

**Daniel & Revelation End-time Prophecies Sermon Series**  
**Study # 28: “The Compromising Church”**  
**Revelation 2:12 – 17**  
**Bible Sermon Study Notes by Cary Rodgers, pastor**

**Prophetic Outline: Seven Letters to Seven Churches**

Each of the seven churches of Asia Minor received the whole message of Revelation but there was a special letter that attached with it at the beginning that directly addressed them as a local church group.

These seven letters to the seven churches represent a literal, prophetic, and modern day application.

**Literal Historic Application**

The seven letters went to seven literal church groups in Asia Minor which is modern Turkey today. Each letter had a special message to correct and encourage that local church.

**Prophetic Application**

The seven messages in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 identifies seven church periods history and its spiritual condition from AD 31 until the end of time.

**Modern “last day” Application**

These seven perfect and complete letters of love to the seven churches teach us critical lessons we need for the last days. There is a message for us in each letter.

**Review Ephesus & Smyrna**

**Ephesus - Revelation 2:1 – 7**

**Literal Historic Application:** Ephesus church was in a thriving and bustling port city full of commerce and entertainment. It was one of the largest of the Roman Empire. The church started by Paul was very successful in spreading the gospel. The Holy Spirit was poured out and thousands renounced their pagans ways and followed Christ. But over time even though they were still doing the work of Christ, they left their first love. They were prideful. God's message of correction was to go back to their first love through humility recognizing that the POWER is through Christ not themselves.

**Prophetic Application:** Ephesus represents a PURE church in church history at the beginning from **AD 31 to 100**

**Modern Application:** We must humble ourselves, let go of our pride, get back to the holy standards of God having the pure love in our hearts for Jesus and others.

**Smyrna – Revelation 2:8 – 11**

**Literal Historic Application:** The church of Smyrna was about 40 miles north of the church of Ephesus. It was also a coast city of the Empire of Pagan Rome. It was one of the empire's richest cities. Smyrna is derived from the Greek work Myrrh which is a sweet smelling perfume oil. Jesus did not say anything negative about Smyrna. He revealed that their character was sweet smelling to Him because they were humble yet rich with faith. Smyrna went through a time of tribulation that perfected their faith. God also revealed that many in Smyrna would be killed for him, but to stay faithful until death.

**Prophetic Application:** Smyrna represents a Persecuted Church, died for the sake of the gospel. This represents the time in church history in which millions of God's people were persecuted by the Pagan Roman Empire. The church period that matches these characteristics of the message to Smyrna was approximately from 100 to 313 A.D. Millions of Christians were put to death because of their faith. History reveals that

persecution especially intensified from 303 – 313 AD when the emperor of Rome made Christianity illegal. Christians were thrown in the large sports arenas of Rome to be torn into pieces by hungry lions in front of thousands of cheering spectators. Many Christians were dipped in tar and burned to light the streets and arenas of Rome. Those were some horrible scenes but they faithfully held on to the promises of God.

### **Modern Application:**

In the last days we all must go through tribulation as a refining process to perfect our characters. Matter of fact that is what Jesus told to the seventh church Laodicea. They were puffed up with pride. Tribulation gets rid of it. Remember Ephesus was puffed up with pride but God allowed Smyrna the next phase of church history to get its purity back through persecution.

*2 Timothy 3:12* “Yea, and ALL that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Matthew 5:10-12 <sup>10</sup>Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Church: Church of Pergamos: “The Compromising Church”**

#### **Literal Historic Application**

##### ***Historical Facts & Background of the city of Pergamos***

The city of Pergamos at one time was the capital province Asia Minor within the Roman Empire which is modern-day Bergama, Turkey. Pergamos was only about 40 miles north of Smyrna. The Greek word for Pergamos according to Thayer Greek means “evaluated or exalted.” Pergamos was “exalted” by many in Asia Minor as the headquarters of the pagan religion mainly sun worship. It was renowned for its great altar of Zeus. Also a 154,000 square feet sanctuary was built in honor of the “god of healing”, Asclepius, equipped with temples, sanctuaries, baths, a lavish spa, springs, exercise rooms, library, a small theater, and more. This sanctuary, known as the Sanctuary of Asclepius, was famous throughout all the Roman Empire. The rod of Asclepius with a snake wrapped around it was the city's main symbol found in art and on coins. This Asclepius symbol is still used today to symbolize our modern medical system, in honor of the false god of healing, Asclepius. The city of Pergamos reach great fame under the Roman Empire and was home to about 200,000 residents.

