

Revelation 1.5

The Church in the World (Pergamos)

Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction

The Message: Avoid Compromise

The Comission to the Church (v.12)

1. If Smyrna was the San Francisco or New York of the ancient world, Pergamos or Pergamum was the Washington DC. Overcomers would never have even contemplated a "march of Pergamos" to take their country back for Jesus! Pergamos was the capitol city of Asia Minor during the Greek and the beginning of the Roman period. Here was the seat of government. It could be because it was the seat of worldly government that prompted Jesus to say this was the throne of Satan (not where men ruled by Satan ruled through them).

Pergamos was also a religious center. Like most ancient cities, there was a high point or acropolis. At the highest point in the city was the forty foot altar to Zeus. If you were to stare at the top of city, the giant altar to Zeus looked like a huge archetectoral throne. Some scholars of ancient times thought this typified religion in the ancient world, and government in the ancient world. Here at Pergamos was a "throne" dedicated to pagan religion. Here is the city where Satan had his throne.

2. Pergamos was also the center of worship for the Greek god Asclepios. Here the ancient healing arts were practiced by a number of medical schools (Remember Luke was a greek physcian from Alexandria and would have been familiar with all the "academic" knowledge of his time." Healing of the mind and body and soul. Asclepios was called "soter" or savior. It is remarkable what a person is willing to go through to be healed. To the Christian to call anyone other than Jesus "soter" or Savior was repulsive. The symbol of the cult of Ascleiopoulos was the serpent around a staff. To the Christian--the serpent was the symbol of Satan.

Again, Pergamos was the governmental seat of the province of Asia--here Rome ruled and Caesar worship was almost as prominent as Smryna. During this time, Caesar worship was a problem. The difference between Pergamos and the other cities, the "Proconsel" had his headquarters. He was Rome's chief citizen, usually a member of the ruling class of Rome. In 64-69 Vespasian was the chief proconsel. During the time of Nero it was Vitellius, and when Jesus was born, Quirius (during the reign of Augustus). The Roman Procounsel had the "right of the sword" (capital punishment). This means that the Proconsul had the right to execute anyone he believed was a threat to the "internal" or external security of Rome. Rome took world domination seriously. It could be for all these reasons that Jesus says, "I know where you live"--where Satan has his throne.

The Character of Christ (v.12) the sharp two edged sword.

1. This is the symbol of judgment. The Roman may have temporary control of the sword, but Jesus weilds the eternal sword. The word coming out of the mouth of Jesus exacts specific judgment. Heb. 4:12 (the word of God) Eph. 6: 17 "and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God".

I believe there are several reasons why Jesus reveals himself to the Church at Pergamos as the sword bearer. In the Greek language there are two words for sword--the most common is the short dagger like sword (18'--the same size as a bowie knife with a celt shaped blade). This was the standard issue in the Roman army--the *machira*. This was the sword held in the hand of the Proconsul--symbolizing life and death. Here is a church facing the threat of death by government officials.

The word used here is *romphaia*. *This is a large sword used in open combat*. The fact that Jesus weilds the large sword demonstrates that he has power over eternal life and death. Another possible explanation is the explanation found in Heb. 4:12

Heb 4:12-13

12For 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.

13And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

(NKJ)

Bob Beltz: "The sword of the Word of God separates that which is simply of the human mind from that which is of the Spirit of God. You might say its function is to divide the spiritual from the flesh in a person's life. The Word judges our thoughts and our intentions. A compromise was taking place at the church in Pergamos. The believers were mixing pagan practices with Christianity. The two-edged sword becomes a symbol of the refining process Christ wants to perform within His church."

In a city where Satan has his thone, where the church has succumbed to Pagan practices, where compromise has infiltrated the church, The Lord Jesus reveals himself as the one who judges, both in the world and in the church.

2.

The Commendation to the Church (v.2:13)

1. Jesus begins with what they are doing right. "You hold fast to my name, and did not deny my faith" "To hold fast" means to keep forcefully, to be unwilling to let go" to be unwilling discard". We could say grip and not let go. He also says "you did not renounce your faith in me." Remember, Christians were faced with the decision to remain faithful to their confession as Christ is Lord, or Caesar as Lord. They were faithful to the Lord.

Note: those who trust in government and those who trust in Jesus.

2. **They were faithful in the days of Antipas.** Antipas was a believer in Pergamos much like Polycarp in Smyrna. He was brought brought before the city rulers and given the opportunity to curse Christ and confess Caesar as Lord. He responded "Jesus is Lord and there is no other." Tradition tells us he was put inside a brass bull and roasted alive. A literal pressure cooker. The church met the external threat of persecution and was found faithful. But the church had serious problems.

The Condemnation to the Church (v.2:14,15).

1.

2.

The Correction (v.2:16)

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The Challenge (v.2:17)

1. The Hidden Manna: Many cults use obscure passages to promote weird or novel interpretations: What is the hidden manna promised to the overcomer? Exodus 16 tells the story of the children of Israel in the wilderness, running out of manna. When you run out of supplies or provisions, even in the most stable of households, it produces murmuring and complaining: "Did you bring us out of Egypt just to die?" Did you bring me out of California, or Arizona to Colorado just to die? Moses prays and God supplies food. The dew would come down and when dried produced a wafer-like cake that they could eat! "What is it?" In Hebrew the question is "*Man hu?*" *What is it?* And Moses said, "Manna; what is it, that's what it is!! (Exodus:15, 31)

You may recall three items in the ark of covenant (it was placed in the tabernacle and

then in the temple). (1) The tablets of the law, received by Moses (2) Aaron's rod that budded (this bud's for you) (3) a jar of manna; a remembrance of God's provision. Ancient Hebrew tradition has it that in 587 BC, when the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah went into the Holy of Holies and took the jar of manna out of the ark, when he was fleeing from the Babylonians, he went to Mt. Sinai--and there hid the manna in the cleft of the rock. That was known as the hidden manna. The Jews believed that when Messiah came, he would bring with him the jar of hidden manna. The Lord here is promising to the one who overcomes the hidden manna. This could be all the blessings of the Messiah in his kingdom. Jesus on the throne, fulfilling all the messianic promises in the future kingdom.

In part Jesus saying, if you are willing to abstain and refrain from the seductions of this world, you will enjoy blessing and reward in the kingdom.

2. The White Stone: The ancients held "court" different from today. Trial juries had guilt or innocence by a white stone or a black stone. Black guilty, white innocent. The white stone was acquittal--innocence, acceptance.

A piece of pure white marble would also confer status and privilege. When a person won in the olympic games, or other national competition, this white stone was like a free lifetime pass to all public activities. The white stone is like a free pass in all future activities in the kingdom. When gladiators retired (not many did) they were given a white stone. On the stone was written the words "proven--beyond a doubt". That stone was like an Roman Express Card with no monthly bill. All he had to do was show the stone and everything was provided for him. The white stone speaks of an abundant provision.

In the ancient world people would carry little white stones almost like charms or jewelry. On them they would write the name of their gods. The charm was supposed to allow them to invoke the name of the god and that god's power. If no one else knew the name on the charm, it was supposed to have double the power.

All of this was a reminder that the Christian had all the rights and privileges in the new kingdom. The seductions of the world, as appealing as they may appear, are nothing compared to the abundance in the kingdom to come. This for the believer willing to say, "no--I won't compromise".

Conclusion

1. Overcomers don't compromise: