***“Reviewing Revelation”—Chapter 2:12-17--Pergamos***

**Each church receives a message composed of seven parts: (1) Name of the Church, (2) Title of Christ as sender, (3) Commendation, (4) Concern, (nevertheless), (5) Exhortation (advice/threat), (6) Promise to overcomer, and (7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”…. The worldly believers at Pergamum picture the Church during the Age of Constantine from AD 312 to 606.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Worldly  **PERGAMUM**  (Pergamos)  (Rev. 2:12-17) | Loyalty to Christ; refuse to deny Him | Tolerate cults, heresies, idolatry and immorality | Repent! | Hidden manna and a stone with a new name on it |

Again if you would travel the normal trade route, going north from Ephesus to Smyrna, you would continue north about 55 miles and come to **Pergamum (2:12b)**. The name **Pergamum** means *thoroughly married*. It was the northernmost of the seven cities. The Roman writer Pliny called it “by far the most distinguished city in Asia.”70 By the time **John** wrote **Revelation**, it had been Asia’s capital for almost 250 years. Today the city is called Bergama. It was located on a huge granite hill that rose a thousand feet above the plain of the river Caicus and lays about 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. The issue that the **believers** **in** **Pergamum** faced is the same one that you and I face today. How can we lead godly lives in the midst of a sinful world that offers other answers to life’s dilemmas? The **believers** **in Pergamum** also had plenty of complicated choices. Should **they** go to a nonbeliever’s banquet, when some of the food might have been sacrificed to idols? What about buying meat at the market, where it was hard to know whether it had come from the pagan temple? **Their** temptation was to “bend the rules” a little bit so that they could fit into **the world.** It was probably founded during Paul’s ministry in Ephesus **(Acts 19:10, “And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”)** Because it was immersed in pagan culture, it was continually enticed into sin and forced to worship Cesar as Lord and declare their loyalty to him alone. The last king of **Pergamum**, Attalus III, left his territory to Rome, and it was made the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. **It was the first city of Asia to openly support emperor worship.** In 29 BC a temple was dedicated “to the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma,” and thus became the heart of emperor worship at that time. Observance of this worship became a test of loyalty to Rome and refusal to take part in the daily cult was considered high treason, punishable by death. Thus, in other cities, believers were primarily in danger on the one day of the year they were required to offer sacrifices to the emperor; however, **in Pergamum** they were in danger every day. **Pergamum** was also a center for many other deities. All of their pagan temples were located a thousand feet above the plain, with the main market place below. There was an amphitheater that could seat 10,000 people. There they had a huge, forty-foot altar dedicated to Zeus and a temple where they worshiped Athena. The city was extremely spiritually corrupt.     It also had a great university with a library with over 200,000 hand written volumes. It was so impressive that it was later sent to Alexandria, Egypt as a gift from Mark Anthony to his lover, Queen Cleopatra of Egypt. Trying to build a library equal to Alexandra’s, the third century king of **Pergamum** tried to lure the librarian in Alexandria to his city. However, the plot was discovered and in retaliation, the Egyptian ruler refused to sell **Pergamum** any more papyrus. So out of necessity, the Pergamenes developed parchment, made of treated animal skins, for use as writing material. Though parchment was actually known from a thousand years earlier in Egypt, the Pergamenes were responsible for its widespread use in the ancient world. In fact, the word *parchment* may derive from a form of the word *Pergamum*. It was a very important city to the Romans. There was also a great medical school there run by the priests, and what some have called the first great psychological school in the world. There they believed they could talk you into being well. There is a tunnel there, and you can walk through it today, with holes in the ceiling every twelve to fourteen feet. The disturbed person would stop under each one of the holes, and a doctor of psychological medicine would be on top of the tunnel, psychoanalyzing this person without being seen. By the time the person got to the end of the tunnel, the disturbed person would supposedly be healed. But if they weren’t quite certain that worked they could go over to the mineral baths. They boasted that anyone who came to **Pergamum** could have their problems solved. Thus, the believers there were living in a city that believed they could solve their own problems without the aid of **Yeshua**. In the age of Constantine, **the Church** became *thoroughly married* to the state, which eventually resulted in sexual immorality and idolatry. “Christianity” became the state religion and all people all over the Roman Empire were baptized into it without any regard to personal faith. As a result, a massive amount of pagans entered **the Church** bringing many of their pagan practices with them. Idolatry entered **the Church** as these people added Yeshua to their many others gods. It planted the seeds for what later developed into the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, those false teachers were rightly condemned for believing in the teachings **of Balaam** (Hebrew meaning *not of the people*), and **the Nicolaitans** (Greek meaning *conquering the people*).77 The spirit of compromise has surely been one of the greatest evils in **the Church** movement ever since the days of the little body of believers **in Pergamum.**

