

Pergamos : The Compromising Church

- 60 miles North of Smyrna
- For 400 years it had been the capital of Asia Minor
- It was near the ancient city of Troy.
- It had a number of pagan temples, with the best known on the acropolis (the highest point in the city). It was a 40 foot altar to the Greek god Zeus.
- Pergamos was known for having a vast library of 200 volumes until Anthony gave them to Cleopatra in Egypt as a gift.

Characteristics:

1. Description of Jesus (2:12)

a. Jesus is “he that hath the sharp sword with two edges”?

- i. What is a two-edged sword?** It’s a Roman lean and mean killing machine. It had two blades, unlike our standard kitchen knives. You could swing it through and back and slice both times.
- ii. Someone read Revelation 19:15 and 19:21: Is Jesus really riding around shooting literal swords out of his mouth like in a video game? What does the sword represent?** This is the word of God coming from the mouth of Jesus to slay the wicked. **Do you think there is going to be a huge war where Jesus leads the angels and us into a bloody battle against Satan and his demons?** God created the universe with a simple word, a simple thought, and will put an end to Satan and his army and evil itself as well with a simple word or thought.
- iii. This sword is double-edged. Hebrews tells us “the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword.” What could be the two purposes?** The word of God holds the plan to free us from the bondage of sin (It can separate you from the power of sin). It will also one day separate believers from unbelievers when it looks deep inside each and every person.

2. Praises (2:13)

- a. What does Jesus “know”?** Thy works...holding fast to His name, has not denied my faith, even when they say Antipas slaughtered where Satan dwelleth. There is a lot to take in from this verse...
 - i. Jesus knows where “Satan’s Seat” is:** This is literally “Satan’s Throne” in the Greek. It is almost certainly a reference to the great altar of Zeus at Pergamos. It is a representation of idolatry and a temple where indescribable things were done in the name of “Zeus. Jesus is saying, I am aware that it is not easy being a Christian where you are living. You’re in the center of the idolatry, Satan’s Throne!
 - ii. While many evil things have been done in the name of some false god, we know these gods to be fake, so what “power” is truly behind any false god or diety/false teaching?** There is no Zeus, no Diana, etc..., but there is a Satan, and most the world would rather act like he does not exist. Don’t be fooled!!

- iii. **Jesus knows about “Antipas”:** This name literally means “against all”, and must be an unknown martyr “witness” at Pergamos that was slain for all to see at the altar of Zeus. Secular history tells us he was just an everyday man, a dentist, who refused to bow down and worship the emperor so they hollowed out a brass bull replica, stuck him in it, and roasted him alive. **Jesus is saying, I saw this happen and I will have the last word, not the ones that carved out the brass bull, not the emperor, and not Satan either, I WILL. So how serious do your challenges look now compared to Antipas?** If you’re like me, those things that keep me from witnessing and doing what’s right look very shallow against those that have truly experienced hardships.
- iv. **William Barkley once said “The principle of the Christian life is not escape, but its conquest” What is he trying to say?** Some churches think they just need to withdraw and stay in their huddle with other Christians bunkered away until Jesus comes back again. They think we don’t need to associate with the world and those in it else we might dirty ourselves. God has not called us to escape but to conquest! **If we are the “salt” of the world, what good is salt if it never leaves the saltshaker? If we are the “light” of the world, what good is a candle if it isn’t taken out of the drawer to be used in the darkness?**

3. Admonitions (2:14-17)

a. There were two false doctrines the church was buying into:

- i. **“doctrine of Balaam”:** Does anyone remember anywhere else in the Bible it talks about Balaam? Peter references in his writings, and specifically it can be found in Numbers 22-25. **Who was Balaam?** Here’s the quick run-down. Balaam was a prophet for hire for the right price available to anybody willing to pay. So the King of Moab, named Balak, hired him to curse Israel. Well, Balaam figured out real fast that was not a wise thing to do against God’s chosen people. Balaam did give the king some advice. He told him if you really want to get to them, have them intermarry with the people of Moab and it will weaken their nation and dilute their faith.
 1. **What could Jesus be admonishing the church of Pergamos for based on the “doctrines of Balaam”?** The Israelites had compromised and tried to mix and match the ways of the world with the ways of God and now the church of Pergamos doing the same.
 2. **In what ways specifically were some of those in the church of Pergamos compromising?** They were eating things sacrificed to idols (worshipping false Gods) and fornicating (sexual perversions). You can’t play the middle ground and expect to come out unscathed. Although we are imperfect, we have to seek the ways of God and not compromise in what we do.
 3. **Does God care about what the skin color, or race, someone is that you date or marry?** Absolutely not. Jesus is not talking about this. **Does Jesus care about the condition of someone’s heart that you may date or even marry one day?** Absolutely! While there may be a chance you lead your bf or gf, husband or wife, to Jesus, it is not very often that

