

Revelation 2v12-17: Letter to the Church at Pergamos

v12: The Recipient Church (Pergamos) is Identified

Pergamos was a centre of human wisdom & pagan idolatry.

Pergamos means '*affinity*', '*union*' or even '*marriage*', symbolic prophetically of the popular & compromised church established initially under Constantine, with an unlawful affinity, an unholy union or marriage between Church and State.

At Smyrna, the enemy as "**a roaring lion**" (1st Peter 5v8) employed violent persecution of the believers, and that utterly failed.

Now at Pergamos, persecution has given way to worldly associations; the enemy as a beguiling serpent (2nd Cor 11v3) employed a more subtle craft of corrupting influence, with a measure of success. The Church lost its distinctive place of separation unto God, it became linked with the world that is so greatly influenced by Satan.

v12: The Lord is Introduced (links with ch1v16)

These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges

Appropriate to conditions at Pergamos, the sharp sword of the Word of God (Eph 6v17, Heb 4v12), coming forth from the Lord, will test all doctrine and will expose & judge that which is false and not of God (see ch2v16).

v13: The Condition is Observed - 2-Fold Commendation is Given

I know [thy works, and] where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is (JND)

The Lord appreciates what it is like for believers to live in this wicked ungodly world, where Satan's authority is centered, where Satan is enthroned & "**where Satan dwelleth**". The world has never been an easy place for the believer in Christ to live in, and remain faithful to the claims of Christ.

1. **thou holdest fast My Name** - the Lord appreciates their essential fundamental doctrinal soundness as to His Person, His deity & His unique eternal glory as God's eternal Son.
2. **and hast not denied My (the) faith** - they did not apostatize from the faith, even in days when faithful men such as Antipas were being martyred for allegiance to Christ.

The reference to this church at Pergamos dwelling in such a place of idolatry is in keeping with the prophetic phase of Church history it represents. As a result of the world's patronage, the professing Church altogether lost its pilgrim character & ceased to be sojourners. They settled down in this world; they were dwelling in the place where they ought to have been sojourning.

v14-15: The Failure is Stated

Among the company were those who held unscriptural & ungodly false doctrine, which was being tolerated if not actually practiced.

“**the counsel of Balaam**” (Numbers 31v16) - his evil counsel to Balak (Numbers 22-25). The separation & sanctity of God’s people was compromised, Israel became joined unto Baalpaor & were worshipping the gods of Moab with disastrous results; 24,000 of Israel perished under the judgment of God.

“**the way of Balaam**” (2nd Peter 2v15) & “**the error of Balaam**” (Jude v11) - his true character and selfish motives.

“**the doctrine of Balaam**” - compromise of the separation of God’s people, and their relationship with the world.

Those in Pergamos were in a place surrounded by pagan idolatry, and there would be the temptation to go back to the old practices before salvation, sharing in the pagan feasts & the associated immoral practices of fornication.

Anything of this world that displaces Christ from having 1st place in our hearts and lives is an idol; “**Little children, keep yourselves from idols**” (1st John 5v21).

“**the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate**”; i.e. a clerical system, with a separate class of clergy who lorded over the common laity.

Many who have held unscriptural ecclesiastical offices in Christendom have been good and apparently godly men, but a good man never makes a wrong position to be right.

v16: The Counsel & Warning is Imparted

The command to repent, or the Lord would come quickly with the sword of judgment. The Lord makes distinction between “**them**”, those who did hold these hateful doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, and the church generally (“**thee**”).

If there was no equivalent of Phinehas (see Numbers 25v7-8) among the responsible men in Pergamos, to deal with those with evil doctrine, then the Lord Himself would “**fight against them with the sword of My mouth**”.

Note that Balaam finally died “**with the sword**” (Numbers 31v8).

v17: The Challenge is Made & 2-Fold Promise is Given to the Overcomer

1. “**to eat of the hidden manna**” (see Ex 16v32-34, Heb 9v4) - pilgrim food for a separated people, feeding upon the exalted & glorified Christ, hidden from the eyes of the world, at God’s right hand.
2. “**a white stone**” - indicating personal divine appreciation & approval and the enjoyment of personal intimacy with the glorified Lord.