**But the Bible doesn’t hesitate to condemn worldliness for the serious sin that it is. Since believers are not part of the world system (John 15:19, “**If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”**), they must not act as though they were. The apostle Paul wrote: Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2). (Titus 2:12, “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”) James encourages us to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world, because anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God (James 1:27b, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,” Titus 4:4, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”)**

**John makes the believer’s duty to avoid worldly compromise unmistakably clear when he says: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires will pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (I John 1:15-17). The church in Pergamum, like many today, had failed to heed to biblical warnings against worldliness. Consequently, it was flirting and in danger of falling in love with the world**. THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS….**312-590 A.D. Pagan Rome.**

**SMYRNA—COMMERCIAL CENTER, EPHESUS—POLITICAL CENTER, PERGAMOS—GREAT RELIGIOUS CENTER….ZEUS WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN BORN IN PERGAMOS.**

**“12And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write;”**

1. **What is the** **(1) Name of the Church? Pergamos (per—means “mixed” and gamos means “marriage.”—Age of Constantine, 313-600 A.D.**
2. **Describe the Church of Pergamos—the Married Church. The Church of Satan’s Throne. Purify Ambassadorship. Spiritual Compromise Mixed. Objectionable Marriage**
3. **Where was the city of Pergamos**? This was the political capital of the Roman Province of Asia the Less. When John wrote, **Pergamos had been the capital city of the region for more than three hundred years.** The city was a noted center for culture and education, having **one of the great libraries of the ancient world**, with more than 200,000 volumes. This was also an extremely religious city. It had temples to the Greek and Roman gods Dionysus, Athena, Demeter, and Zeus. **It also had three temples dedicated to the worship of the Roman Emperor.** 
   1. **What was its relationship to Smyrna**? Some 50 years before Smyrna won the honor of building the first temple to Tiberius, **the city of Pergamos won the right to build the first temple to worship Caesar Augustus in the province of Asia.**
   2. **What type of worship was it known for?** This city was especially known as a center for the worship of the deity known as Asclepios. **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, ASCLEPIUS, 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."
      1. **Asclepius was depicted holding Hermes’ staff, the Caduceus, and was a pointing-to the brazen serpent in the desert. Numbers 21:6-9, “**And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.7Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.9And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived,” **John 3:14-16, “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.16For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” **and 2 Kings 18:1-4, “**Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. 2Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. 3And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. 4He removed the high places, and break the images, and cut down the groves, and break in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.”

(12b) “**These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;”**

1. **What is the (2) Title of Christ as sender? “He which hath the sharp sword with two edges?” See in** [**Revelation 1:16**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+1:16&t1=en_nas) **and 18**, **“And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.18I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”** John observed of Jesus *out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*. Now, Jesus "showed" this **two-edged sword** to the Christians in Pergamos. The description of the sword in [Revelation 1:18](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+1:18&t1=en_nas) helps us to associate it with the *mouth* of Jesus. Jesus will confront this church with His word, and they will feel the **sharp** edges.
   1. **Also see** [**Hebrews 4:12**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Hebrews+4:12&t1=en_nas)**:** **“*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.”*** Jesus would use this **sharp two-edged sword** to make some separation among the Christians in Pergamos. **Hebrews** describes **the Word of God** as being more powerful than **a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).**
   2. **What kind of sword is described here? See Revelation 1:16, ““And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength,” and Isaiah 11:4, “But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”** The type of **sword** mentioned here is the *rhomphaia*, a weapon similar to the sword used by the Romans in battle. This image, as seen in **John’s** first vision of **Messiah** in **1:16**, deliberately points back to the Greek translation of **Isaiah 11:4**, **“**There **Jesus** is seen as **the Judge** who comes to **strike the earth with the sword of His mouth; with the breath**, *pneuma* or **Spirit** in the Greek, **of His lips He will slay the wicked.**
   3. **Reference also Ephesians 6:17, “**And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” **and Revelation 19:15, “**And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

“**13I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.**

1. What is the **(3) Commendation** for Pergamos? **I know your works**: Jesus said this to each church. It is true of each one of us. He knows our **works**, even if there isn't much to know. **And you hold fast to My name**: Despite the fact they lived in such a difficult city, the Christians of Pergamos held fast to their faith in Jesus. This **church** was ministering where **the devil** had **his throne**, where Aesculapius, the serpent, was worshiped. **Yet**, they remained faithful.
   1. Define: “**hold fast to My name.”** Because the center of Baal worship had shifted from Babylon to **Pergamum**, **He** commended them for remaining true to **His** name even though they lived **where Satan** had **his throne.**
   2. **Speak about: “Did not deny My faith**.”
   3. **Who was Antipas? Antipas** is one of the great almost-anonymous heroes of the Bible. History tells us nothing about him except for here. "It is much no ecclesiastical history makes mention of this martyr Antipas, which argues him to have been a person but of obscure note in the world; but Christ seeth and taketh notice of those little ones who belong to him, though the world overlooks them."
      1. **Faithful martyr, see Revelation 1:5, “**And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”  **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 was held by Jesus also ([Revelation 1:5](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+1:5&t1=en_nas)). **Antipas** was a man who followed Jesus, who was like Jesus. **Antipas** lived **where Satan's throne** was. Yet he stood against the attacks and the evil around him. He fulfilled the meaning of his name, because **Antipas** means "Against All." **Martyr** is the ancient Greek word *martus*. "*Martus* is a most interesting and suggestive word. In classical Greek *martus* never means a *martyr* in our sense of the term. It always means a *witness*. A *martus* was one who said: 'This is true, and I know it.' It is not until New Testament times that *martus* ever means *martyr.* **Antipas** would not compromise on that issue and **was put to death**. **His** name means *against all*. It probably meant that **he** had to take a stand *against all* satanic worship. Antipas means “AGAINST ALL.” **A legend has it that Antipas, in Domitian’s reign, was shut up in a red-hot brazen bull, and ended his life in thanksgivings and prayers.**
2. **What is the (4) Concern, (nevertheless) for Pergamos?** **And where you dwell, where Satan's throne is**: In many ways, Pergamos was a stronghold of Satanic power. There are many different opinions as to why Pergamos was such a stronghold of Satanic power. Some believe it is because Pergamos was a center of pagan religion, especially of "***Asclepios Soter*" or "Asclepios Savior." Some believe it was because Pergamos had a huge throne-like altar dedicated to the Roman god Zeus. Some believe it was because Pergamos was a center for the ancient Babylonian priesthood, but this is tough to prove conclusively. Others believe it was because Pergamos was the political center of the worship-demanding Roman government.**
   1. ***Discuss “worldliness” of the church*?** But the Bible doesn’t hesitate to condemn worldliness for the serious sin that it is. Worldliness is any preoccupation with, or love for, the world.
      1. **Compare with** **John** **15:19.** “**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.”**
      2. **See also Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”** Believers are called to **say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age**
      3. **Parallel with Titus 2:12, “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”**
      4. **Review James 1:27b, “…and to keep himself unspotted from the world,” 4:4, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” John** makes the believer’s duty to avoid worldly compromise unmistakably clear when he says: **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires will pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever**
      5. **Refer to John 1:15-17, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”** **The church in Pergamum**, like many today, had failed to heed to biblical warnings against worldliness. Consequently, it was flirting and in danger of falling in **love** with **the world**.
      6. **Who was Esculapius?** There was also a great medical school there run by the priests, and what some have called the first great psychological school in the world. There they believed they could talk you into being well. There is a tunnel there, and you can walk through it today, with holes in the ceiling every twelve to fourteen feet. The disturbed person would stop under each one of the holes, and a doctor of psychological medicine would be on top of the tunnel, psychoanalyzing this person without being seen. By the time the person got to the end of the tunnel, the disturbed person would supposedly be healed. But if they weren’t quite certain that worked they could go over to the mineral baths. They boasted that anyone who came to **Pergamum** could have their problems solved. Thus, the believers there were living in a