satan’s throne is there.

- **Antipas** was My faithful martyr,
who was killed among you:

- One specific man among the
Christians of Pergamos received a
precious title (**faithful martyr**).

- This **same title** is held by Jesus also
(**Rev_1:5**).

- **Each epistle takes for granted the warfare—warfare for the churches as well as for each member.**
- **And each epistle speaks of victory.**
- **'To him who overcomes' is the keynote of each.**
- **Battle and victory, to these are we called.**

- Believers were **aware** of the persecution and death of Antipas
- Yet they **marched on** to the city four-square, not made with hands.

Our **faith** will have a
great influence upon our faithfulness.

Men who **deny the faith** of Christ
may boast very much of their sincerity,
and faithfulness to God and conscience;

But it has been seldom known that those who let go
the true faith retained their fidelity;
usually on that rock on which
men make shipwreck of their faith
they make shipwreck of a good conscience too.

Words of Reproof

2:14 “But I have a few things against three, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

**1 Peter 5:8 describes Satan
as a “Roaring Lion.”**

**When the “Roaring Lion”
tactic doesn't work
it's time for the
“Serpent Tactic”.**

If a full charge of
persecution doesn't
work then sneak in
the back door with
some
deceptive doctrines.

• The Christians of Pergamos were like the Christians of Corinth as Paul wrote to them in 1Co_5:1-9.

• They were too "tolerant" and "accepting" of false doctrines and immoral living, and Jesus had to rebuke them.

**It is never right,
loving, or Christian
to tolerate sin
in the body
of Christ.**

• **The Apostle Paul wrote concerning the lack of dealing with a wayward church member at Corinth.**

• **It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.**

(1 Cor. 5:1)

- Notice how sharply these words contrast with the Lord's previous message to the church in Smyrna.
- The church in Smyrna was enduring enormous pressure and persecution.
- The church in Pergamum was flirting with corruption and immorality.

- **Gnostics practiced licentiousness as a principle since they were not under law, but under grace (Romans 6:15).**

- There were some who taught that fornication was no sin;
- Impure worship drew men into impure practices, as Balaam did the Israelites.

- Corrupt doctrines
and
corrupt worship
 - lead to a
corrupt
manner of living.

**Balaam showed Balak
how to set a trap for the
Israelites by beguiling
them into the double sin of
idolatry and fornication,
which often went together
(and still do).**

- It seems that the devil has two very effective weapons which he delights in using against the church:

- Intimidation

- Enticement.

- **Satan** either seeks to make the church **knuckle under**
- Or he tries to **tempt** and **lure** the church into **destroying itself.**

**2:15 So hast thou also
some that hold the teachings
of the Nicolatians
in like manner.”**

- **With the sharp two-edged sword of verse 12
he laid bare their sins.**

1st: Evil doctrines were taught.

• **Doctrine of Balaam and Nicolaitans.**

• **Teaching that the**

freedom of the gospel

lifts men above the moral law,

• **conferring license to worship**

idols and commit the vilest of

sins.

- **2nd False teachers**
were tolerated.
- **Though some of them**
did not participate.
- **They were guilty of laxity**
toward those in error.

**The stern discipline,
prominent in the
church in Ephesus,
was lacking in
Pergamum.**

Words of Admonition

- **2:16** “**Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.”**
- **Religious error and compromise called for drastic action.**

**Compromising Pergamos had to
cease and desist with its "politically
correct" toleration of both the
doctrine of Balaam and the
Nicolaitans,**

- **“Repent; or else I will come
unto thee quickly, and will
fight against them with
The Sword Of My Mouth”**

• **This sounds much the same as the warning to the professed Christians to disassociate themselves from Babylon before its coming destruction.**

• **"And I heard another Voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev 18:4).**

They were given two choices:

1. Repentance: Expose the error and discipline those teaching it.

2. Tolerance: Continue as usual exposing the church to the wrath of God.

**“It is a fearful thing
to fall into the hands
of the living God.”**

Hebrews 10:21

**Doors of the church
are open.**

**Spirit & Bride Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17

- 2:15 “with the sword of my mouth”

- A reference to the drawn sword with which the angel of the Lord confronted Balaam on his way to curse Israel:

- The Balaamites of John's day are to be smitten with the Lord's spiritual sword, the word or

“rod of His mouth”

Words of Promise

2:17 “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”

❖ Spiritual ears
will hear and obey the Spirit.

❖ Those who overcome will
"eat of the Hidden Manna"
and not things sacrificed to idols.

❖ **"And have no fellowship with the
unfruitful works of darkness, but rather
reprove them"** (Ephesians 5:11).

**How important it is to have
an open heart and a
listening ear.**

**A heart and an ear in
attuned to the voice of the
Almighty.**

• **“to him that
overcometh”**

• the **world**,

• the **flesh**,

• the **devil**.

2:17c

**“to him will I
give of the
hidden manna,**

Three blessings are assured:

1st “hidden manna”

- On our journey of trials & temptations we are nourished by Jesus himself – manna from above, “the bread of life”.

(John 6)

- **“Hidden manna”**,
- **The influences and comforts of the Spirit of Christ in communion with us through the word,**
- **As if coming down from heaven into the soul**
 - **To let us taste something how saints and angels live in heaven.**
 - **Hidden from the rest of the world**
- **“Peace that passeth all understanding”**

- In John 6, Jesus says,
"I am the bread that came down
from heaven."

- He is the "hidden manna."

- Food for the inner spirit that
others do not know about.

2:17

and I will give

him a

white stone,

• **2nd “a white stone” 2:17**

• **A token of
divine favor.**

• **White is the
color of heaven.**

➤ Receiving a "white stone"
is a sign of acceptance.

➤ “ I will give them an
Everlasting Name, that
shall not be cut off”
(Isaiah 56:5).

- 2:17 "New" implies something altogether renewed and heavenly.
- The white stone is possibly a diamond, the Urim borne by the high priest within the breastplate of judgment.
- With the twelve tribes' names on the twelve precious stones, next the heart.

• The word Urim means

"light,"

answering to the color white.

• None but the high priest knew
*the name written upon it,
probably the incommunicable
name of God, "Jehovah."*

Rev. 2:17

and upon the stone
a new name written,
which no one knoweth
but he that
receiveth it.”

- 3rd “**a new name**”

- **A new name**
indicates an advancement.

- **Abram to Abraham.**

- **Jacob to Israel.**

- **Perhaps a more intimate relationship with the Lord.**

- “White” and “New” are key words in the book of Revelation.

- White robes,
- White clouds,
- White horses,
- White thrones.

- New earth,
- New Jerusalem,
- New name,
- New song,
- All things are made new.”

**This is one of numerous
illustrations of the
dependence of
Revelation upon
Old Testament
history and prophecy.**

Heaven is described
under the figure of
the tabernacle
in the wilderness

(Rev 11:1, Rev 11:19; Rev 6:9; Rev 8:3; Rev 11:19; Rev 4:6).

The
song of the
redeemed
is the
song of Moses
(Exodus 15; Rev_15:3).

Plagues of Egypt

appear in the
blood, fire, thunder,
darkness and locusts
(Rev_8:1-13).

The scorpions
of chapter 2
from
Ezekiel:

**The gathering
of the vine
of the earth
(chapter 14)
from Jeremiah,
Job & Psalms**

The treading
of the wine-press
(chapter 14)
from Isaiah.”

- The great earthquake
of chapter 6.
- From Haggai;

- The **sun** becoming black
as sackcloth of hair and
the moon becoming
blood
(Rev 8:1-13)

- From Joel:

- ❖ The stars of heaven falling,
- ❖ the fig-tree casting her untimely figs,
- ❖ the heavens departing as a scroll (Rev_8:1-13)
- ❖ From Isaiah:

- **The golden candlesticks.**
- **From Exodus and Zechariah**

- **The garment
down to the foot.**

- **From Exodus
and Daniel**

- **The golden girdle
and the hairs
like wool.**

- **From Isaiah
and Daniel;**

- **The feet like burnished brass, and the voice like the sound of many waters.**

- **From Ezekiel;**

- **The two-edged sword**

- **From Isaiah
and Psalms;**

- **The countenance
like the sun.**

- **From Exodus**

- **The falling of the seer as dead**

- **From Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel;**

- **The laying of
Jesus' right hand
on the seer**

- **From Daniel.**

From Rev. 2:12-17 we learn:

1. That we can live the true life in any locality, “even where Satan’s throne is.”

In the house of Potiphar, Joseph kept himself pure (Gen. 39).

While in the power of a heathen ruler, Daniel did not defile himself. (Dan4).

There were saints in Caesar’s household. (Phil 4:22).

From Rev. 2:12-17 we learn:

2. That it is right to love the sinner, no matter how vile;

• but it is never right
to sanction his sin
or condone his error

From Rev. 2:12-17 we learn:

3. That the promises of God
are not pledged to the
Christian that is over come,
- But to the Christian
that over comes.

From Rev. 2:12-17 we learn:

4. That a Christian may live in the very abode of Satan and within ear shot of damnable doctrines; yet overcome.

He/she shall eat of the hidden manna which restores the spirit.

He/she shall have the white stone of absolution.

**Doors of the church
are open.**

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Revelation 22:17