#### **Introduction:**

#### **How does Jesus start his letter to the church of Pergamos?**

##### **Revelation 2:12**

12 *And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.*

At the introduction to Pergamos, Jesus describes Himself as one with the sharp two edge sword.

#### **What was Jesus revealing to Pergamos in the introduction of His message?**

##### **Hebrews 4:12**

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

Jesus reveals to Pergamos from the introduction of His message that He knows ALL. Nothing can be hidden

from God and that His messages of truth pierces and pricks the conscience mind of each person. In other words, the truth that Jesus gives is holy spiritual surgery to the obedient and destruction to the wicked.

## Body

### What message did Pergamos receive from Jesus Christ (First Section of the Body)?

#### Revelation 2:13

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

Based on the mood of the introduction of Jesus' message to Pergamos in which He describes Himself as the two edged sword, He really does not sound pleased with the church of Pergamos. As we read in Hebrews 4:12 Jesus pierces to the heart. Everything is opened to Him. He is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." He knows if you are real or not. He knew the "works" of Pergamos- aka the church activities and programs. Some of it was good with good intent, but others were "bad" with good intent.

Jesus continues I know where you live, "even where Satan's seat is." "Seat" in the Greek implies a "stately seat" or throne. In other words this is where a government official such as a king make decisions for his kingdom. Remember, Satan is NOT omnipresent, he can only be in one place so He set up his "throne" in the city of Pergamos, the headquarters of false pagan worship in Asia Minor. It was the center of sun worship. People ALL over Asia Minor came on pilgrimages to worship their false deities such as Zeus and Asclepius. So in essence they were coming to worship Satan. But was he satisfied with that? NO. Satan's ultimate goal was to set up his throne in God's church!

The church of Pergamos called themselves "Christians", but God actually saw what was really in their hearts in which we will see in the next verse.

Jesus said that the church of Pergamos "hast not denied **my faith**". Deny also means reject. Faith also means "conviction of truth" or belief. Pergamos was careful not reject the truth of Jesus Christ, they believed in the Sabbath, they believed in the ten commandments, they believed in the "spirit of prophecy", they believed in the baptism, they believed in the health message, etc... The Bible is VERY clear of these things. But we will see that conviction or the acknowledgment of the truth from the Bible **IS NOT** enough. We need to be converted and transformed by the power of Jesus. You will see that Pergamos was convicted but not converted. In reality they had a DEAD faith!

Pergamos did not reject truth even when one of their own was killed for the sake of upholding truth, Antipas. In the Greek "Anti" means "against" and "pas" means father or papa. Papa is Latin for "Pope". It is apparent that one who was killed was called Antipas because he probably spoke out against the authority of church leaders who began to assume divine authority over the church as a whole. He was killed as a result.

**We can see in the next verse that Satan was able to gain entry into the church of Pergamos.**

### What did Jesus say to the church of Pergamos that exposed what was going on behind the church doors? What is the second half of the message?

#### Revelation 2:14-16

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Jesus is clearly very angry with the church of Pergamos because they have embraced the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, in which He hates. Jesus hates sin and it is evident that both doctrines are tainted with sinful principles. The word "Pergamos" is also derived from the Greek word "purgos" which means "tower". The church of Pergamos should have been watching from the tower of the approaching enemy, the Satanic doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. As a whole, the church was not fully converted. They allowed the bling and awe of pagan and sun worship that surrounded them in the city to creep into the church. This was an entering wedge for Satan to find his way into the church.

