

The Letter to the Church at Pergamos

(Revelation 2:12-17)

- A. Christ introduces himself to this church as, "...He which hath the sharp sword with two edges" (v. 12).
1. This sword projects from His mouth (**REV 1:16**) and thus indicates judgment with/by the word for the unrepentant. **v. 16; REV 19:15.**
 - a. Christ *judges* men by the *word of the Scriptures*. **MAT 5:17-19; 2TI 3:16; 1JO 4:6.**
 - b. Christ *executes sentence* upon the wicked by the *spoken word of His mouth*. **2TH 2:8; MAT 25:41.**
 2. It is a *sharp sword*.
 - a. The word of Christ cuts through the grand ideas of men and cuts to the heart of the disobedient. **2CO 10:5; ACT 5:33.**
 - b. It **IS**, not *becomes*, a sharp sword (as if it needed men's traditions to sharpen it). **MAR 7:13.**
 3. It is a *twoedged* sword.
 - a. There is no relief from it for the unrepentant who might presume to find such from a blunt side of the blade. The revealed words of Jesus will be the basis of final judgment AND sentence. **JOH 12:48; 2TH 1:7-9.**
 - b. It gives God pleasure in both salvation and condemnation. **2CO 2:14-17.**
 - c. God's minister bears this sword as a revenger to execute wrath on evil-doers. **ROM 13:4.**
 - d. When you are walking contrary to the word, does it not feel like it is slashing away at you and unsettling you about the day of Christ?
 4. NOTE: **HEB 4:12** is talking about the *incarnate Word*, not the *spoken* or *inspired* word, as many assume.
 - a. The context shows the "word" there to be a Person, our High Priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ. **HEB 4:13-14.**
 - b. **REV 2:12, 16** speaks of a sharp, twoedged sword. But the Person, the Word of God of **HEB 4:12**, is *sharper* than any twoedged sword.
- B. As with the other churches, Christ *knew their works* and their situation. **v. 13.**
1. This church was situated in a most unfriendly environment: Pergamos was especially noted as the place "where Satan's seat is" and "where Satan dwelleth."
 - a. Pergamos was then a capital of a province of Asia.
 - (1) It was renowned for idolatry.
 - (2) The pagan god of healing, *Aesculapius*, was worshipped there under the emblem of a serpent. c/w **REV 12:9.**
 - b. At any rate, "seat" here translates *thronos* (SRN #2362), which is translated 54 of 61 times as "throne(s)," referencing a stately seat.
 - c. Satan's kingdom is made up of principalities. **EPH 6:12.**
 - (1) Satan apparently has certain areas which are his headquarters or strongholds.
 - (2) Babylon the great was/is another such place. **REV 18:2.**
 - (3) Israel and its religion became such strongholds. **MAT 12:45; REV 2:9.**
 2. They were *holding fast the name of Christ*.
 - a. In a place where Satan's name (or his alias) was of note, they went against the flow and honored the name of Christ.
 - b. The name of Christ is above every name in heaven and earth. **PHIL 2:9-10.**
 - c. There is salvation in no other name. **ACT 4:12.**
 - d. It is a name worth suffering for. **1PE 4:14.**

3. Holding fast the name of Christ incorporates what Christ next noted of them, "...hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you..."
 - a. Smyrna had been warned about the potential of death for the faith on the horizon. **v. 10.**
 - b. Pergamos had already experienced this. Antipas had suffered martyrdom.
 - (1) Christ does not call him, "A faithful martyr" but, "MY faithful martyr."
 - (2) Antipas had shown by this that he truly valued the name of Christ. This is the very core of discipleship. **MAT 10:32-33; LUK 14:26.**
 - c. Yet Pergamos had not been negatively moved by this. They had *held fast Christ's name*. c/w **1TH 3:3.**