city that believed they could solve their own problems without the aid of **Yeshua**. **Pergamum** was also the center of worship of Esculapius, the serpent-god of healing. Its idol was a staff with the snake curled around it. The serpent curled around a staff was the city emblem. They worshiped the snake and believed that he had the power to heal. Nonpoisonous snakes commonly roamed freely in the temple dedicated to him. Worshipers would either sleep or lay down on the temple’s floor hoping to be touched by one of the snakes, symbolically Esculapius himself, and thereby be healed. Such symbolism would undoubtedly remind the body of believers of **Satan (12:9, 14-15, 20:2)**. During the reign of Emperor Diocletian some believers who were stonecutters were executed for refusing to carve an image of Esculapius. It was a very dangerous place to be a follower of **Jesus Christ**. **The caduceus (☤;** [**/kəˈduːsiːəs/**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English) **or** [**/kəˈdjuːʃəs/**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English)**; from** [**Greek**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek) **κηρύκειον *kērukeion* "herald's staff") is the staff carried by** [**Hermes Trismegistus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes_Trismegistus) **in Greco-Egyptian mythology and** [**Hermes**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes) **in** [**Greek mythology**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology)**. The same staff was also borne by heralds in general, for example by** [**Iris**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iris_(mythology))**, the messenger of** [**Hera**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hera)**. It is a short staff entwined by two** [**serpents**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serpent_(mythology))**, sometimes surmounted by wings. In Roman iconography, it was often depicted being carried in the left hand of** [**Mercury**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury_(mythology))**, the messenger of the gods, guide of the dead and protector of merchants, shepherds, gamblers, liars, and thieves. Some accounts suggest that the oldest known imagery of the caduceus have their roots in a Mesopotamian origin with the Sumerian god** [**Ningishzida**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ningishzida) **whose symbol, a staff with two snakes intertwined around it, dates back to 4000 B.C. to 3000 B.C. As a symbolic object, it represents Hermes (or the Roman Mercury), and by extension trades, occupations, or undertakings associated with the god. In later** [**Antiquity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_antiquity)**, the caduceus provided the basis for the** [**astrological symbol**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrological_symbols) **representing the** [**planet Mercury**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury_(planet))**. Thus, through its use in** [**astrology**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrology) **and** [**alchemy**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alchemy)**, it has come to denote the** [**elemental metal**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury_(element)) **of the same name. It is said the wand would wake the sleeping and send the awake to sleep. If applied to the dying, their death was gentle; if applied to the dead, they returned to life.  By extension of its association with Mercury and Hermes, the caduceus is also a recognized symbol of commerce and negotiation, two realms in which balanced exchange and reciprocity are recognized as ideals.This association is ancient, and consistent from the Classical period to modern times. The caduceus is also used as a symbol representing printing, again by extension of the attributes of Mercury (in this case associated with writing and eloquence). The caduceus continues to be used incorrectly even after abundant knowledge has been made available** [**as a symbol of healthcare organizations and medical practice**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caduceus_as_a_symbol_of_medicine) **(especially in** [**North America**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_America)**), due to confusion with the traditional medical symbol or other reasons, the** [**rod of Asclepius**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod_of_Asclepius)**, which has only one snake and is never depicted with wings.**
      7. **See also, the brazen serpent in** **Numbers 21:8-9, “**And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.9And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived,” **John 3:14, “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up,” **2 Kings 18:4, “**He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.”
3. **Where does Satan dwell?** Thus, for any or all of these reasons, **Pergamum** could justifiably be called the city **where Satan** had **his throne**. It had become the greatest center of pagan worship in the world at that time. Not only that, it was also the greatest advocate of emperor worship and, therefore, provided an unusually difficult environment for a **church**.

