

# Pergamos: The Church at Satan's Throne

Revelation 2:12-17

---

Pastor Bill Farrow

---

<sup>12</sup> *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: <sup>13</sup> “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. <sup>14</sup> But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup> Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’*

---

## Introduction

- For now, let's open our Bibles to Revelation chapter 2.
  - We're going to be looking at verses 12 through 17, the letter to the church at Pergamos.
- In chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation there are letters by the Lord Jesus written to seven churches.
  - They were actual historical churches, churches that really did exist.
  - These messages were directly given to those specific churches because of the very specific issues at hand.

- However, these letters transcend those churches, as do the letters of the New Testament
  - which are typically written to churches or individuals and also transcend those churches and individuals to be applicable to all of us.
  - These letters likewise describe not only a single church in history but a kind of church that exists through all the history of the church.
    - And so they are very instructive for us.
- We've Learned lessons from the first three letters we've looked at:
  1. **From Ephesus we saw that it is entirely possible, even as a believer who loves the Lord, to allow our love for Christ to be replaced by the weight and burden of the world...**
  2. **From Smyrna we learned a similar lesson...even in the midst of a world that is persecuting and setting itself against the Lord Jesus we must set ourselves apart from them and, rather than being filled with fear and anxiety, stand tall and strong for Christ and not let them overcome our testimony to the truth of the Gospel!!**
- Now, thirdly, we come to the Church at Pergamum (Pergamos)
- This was a..

### ***1) A Church Engaged in Dramatic Compromise***

- As we look at this third letter to the church at Pergamum, or Pergamos, either is correct, we meet a church engaged in quite dramatic compromise.
  - In all three of these three we see the world to some degree becoming embraced by those who ought to have been completely separate!!
  - This letter is written to **a compromising church**.
- This church is **beginning to be linked inseparably to the world.**

- And this church has **decided that it can maintain some kind of Christian credibility and also associate itself** with the sins of the past.
  - **In fact, one might argue** that this type of Church had come to think that **the ONLY way to be relevant** to and to reach the world **was to compromise...namely to become**, to some degree **LIKE the world!**
- Pergamos is **a picture of any church that courts the world**, any church that **marries paganism in any form**.
  - As such, we **can really see, in it, the countless Churches around today** that are **ordering and building themselves in order to be attractive to and attract worldlings**.
  - **“We need”** to conduct ourselves **in a way that they like!**
- The church at Pergamos is also a picture of any believer, any Christian who weds the world, as we shall see.

### A. Similar Components in Each Letter

- As we go through these letters **we note that they all have pretty much the same components**, and we'll **run through those components** and by doing that the letter **will unfold** to us.

#### 1. *The Author*

- First is the correspondent...the correspondent, or the one who writes.
- **Verse 12** says,

---

*"To the angel,*

---

- or **the leader, the messenger**, the one who will take this letter **back to the church at Pergamos**,
- **probably one of their pastors**, to the messenger of the church in Pergamum,

---

*"write:"*

---

- And that is, **of course, the Lord Jesus telling John to write**,

## 2. *The Pen Man*

- **John is the pen man,**
  - he is **the one who picks up the quill**, as it were, and
  - puts **the words that Jesus gives him**.
  - He says,

---

*"Write this, the one who has the sharp two-edged sword says this..."*

---

## 3. *The Authors' Description*

- And I've noted for you that **every time these letters begin** with a reference to the author, this **is typical of ancient correspondence**.
  - **Modern correspondence ends** with the author's name, **ancient correspondence began** with the author's name.
  - And this author is **identified as the one who has the sharp two-edged sword**.
- **We know** who that is from **chapter 1 verse 16** because **back in chapter 1 you have the vision of Jesus Christ**.
  - And **Jesus Christ is described in verse 16** as having in His right hand seven stars

---

*<sup>16</sup> He had in His right hand **seven stars**, out of His mouth went **a sharp two-edged sword**, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (1:16)*

---

- **These**, you know, are **the seven leaders of the churches**, as is **noted for you in this same text**.
  - And **out of His mouth**, it says, came **a sharp two-edged sword**.
  - So the Lord is **described as holding the leadership of the church in His hand** and out of His **mouth coming a sharp two-edged sword**.

## 4. *The Implication of the Authors' Description*

- Now when you **go over to chapter 2 verse 12**, the one who has **the sharp two-edged sword says this...**
  - Jesus Christ then is the author.