### **What warnings were given to churches as a whole including Pergamos as the church was growing?**

#### **Jude 1:3-4**

- 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.
- 4 For there are certain **men crept in unawares**, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, **ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness**, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Obviously overtime Pergamos became intoxicated with the Pergamos city pagan life. They wanted to fit in more. They began to enjoy some Roman entertainment that involved the beliefs of sun worship. They became mesmerized by the 154,000 square foot Sanctuary of Asclepius. At first the visit there were out of curiosity. They just wanted to partake in the beautiful art work and the wonder of the large temple. Then over time instead using God's simple natural remedies they began to go to the Sanctuary of Asclepius for healing. Because they allow themselves to associate with the pagan lifestyle they did not see evil as being evil. They were comfortable with it. They compromised God's principles. No longer was willing to rid evil from the church as Ephesus did.

### **What is the doctrine of Balaam that the church of Pergamos allowed?**

*To understand the doctrine of Balaam we must go to the story found in Numbers chapters 22 – 25 and 31.*

#### **Numbers 22:1-7**

- 1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho.
- 2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.
- 3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.
- 4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.
- 5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:
- 6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.
- 7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

Summarize...

#### **Numbers 22:12, 15 - 22**

- 12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt **not** go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed.
- 15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.
- 16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee,

hinder thee from coming unto me:

- 17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.
- 18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.
- 19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.
- 20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, *and* go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.
- 21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.
- 22 And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him

God used a donkey to speak directly to Balaam, to let him know that he was not in the will of God. Though God allowed Balaam to go, he would only be permitted to speak words from God. Three times Balaam tried to curse Israel as Balak requested, but three times words from God took control to bless Israel instead.

### **Remember who are the Moabites and Midianites?**

#### **Moabites:**

BDB Definition:

Moab = "of his father"

- 1) a son of Lot by his eldest daughter (noun proper masculine)
- 2) the nation descended from the son of Lot (noun proper masculine)
- 3) the land inhabited by the descendants of the son of Lot (noun proper locative)

#### **Midianites:**

BDB Definition:

Midian or Midianite = "strife"

- 1) son of Abraham by Keturah and progenitor of the tribe of Midianites or Arabians (noun proper masculine)
- 2) the tribe descended from Midian (noun proper masculine)
- 3) the territory of the tribe descended from Midian; located principally in the desert north of the Arabian peninsula; land to which Moses went when he fled from Pharaoh (noun proper locative)

**The Moabite and Midianites who were related to the Israelite rejected the everlasting covenant of Jesus Christ in which God gave to Abraham. They wanted to curse the people who were forerunners of the everlasting covenant.**

### **Balaam, who was a true prophet of God, became corrupt and false because of the love of money.**

#### **1 Timothy 6:10**

- 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The "**love** of money" is the doctrine of Balaam. The name Balaam in Hebrew means "not (of the) people, foreigner." Balaam was not of the people of Israel nor for the people of Israel he just wanted to curse them so he could cash in!

**In the story of Balaam, Balaam knew that as long as Israel was faithful and obedient to God that they would be continually blessed.**

#### **Deuteronomy 28:1-2**

- 1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high

above all nations of the earth:

2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

**But Balaam knew if he could teach King Balac how to entice the children of Israel to disobey God that they would bring curses upon themselves.**

### **Deuteronomy 28:15**

15 But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

**The men of Israel disobeyed God by mingling with the Moabite women.**

### **Numbers 25:1-3**

1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to **commit whoredom** with the daughters of Moab.  
 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.  
 3 And Israel joined himself unto **Baalpeor**: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

**Who taught Balac to entice the children of Israel to sin?**

This was revealed clearly when God instructed Moses to war against the people of Midian in Numbers chapter 31.

### **Numbers 31:16**

16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the **counsel of Balaam**, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

**In verse 8 God had Balaam killed for his foolishness...**

### **Numbers 31:8**

8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: **Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.**

What did Balaam earn in the end? Death... the wages of sin is death...

Also “Bal” of Balaam in Hebrew means “failure”. Balaam was a totally failure in God's eyes, no longer a true prophet but a false prophet of Satan.