**14 “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.15So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”**

1. List other **(4) Concerns** about the Pergamos church.
   1. **Who is Balaam?** When Balaam counseled Balak, he **taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel**. The **stumbling block** was connected with idolatry (**to eat things sacrificed to idols**) and **sexual immorality**. If the church in Pergamos had those who did **hold the doctrine of Balaam**, it showed they had tendencies towards both idolatry and immorality. Sexual immorality marked the whole culture of the ancient Roman Empire. It was simply taken for granted, and the person who lived by Biblical standards of purity was considered strange. To paraphrase the Roman statesman Cicero cited in Barclay: "If there is anyone who thinks that young men should not be allowed the love of many women, he is extremely severe. I am not able to deny the principle he stands on. But he contradicts, not only with the freedom our age allows, but also with the customs and allowances of our ancestors. When indeed was this not done? When did anyone find fault with it? When was such permission denied? When was it that what is now allowed was not allowed?" To keep from **sexual immorality** in that culture, you really had to swim against the current.
      1. **See “The Doctrine of Balaam,” Revelation 2:14, “**But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. Spiritually married to the world.”
      2. **Review “The Way of Balaam,” 2 Peter 2:15, “**Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness,” **hireling, making a market for his gift.**
      3. **Examine “The Error of Balaam,” Jude 11, “**Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core,” **sacrificing eternal riches for immediate gain.**
      4. **Who were the false teachers? See Numbers 22-24.** In the first heresy, Jesus said: **You have** some **people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality (2:14). Balaam**, in **Numbers 22-24**,
   2. **Who are the Nicolaitans?** **See Revelation 2:6,** “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.” You also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans: In [Revelation 2:6](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+2:6&t1=en_nas), Jesus praised the Ephesian Christians because they hated *the deeds of the Nicolaitans*. But the Nicolaitans also had their doctrine, and some among the Christians of Pergamos held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. **\*\*\* \*\*\*SEE NOTES ON PAGE 75!!\*\*\***
      1. **What is the** **doctrine of the Nicolaitans**? The title *Nico-laitans* has the idea of a proud authority and a hierarchical separatism. The name *Nikao-laos* literally means "to conquer the people." According to ancient commentators, the **Nicolaitans** also approved of immorality.
      2. **You have those there . . . you also have those**: The rebuke was not only against those who **hold the doctrines of Balaam** and **those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans**. The rebuke was also against those who allowed them to continue (**you have there those . . . you have those**).
   3. **Compare the Nicolaitans with the Corinthian Christians. Use I Corinthians 5:1-9, “**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. 2And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: 8Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 9I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators.”
   4. **The Christians of Pergamos were like the Christians of Corinth as Paul wrote to them in** [**1 Corinthians 5:1-9**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Corinthians+5:1-9&t1=en_nas)**. They were too tolerant and accepting of false doctrines and immoral living, and Jesus had to rebuke them. Satan couldn't accomplish much by persecution, because many did *hold fast*, like Antipas. So Satan tried to accomplish his goals by using deception. The strategy was first *violence*, then *alliance*. The Church at Pergamum....It didn’t take long for the practice of worldly compromise to become a pattern in their daily life. They even ended up accepting the Nicolaitans. In the second heresy, Jesus said: Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (2:15). They were also involved in idolatry and immorality. The church at Ephesus hated the works of the Nicolaitans (2:6), but the church in Pergamum tolerated their teaching. They had not yet embraced their teachings, but they had allowed them in the church, and the leaven was beginning to work. While the Ephesians understood how to love the sinner and *reject* the sin, Pergamum chose to love the sinner and *accept* the sin! It was during this period of Church history that a distinction began to emerge between the clergy and the laity with different sets of laws and regulation for each group. A priestly order was set up in the Roman Catholic Church that further corrupted it and laid the foundation for the Dark Ages.**

**“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”**

1. **What is Jesus’ (5) Exhortation (advice/threat) to the Pergamos church**? **Repent**: The simple word **repent** stands out. Five of the seven churches are commanded to repent. **Repent** is a command that applies to Christians, not only to those who first come to Jesus. ***SEE #4 EXPLANATION ABOUT SWORD!—PAGE 62-63!***
   1. **See I Peter 4:17, “**17For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? **“ Or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth**: Unless they do **repent**, the Christians of Pergamos would face the Jesus who has the two-edged sword. Judgment will begin at the house of God ([1 Peter 4:17](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Peter+4:17&t1=en_nas)).
   2. **Discuss** “**The sword of My mouth**.” When Jesus came **against** the Christians of Pergamos, He will confront them with His Word.

