



LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

July 9th 2017 — Part 10
“The Letter to the Church of Pergamum”



The City of Pergamum

- Known throughout the ancient world for its numerous pagan temples, structures dedicated to the Roman emperor, and its vast library which rivaled that of Alexandria, Pergamum held the honor of being the provincial capital of Roman Asia. The city was in many ways the epitome of Hellenistic culture in terms of religion, architecture, and humanistic pursuits.

The city was famous for: (1) _____ and _____

→ The worship of Dionysus and Asclepius

(2) Worship of the _____ .

The Vision of Christ

Rev. 2:12—“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.’

The Sharp Two-edged Sword:

Jesus’ Knowledge of His Church

Their Faithfulness

Rev. 2:13—“I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”

- The city in which they live is the place where _____ dwells.

Satan’s Throne →

- They have remained faithful in the midst of _____ .

Antipas →

Their Failures

Rev. 2:14-15—¹⁴ But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Those who hold to the Teaching of Balaam

- * The OT background for these words of Christ is found in Numbers 22-25.

Balaam —

Idolatry in the Ancient World:

⇒ _____ had come in among the church and were leading some of the people into the same sins which had overcome Israel in Numbers 25 (Idolatry & Sexual Sin).

The Nicolaitians

"The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles (Acts 6:5). They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence." —Irenaeus of Lyon, Against Heresies (2nd C.)

⇒ Like the other group within the church, the Nicolaitians had no problem with believers taking part in pagan feasts and immorality, probably because of a licentious view of the _____.

The Solution and Warning for the Church

Rev. 2:16—*Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.*

- It is interesting to note that in the OT, Balaam was threatened with a sword (Num. 22:23, 31) and was eventually killed by a sword because of his evil deeds (Num. 31:8).

Who should repent?

⇒ The warning involves the _____ being turned against the unrepentant in judgment.

The Prophetic Call & Promise

Rev. 2:17—*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'*

The Hidden Manna

- * The OT background for this was God's provision of manna for Israel in the wilderness. In the NT, Jesus also spoke of manna.

John 6:47-50—⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

Through Christ → Believers will have true _____ from God.
Believers will have complete _____ to God.
Believers will have perfect _____ with God.

The White Stone

- * While there may be OT background for this, it is more likely this is a reference to a common practice associated with feasts to pagan gods. The white stone was an "invitation" that granted one access to the feast in honor of the deity.

⇒ This is probably a reference to the believer's invitation to the _____ (Rev. 19:6-10)

The New Name

- * The "new name" is probably a reference to the name of Christ which only He knows (Rev. 19:12).

⇒ Because believers are "in Christ," they are fully _____ with Him and His name for all eternity.

Rev. 22:4—*They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.*

The Vision of the Son of Man for Pergamum

1. Jesus is the one with the sharp sword of God's Word and will _____ the unrepentant.
2. Jesus provides His Word for His people so that they might be _____ from false teaching and sin.

Questions for Reflection

- In which idols (wealth, comfort, sex, leisure, knowledge, food, alcohol, sports, work, etc.) am I prone to seek the identity and comfort that only Jesus can truly provide?
- Which idolatrous imagery or activities in the surrounding culture am I drawn to in my sinful nature?