

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS

Introduction:

1. Pergamos (or, Pergamum) was located about 30 miles north of Smyrna and about 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.
2. Pergamos was the capital city of the Roman Province of Mysia (called “the royal city”).
3. The city possessed a library of 200,000 volumes, second only to Alexandria, Egypt.
4. It was also a center of medical study and practice – the healing cult was represented by a serpent entwined around a sapling or branch.
5. It was the first city to build a temple dedicated to Emperor worship (Augustus, 29 BC).
6. It also boasted the “Altar” of Zeus – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
7. From God’s perspective, Pergamos was a city where Satan dwelled...

I. Salutation Revelation 2:12a

II. Description of Jesus Revelation 2:12b

III. Commendation Revelation 2:13

- A. The Lord knows His people (cf. 2 Timothy 2:19).
- B. The church at Smyrna was commended for her faithfulness in spite of sacrifice.
 1. This church continued to work even in the face of severe persecution.
 2. They served Christ in the midst of a city where Satan reigned.
 3. Despite the pressure and persecution that came from such a society, the brethren in Pergamos did not deny the Lord.
 4. This they did while having to witness one of their own brethren, Antipas, killed for such devotion.
 5. Satan still bears rule upon the earth and has thrones in communities all over our land.
- C. Because the Lord knew both their works and the environment in which they were forced to practice such works, He was able to commend them for their faithfulness.

IV. Condemnation Revelation 2:14-15

- A. Despite their loyalty to Christ in the face of persecution, there were still some things for which Jesus condemned this congregation.
- B. First, there were those among them who held false doctrine, called the doctrine of Balaam (cf. 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11).
 1. This doctrine was so called because it was of like character as what Balaam had taught and practiced under the Old Law (Numbers 22 - 24).
 2. Balaam was hired to curse the people of God.
 3. However, every time he tried, God intervened and caused him to pronounce a blessing upon Israel.

The Book of Revelation

Lesson Six

Revelation 2:12-17

4. So, Balaam formulated a plan to cause Israel to sin.
 5. He encouraged Balak, king of Moab, to tempt the Israelites with the most beautiful Moabite women.
 6. Thus, Israel would participate in the idolatrous practices of the Moabites and be abandoned by God.
 7. Balaam's only goal for his actions was the acquisition of money!
 8. Thus, Balaam's doctrine consists of the following...
 - a. Casting an obstacle before others (or, enticing others to sin)
 - b. Encouraging others to participate in false worship or false doctrine
 - c. Motivating others through lust to endanger their eternal souls
- C. Second, some held the false doctrine of the Nicolaitans.
1. It is possible that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was the name of the doctrine of Balaam when the book of Revelation was written.
 2. If these are two distinct groups, it is unknown what the Nicolaitans taught and practiced.
- D. Compromise with error negates all good works and even sacrifice.
- E. One cannot be loved (accepted) by God while compromising with something that He hates!
- V. Warnings Revelation 2:16
- A. Because of their compromise, the Lord threatened to punish this church.
 - B. He warned that He would not tarry in His punishment.
 - C. He warned that they would be fighting against Him – the Lord.
 - a. How tragic it is when the Lord must fight against His own body!
 - b. While Jesus was fighting against the church, He was also fighting for the church – to preserve it from error (cf. 2:12; John 12:48).
- VI. Exhortations Revelation 2:16-17a
- A. The Lord exhorted the church at Pergamos to repent or perish.
 1. Notice that the call to repentance was not only for the false teachers, but also for those who followed them and for those who allowed them to continue to influence the congregation.
 2. The church needed to repent for not hating the error and sin which was hated by God.
 - B. He exhorted them to hear the words of the Holy Spirit.
 - C. He exhorted them to overcome this allure from the devil.
- VII. Blessings Revelation 17 b
- A. Hidden Manna
 1. This is spiritual food, the bread of life eternal (cf. John 6:31-51).
 2. It is hidden from those who do not have eyes to see it (Matt. 13).
 3. It is in contrast to the physical food that was eaten in idolatry.
 - B. White Stone
 - a. It is symbolic of being declared not guilty – forgiven.
 - b. God longs to forgive His wayward children (1 John 1:9).
 - C. New Name
 - a. Probably indicates a heavenly name, renewed and cleansed.
 - b. It is possibly the name of Jesus Himself (cf. 3:12).