“**17He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...”**

1. What is **(7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”….? He who has an ear**: The danger of false teaching and immoral conduct still faces the church today. So does the danger of *allowing* false teaching and immorality, as was the problem with the Christians in Pergamos.

“17B, **To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”**

1. What is **(6) Promise to overcomer?** 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. **What is “Hidden manna**?” This is God's perfect provision, the true bread from heaven ….[**John 6:41**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=John+6:41&t1=en_nas), “The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.”) The promise to those **in Pergamum** who were martyred was strikingly unique. **To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, Revelation 2:17b, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.”** The Bible shows us that **God** fed Israel in the wilderness with **bread from heaven. Exodus 16:4, “**Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no,” and**, “**And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan,”which was called **manna** and that a golden **jar was filled with manna** and **put into the** ark **that it might be kept** for future **generations. Exodus 16:15, “**And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, this is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat….”and **31, “**And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.” The rabbis teach that in the third heaven “mills grind manna for the righteous” (Chagigah 12b). According to Second Baruch 29:8, in the Messianic Kingdom “the treasury of manna will again descend from on high and those alive then will eat of it.” When the First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, Jeremiah (Second Maccabees 2:4-8) or an angel (Second Baruch 6:5-10) rescued the ark of the Covenant with its jar filled with manna, and it is being kept for the days of the Messiah, when the LORD’s people will eat it once again. John uses the language of such traditions to show that believers in Jesus will be admitted to the messianic Banquet, the marriage feast of the Lamb.
      1. **Compare with Bread of Life” in John 6:26-58, “**25And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 26Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. 28Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. 30They said therefore unto him, what sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? 31Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.33For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. 41The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. 42And they said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? 43Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.47Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 48I am that bread of life. 49Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. 52The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 53Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.”
   2. **Discuss “And I will give him a white stone**.” In the ancient world, the use of **a white stone** had many associations. A **white stone** could be a ticket to a banquet, a sign of friendship, evidence of having been counted, or as a sign of acquittal in a court of law. Jesus may have any one of these meanings in mind, but at the very least we know that it has the assurance of blessing.: "Others suppose there is an allusion here to conquerors in the public games, who were not only conducted with great pomp into the city to which they belonged, but had a *white stone* given to them, with *their name inscribed on it*; which badge entitled them, during their whole life, to be maintained at the pubic expense . . . **These were called *tesserae* among the Romans, and of these there were several kinds." Clarke then gives examples of the different kinds: "*Tesserae conviviales*, which answered exactly to our *cards of invitation*, or tickets of admission to a public feast or banquet; when the person invited produced his *tessera* he was admitted . . . But the most remarkable of these instruments were the *Tesserae hospitales*, which were given as badges of *friendship* and *alliance*, and on which some device was engraved, as a testimony that a contract of friendship had been made between the parties."**
      1. **WHY DOES THE PROMISE COME AT THIS POINT**?