**So the church of Pergamos followed the same practices of Balaam. They were intoxicated with pride, money, prestige, power, and wealth which corrupted many leaders of the church. They saw the wealth and pomp of the pagan. They were enticed by it. They began to play the pagan's “lottery”, scratch off their “powerball.” The church of Pergamos began to hold their own lottery, but call it raffle tickets instead. Some of the church leaders as Balaam were used by Satan to entice the people of the church of Pergamos into covetousness, the love of MONEY more than the love of God.**

**What is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans?**

This is the same doctrine which the church of Ephesus did not allow in their church.

**Review:** According to Thayer's Greek definition Nicolaitans means the “destruction of people”. It is clear that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was designed to destroy God's people. They obviously used the garment of Christianity to excuse the deeds of the flesh. They say that “we don't have to worry about destruction, we are all

under grace. We don't need to keep God's 10 commandment law.” It is evident during the time of the church of Pergamos the doctrines of the Nicolaitans were very popular but not Biblical.

### **In His mercy to the church of Pergamos, what does Jesus instruct them to do?**

#### **Revelation 2:16**

**16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.**

If they failed to repent and turn from sin, the sword of the Lord would be their enemy instead of a tool of spiritual surgery to rid them of sin.

#### **Conclusion**

### **17. What was the conclusion of the letter to the church of Pergamos?**

#### **Revelation 2:17**

**17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.**

Hidden manna – Jesus is the bread of life.

White stone – psēphos (*psay'-fos*) From the same as [G5584](#); a *pebble* (as worn smooth by *handling*), that is, (by implication of use as a *counter* or *ballot*) a **verdict (of acquittal) or ticket (of admission)**; a *vote*: - stone, voice.

**White stone of admission into the heavenly kingdom with your new name on it!**

#### **Prophetic Application:**

### **Which significant historical period of the Christian church movement does the message of Pergamos represent?**

Pergamos clearly fits the characteristics of the Christian church during the fourth and fifth centuries after the intense hammer of widespread persecution was lifted by the Roman Empire against the Christians from 323 to 538 AD. Persecution added to the numbers of God's church. So instead of using persecution, Satan enticed the Christian church during this time to embrace the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

The church compromised God's truth in order to be relieved from persecution and take advantage of the money and prestige that the pagans were enjoying. In order to gain more influence and to “convert” the pagans, they allowed paganism to come into the church. Christianity became more mainstream. Roman Emperor Constantine, also a pagan priest, embraced Christianity in AD 322. But He still used his pagan title as “Pontifex Maximus” which means supreme priest or high priest in Latin. He was a pagan high priest and a counterfeit high priest for the Christian church.

According to history Emperor Constantine mixed many of the Satanic pagan practices with the Christian practices in order to unite his empire both pagans and Christians. Many of the church leaders in Rome accepted the compromises that were contrary to the Word of God in order to gain power, wealth, and influence within the Roman Empire. A series of compromise opened the door to the papal system. **Matter of fact by 440 AD, Pope Leo I, was the first church leaders that assumed the title Pontifex Maximus.**

While the Pagan Empire of Rome was declining, by the end of the period in 538 AD, Emperor Justinian decreed Christianity the official religion of the empire, joining church and state. The Pope of the Christian church continued to adopt the title Pontifex Maximus. 538 AD plucked up the Ostrogoths.

The love of money continued to be their driving force to compromise God's Word.

## Modern Application:

### What do we need to learn from the Church of Pergamos?

#### What causes many modern-day churches to compromise God's word?

##### **2 Peter 2:1-3**

- 1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.
- 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.
- 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make **merchandise of you**: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

#### **Answer: The doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans! Love of Money and cheap grace!**

God is telling his people today, don't compromise to be recognized! Don't sell yourself out for money! Don't compromise God's word for money, job, or status!

##### **1 Timothy 6:6-10**

- 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.
- 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
- 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.
- 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.
- 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

##### **Philippians 4:11**

- 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

##### **Matthew 6:31-34**

- 31 **Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?**
- 32 **(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.**
- 33 **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**
- 34 **Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.**

##### **Luke 22:35**

- 35 **And he said unto them (Jesus' disciples), When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.**

##### **Ephesians 4:13-15**

- 13 **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:**
- 14 **That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;**
- 15 **But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:**

## The Appeal