happens. Most often the opposite happens and the unbeliever drags you down instead of you lifting them up. If you get involved in a relationship with an unbeliever, there will come a point that your beliefs will not match theirs. There will come a point they may entice you into doing something that is against your beliefs. God loves you and is looking out for your best interest, and He knows the problems that will occur when two worlds (heaven and earth) collide. **Maybe you say, c'mon, I'm just a teenager dating, it's not like I'm getting married to them. But remember this, at some point in your life, one of your "dates" will turn into multiple "dates" and eventually somebody down the road that you "date" will become the one you marry.**

- b. **Holding the ways of the Nicolaitanes:** Many bible scholars believe that this sect of false teachings was founded by Nicholas who was mentioned in Acts 6:5, who was one of the first seven deacons chosen by the early church. This doctrine was a false teaching that allowed Christians to engage in sexual immorality and to participate in the Pagan feasts of these false gods. **How did they come to this conclusion?**
 - i. **They distorted Christian Liberty:** They took the idea that since they are free in Christ, they are free to do anything. I mean, salvation brings forgiveness for all past, present, and future sins, right??? **Let me ask you. As a Christian, are you under the Law anymore? Are you tied to the 10 commandments for your salvation or are you FREE from the laws?** Paul clearly tells us in Ephesians that we are "*called to freedom*", but the Nicolaitanes stopped there and ran with it, distorting scripture. Paul continues by saying "*but don't your freedom for an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another*". You are saved by GRACE. You don't have to carry around the chains of your past mistakes and mistakes you will make. **Isn't that awesome!! Doesn't that bring relief??** But we MUST HONOR that sacrifice made by Jesus and the grace given to us is the grace given to do God's will in our lives.
 - ii. **They embraced Gnosticism:** In short, they believed that your flesh, your body, is sinful and there is nothing you can do about it. They believed anything good can only be in your spirit, so guess what, you don't have any control over your body sinning. **Doesn't this sound completely absurd? Talk about distorting scripture. Does God care about what you do with your body? Why?**
- c. **What's the remedy for this? Repent!** Once again, Jesus is pleading to them to repent before it is too late. **What does it mean to repent? Can you really repent without action?** Repent means to turn and start heading the opposite way away from sin. Repenting is not just saying I'm sorry and not doing anything about it.
- d. **Promises for those that overcome:**
 - i. **The "hidden manna":** refers to the divine food that was preserved in the ark of the Covenant; the "bread of life". You will be given new life.
 - ii. **A "white stone":** Colored stones were used in courts to signify either guilt or innocence. **What do you think the black stone stood for? What about the white stone?**

- iii. **A “new name”:** God seems to promise a new name appropriate to each of our different type of character and service, just as Abraham and Israel were granted new names. Maybe this is an additional name such as the disciples received? No one can know for sure.

Thyatira : The Apostate Church

- 40 miles east of Pergamos
- Lydia, whom Paul met at Philippi, was from Thyratia
- This letter is the central and longest of the seven letters even though Thyatira was the least significant city in Asia Minor
- This is a blue collar town, full of laborers of different trades

Characteristics:

4. Description of Jesus (2:18)

- a. Jesus has “eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass”:
- b. One of the chief false dieties in Thyratia was the sun god Tyrimnus. Why do you think this particular description of Jesus was appropriate to the church of Thyratia?

5. Praises (2:19)

- a. What does Jesus “know”? works, charity, service, faith, patience...

6. Admonitions (2:20-29)

- a. Thou “sufferest that woman Jezebel”: Jezebel had been the pagan queen of Israel in the days of Elijah who introduced Baal worship into Israel (1 Kings 16:30-33). **Is this really Jezebel here back from the dead?** Apparently a similar seductress had infiltrated the church and was in leadership. She taught in ways that gave members the license to sin and break God’s commandments in the name of love, faith, and good works.
- b. Thyatira had the ingredients to be a great church, but could not find the right balance between a love for others and a love for truth. In what ways does this happen with Christians today as well?
- c. What sort of warning did God have for those that continued to do these things? Both spiritually and physically adulterous people like the ones in Thyatira would be left behind when Christ returns and enter into tribulation.