   3. **And on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it**: What is the meaning of this **new**, secret **name** promised to **him who overcomes**? Is it God's name, or is it the believer's name? This is probably the believer's new name, and the name itself is probably more important than the stone itself. One idea behind this new, secret name is that it shows what an intimate relationship we have with God. When a couple is close, they often have "pet names" for each other. This is probably the same idea. Another idea associated with the new name is simply the assurance it gives of our heavenly destination. Your name is there, waiting for you. It is as if your "reservation" in heaven is made. **I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it (2:17c).** In the ancient world, **white stones** had a variety of uses. A **white stone** signaled acquittal by a jury, a black stone condemnation. In addition, it was a token of admission, membership or recognition.79 People would be given **a white stone** as a symbol of their acceptance. Thus, **a white stone** points to our being found innocent of our sins because of **His** substitutionary death on the cross and our acceptance into the family of **God** by faith alone. This would have been particularly comforting to those first century believers facing martyrdom.  **I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it (2:17c).** In the ancient world, **white stones** had a variety of uses. A **white stone** signaled acquittal by a jury, a black stone condemnation. In addition, it was a token of admission, membership or recognition.79 People would be given **a white stone** as a symbol of their acceptance. Thus, **a white stone** points to our being found innocent of our sins because of **His** substitutionary death on the cross and our acceptance into the family of **God** by faith alone. This would have been particularly comforting to those first century believers facing martyrdom.
   4. **New Name?** The Greek word for **new**, *kainos*, does not mean **new** in contrast to old in time, **but new in the sense of *becoming something different*.** As believers, when we die we will become something **new** because we will exchange our bodies of corruption for resurrection bodies. Our standing before **ADONAI** cannot change because we were justified for all time at conversion. **Romans 5:1, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” 16, “And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification;” Acts 13:38-39, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses,”** But the Bible teaches that **we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (I Corinthians 15:51-53, “**Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.53For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” **So this new name will serve as each believer’s admission pass into heaven. It will uniquely reflect God’s special love for you, if you have accepted Him as Lord of your life.”**
2. **Discuss how the Medieval Church fits into this section, the Church of Pergamos.** The worldly believers at Pergamum picture the Church during the Age of Constantine from **AD 312 to 606. Satan** learned from his attack on the church of Smyrna that persecutions only caused **the Church** to flourish and continue in a perpetual state of revival. After Diocletian’s unsuccessful attack on **the Church**, Constantine battled for the throne with a general named Maxentius. During the battle, Constantine, already attracted to Christianity, allegedly saw a vision of a fiery cross in the sky and heard a voice saying, “In this sign conquer.” Constantine’s rise to the throne was not without controversy, and it had far-reaching effects on believers during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. Constantine believed this vision was a message from **the Lord** that if he would embrace the Christian religion, he would be able to conquer his enemies. He supposedly accepted the Christian faith and declared himself to be its defender and protector. There are some people who accept his profession as a bona fide conversion; however, a careful examination of his life indicates that he either had a poor concept of what it meant to follow Jesus, or he had never been truly born again by the Spirit of **God**. When Constantine became emperor of Rome, he became the virtual emperor of the Western world. As the self-styled “protector of the Christian faith,” he issued an edict of toleration for Christianity and showered many favors on **the Church**. The government provided money for the operation of the church, and many of the pagan temples were taken over by believers. To please the emperor, these leaders adopted customs that were parallel to pagan practices. In fact, during the succeeding three centuries, many practices of pagan origin were adopted. One compromise led to another, and what seemed at the start to be a great blessing ended up a great curse because it robbed the true believers of their evangelistic fervor. The influence of paganism in **the Church** increased over the years little by little, step by step. ***The Church began to shroud itself in “mystery” and ritualism that had a strong resemblance to Babylonian mysticism. The Chaldean tau, which was the elevation of a large “T” on the end of a pole, was changed to the sign of the cross.*** The rosary of pagan origin was introduced. Celibacy of the priest and nuns, which has no scriptural basis, found a counterpart in the chaste virgins of paganism was conceived. Here is a partial list of unscriptural changes introduced from **312** to **600**. Gradually, these changes became more prominent than the teachings of **the Church**.