C. However, Christ had a few things against this church. **vs. 14-15.**

1. They valued the name of Christ but that was no excuse for tolerating sin. **2TI 2:19.**
2. Specifically, they were retaining members who were embracing false doctrines.
3. The promotion of false doctrine is grounds for exclusion from the church. **TIT 3:10-11.**
4. Ironically, while holding fast Christ's name, there were some there who were *holding the doctrine of Balaam*.
 - a. Balaam's doctrine is noted here as having "...taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (**v. 14**).
 - b. Balaam's adventures are found in **NUM 22-25** (summarized here):
 - (1) Israel was encamped in the plains of Moab.
 - (2) Fearing that Israel would overtake them, Balak, king of Moab, sent messengers to hire Balaam to come and curse Israel.
 - (3) At first, God told Balaam to not go with the messengers.
 - (4) Balak then sent other messengers of nobler status with promises of great honor for Balaam if he would come and curse Israel.
 - (5) Balaam double-checked with God just in case there might be a "righteous" way for him to get his reward. **2PE 2:15.**
 - (6) Thrice Balaam tried to curse Israel but God made him to bless them instead. **DEU 23:4-5.**
 - (7) Restrained from getting his reward directly, Balaam advised Balak how to bring about Israel's downfall circuitously.
 - (8) He recommended that Israel should be enticed to commit fornication with the Moabite women and eat the sacrifices of Baalpeor.
 - (9) Thus, God would be provoked to destroy them. **NUM 31:16; DEU 4:3.**
 - (10) Israel, like many who name the name of Christ today, was lulled into thinking that a little fornication and dabbling with other "religions" was not a big deal with God.
 - c. Idolatrous religion is oft accompanied by immoralities. **ACT 15:29; 1PE 4:3.**
 - (1) God's religion upholds the Biblical model for sexual purity and expression. **HEB 13:4.**
 - (2) Idolatrous religion tends to promote corruption of these.
 - d. Believers are to *flee*, not *flirt with* idolatry. **1CO 10:14-22.**
 - (1) Remember that heathen worship is actually devil worship.
 - (2) God forbids the commingling of His worship with the worship of idols/devils. **DEU 12:29-32 c/w 2CO 6:16-17.**
 - (3) Participation in idolatrous rituals is participation in idolatry. As partaking at the Lord's table indicates communion with the Lord, partaking at an

- idolatrous rite indicates communion with the devil.
- e. While an idol is not actually a god, we are to abstain from any action that treats an idol as a god. **1CO 8:4-6; 10:27-28.**
 - f. Dabbling with idolatrous customs provokes God to jealousy. It is the commission of spiritual adultery.
5. Pergamos also had those who *held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*.
- a. That doctrine had implications in deeds. **REV 2:6.**
 - b. There is a connection between the *doctrine and deeds* of Balaam and the *doctrine and deeds* of the Nicolaitans.
 - (1) This is seen by virtue of the definition of “so” **v. 15.**
 - (2) so: In the way or manner described, indicated, or suggested; in that style or fashion. Contextually, the sense may be “in the same way,” “by that means.”
 - (3) The doctrine of the Nicolaitans apparently dovetailed with the wickedness of the doctrine of Balaam.
 - (4) “Nicolaitans” comes from words which mean “conqueror of the people.”
 - (5) Scripture warns us against false teachers with damnable heresies who use sexual immorality to conquer the saints. **2PE 2:1, 14-19.**
6. Thus, in this letter, some of Satan's main devices of infiltration in the church are exposed so we may *be not ignorant of his devices* (**2CO 2:11**).
- a. If he cannot sway the faith by outward persecution, he will seek to corrupt it.
 - b. Religion and sex are two dynamic passions which Satan has sought to exploit.
 - c. Satan has habitually tried to mix God's pure religion with pagan religion.
 - d. Consider his devices of Christmas and Easter which are nothing more than ancient pagan customs/holidays dressed up with Christian doctrine.
- D. As with Ephesus, Christ threatens to *come against them quickly and fight against them except they repent*. **v. 16.**
1. If Christ came to this church he would fight against those who held these evil doctrines.
 2. If the church retained these heretics, they too would feel the brunt of His wrath. **EPH 5:3-7.**
- E. To the *overcomer* Christ promises *to give him to eat of the hidden manna and to give him a white stone*. **v. 17.**
1. Written in the white stone will be a new name which no man knows except the one who receives it.
 2. If the manna is hidden and the stone bears a name no other man knows, then these are special, secret things.
 3. Whatever these emblems represent, it is evident that they suggest very special personal favor being granted to the overcomer.
- F. Compare this message with **ISA 65:11-15.**