**AD 312**        Prayers for the dead

**AD 312** Making the sign of the cross

**AD 375**        Worship of saints and angels

**AD 394**        The Mass was first celebrated

**AD 431** The worship of Mary began

**AD 500**        Priests began dressing differently than laity

**AD 526**        Extreme use of rubbing or sprinkling oil during a religious ceremony

**AD 593** The doctrine of purgatory was introduced

**AD 600**        The Mass started to be conducted in Latin

**AD 600**        Prayers started to be directed at Mary

From **AD 312** on, **the Church** became more and more Roman and less and less messianic in its practices. Before then, the movement of **Yeshua** was an independent collection of local **churches** working together whenever possible, but not dominated by a central authority. The name **Pergamum** literally means *thoroughly married*, and as the body of **Christ** became *thoroughly married* to the Roman Empire and elevated to a place of acceptance, it declined in spiritual blessing and power. In reality, **the** **Church** began to commit spiritual adultery. We will see this when we visit the next **church** down the road, traveling southeast to Thyatira. **Danger of doctrinal compromise of fundamental truths. 325 A.D Constantine encouraged Christianity; favored Christianity. Moved capital to Byzantium, or Constantinople, now Istanbul. He abolished crucifixion. Declared Sunday as the day of worship. Marriage between the world and the church. In 378 A.D., Theodosius made Christianity mandated as a state religion. Heathen festivals married to Christian celebrations. Marriage to the world.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Churches and title of Jesus** | **Strengths** | **Failures** | **Instruction** | **Promise To Faithful** |
| Loveless  **EPHESUS**  (Rev. 2:1-7) | Hard work  Patient endurance  Reject evil  Persevere | You have forsaken your first love | Repent and do the works as you did at first | **This is a Post Script:** You will eat from the tree of life |
| Suffering  **SMYRNA**  (Rev. 2:8-11) | Endure your suffering and poverty, yet you are rich | None | Remain faithful even when facing prison, persecution or death | I will give you the crown of life. You will not be hurt by the second death |
| Worldly  **PERGAMUM**  (Pergamos)  (Rev. 2:12-17) | Loyalty to Christ; refuse to deny Him | Tolerate cults, heresies, idolatry and immorality | Repent! | Hidden manna and a stone with a new name on it |
| Wrong Doctrine  **THYATIRA**  (Rev. 2:18-29) | Love, faith, works, patient endurance; constant improvement | Tolerate pagan cults, idolatry and immorality. Judgment coming! | Repent! | Faithful hold fast until I come. I will give you authority over the nations and gift of the morning star |
| Spiritually Dead  **SARDIS**  (Rev. 3:1-6) | Only a faithful remnant has kept the faith. Church is spiritually dead | Repent and turn back to Christ | Strengthen what little faith remains | Faithful will walk with Jesus and not be blotted out of the book of life |
| Spiritually Alive  **PHILADELPHIA**  (Rev. 3:7-13) | Kept my word and have not denied my name | None | I have placed before you an open door. I will keep you from the hour of trial. | I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God |
| Complacent  **LAODICEA**  (Rev. 3:14-22) |  |  |  |  |

***And, here are the promises:***

**Revelation 2:17, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”**

**Revelation 1:3, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”**

**James 4:4, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”**

**Isaiah 11:4**, **“But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”**

**Notes on the Nicolaitans**

**In its ecclesiastical setting, Nicolaitans means** [**the bishops and prelates of the Church**](http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/what-did-early-church-believe-preach-after-death-of-jesus.html) **have gained a triumphal victory or conquest over the LAITON, the laity. Members are compelled and forced to submit to the arbitrary dominion of men who have become that thing which God hates. "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:  Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;** [**NOR AS BEING LORDS OVER THOSE ENTRUSTED TO YOU**](http://www.biblestudy.org/maturart/how-to-start-a-church/two-qualities-of-a-christian-leader.html)**, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:1 - 3).The teachings and preaching of the Nicolaitans are in religious and secular** [**dictionaries**](http://www.biblestudy.org/bookstore/dictionaries-word-studies.html)**. When we look for the definition of the term we find it is a "hierarchy: the power of dominion, government by ecclesiastical rulers" we find the following, which is offered as evidence. "If anyone shall say that there is not in the Catholic Church a hierarchy established by the divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters and ministers, let him be anathema, Council of Trent (translation) XXIII 6." (Century Dictionary) Let anyone who has the audacity to say there is not a hierarchy, not a collection of human beings who try to exercise authority over others, as ecclesiastical rulers over churchmen, let that man be ACCURSED. Surely, the thing in which that ecclesiastical company is glorying is their shame! Webster's dictionary defines the word "episcopal" as "the power of government, belonging to, or invested in, bishops or prelates. Government of the church by bishops." It also says, "in episcopacy, the order of bishops is superior to the other clergy, and has exclusive power to confer orders." The above definition affirms that a certain portion of presbyters (elders) were "in apostolic times superior in authority to ordinary presbyters." It also mentions the fact that episcopacy recognizes "episcopal rank," which is created by the institution thus governed. It all of which affirms that any church in which** [**episcopal government**](http://www.biblestudy.org/maturart/how-should-a-church-be-lead.html) **obtains is practicing the very carnal and fleshly iniquity of creating "superiors" in what should be a holy brotherhood. The use of this appellation makes INFERIORS out of brethren who are in the selfsame clergy.**