- And in this case you will **notice that the description of Christ that is selected** is that which **articulates His judicial authority.**

---

*<sup>16</sup> He had in His right hand seven stars, **out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword**, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (1:16)*

---

- It sees Him as **judge**,
  - it sees Him as **executioner.**
- **What is it that is the sword** coming out of His mouth?
  - Perhaps **Hebrews 4:12** says it as well as any,

---

*"For the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any...**what?**...two-edged sword."*

---

- It is **the Word of God** coming out of His mouth that is like a two-edged sword.
  - It's a **double edged sword to speak of its facility and alacrity and judging and moving** fast from side to side and **wreaking havoc as it moves.**
  - It is an instrument of **judgment falling on those who are deserving of that judgment.**
- In Revelation chapter 19 we see the same imagery in verse 15.
  - **Revelation 19:15–16**

---

*<sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup> And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:*

***KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS***

---

- Jesus Christ in **His return is described here**,
  - heaven opens in **verse 11**,
    - Christ on a **White Horse**

---

*<sup>11</sup> Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (19:11)*

---

- a **white horse**,
- the one on it is **faithful and true**,
- He **comes in judgment and making war**.
- And going **on in the following verses**...
  - His eyes are **like a flame of fire**, and **so forth**.
- And in **19:15**,

---

*"And from His mouth comes a sharp sword."*

---

- And at the end of **verse 15** it tells you **what it's for**.

---

*"So that with it He may smite the nations."*

---

- It is a **sword of judgment**.
  - The **two-edged character** simply means it **moves fast and rapidly and devastatingly in both directions**.
  - It **cuts everywhere it turns**.
- The **introduction to Christ** then **in this letter** is **not a happy one**, it is **not a promising one**, it is **a threatening one**.
  - When He introduced Himself **to the church at Smyrna** in **verse 8** He said
    - the **first and the last**
    - who **was dead** and **has come to life**,
- That's **encouraging** because some of them were **dying for the faith in Christ** and
  - He was writing them **as the one who was resurrected**,
  - who **had conquered death** for Himself and for them.
- In the letter to the church **at Ephesus** He **introduces Himself simply as the one who holds the seven leaders** in His hand
  - and **moves among the churches**,
  - which are **represented by the golden lampstands**,
    - **not threatening** at all,
  - speaking about His **control** and His **care** and His **concern** as He **moves through His church** and
  - His **protection over its leaders**.
- Here is the **first negative introduction**
  - because this is **a church that is facing judgment**.

## **B. This introduction of Christ is the right introduction for the church at Pergamos.**

### *1. The church at Pergamos was in serious danger*

- and **that danger was going to come from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.**
  - He is **the one who wields the sword.**
  - This particular sword is **the sword of judgment**
    - that is **used to cut down those who disobey** the Lord Jesus Christ.

### *2. It's Clear That Pergamos Was Compromising*

- It is **clear from the very letter which we'll study today** as we go through it
  - that **Pergamos was compromising.**
    - a. Pergamos – A Church Largely Made Up of Gentiles*
    - Pergamos **obviously was a church made up of Gentiles** primarily who had been **converted out of paganism.**
      - They **had, no doubt,** been **converted to Christ** and
        - there was **some great transformation**
        - **but times have changed** and
          - b. They have now gone back and picked up some of their pagan habits.*
    - They have **married the world**, as it were,
      - and are **in danger of the judgment of the Lord** of the church.
      - **Disaster is looming** on the horizon.

## **C. Looking Back at the History of the Church**

- If you **look back** at what happened in **the history of the church**, you **can understand this kind of thing.**
  - If you **look at the sweeping history of Christianity** in the western world,
    - **you will see churches that became worldly and what happened to them.**

## *1. For Example – 300-600*

- You **look**, for example, at a **time period say from the year 300 to 600** and
  - you see that **under the Roman Empire** under the **direction of Constantine** in those early years, **the church married the world.**
    - **The Rise of the Roman Catholic Church**
      - **This was why it is called the ROMAN Catholic Church**
    - **Heathen priests became Christian priests.**
    - **Heathen temples became Christian churches.**
      - **All children were required to be christened,**
      - **they were therefore supposedly made Christians by putting a little water on their heads.**
    - **What had been Heathen days of feasting and drunkenness were made in to Christian days like Christmas and all other sort of saint days.**
  - **And Christianity, to a large extent, got lost in all of this.**
    - **It was merely a massive state religion.**
      - **And that is perhaps the most dominant period in the church history when what we can call the “Pergamos mentality” was evident.**

## *2. Seeing it Again Today*

- **But if we ever were in such a time, we are in such a time again today.**
  - **The church, of course, has become worldly.**
    - **Even so-called Evangelical Churches!!**
    - **They are much more concerned with being designed and structured in a way that will appeal to young and to middle-aged people today.**
    - **From Music to dance to drama...all of it, **instead of** being firmly Biblical and given over to calling men to salvation, it is designed to cause men to like and appreciate and indulge in fake praise!!**



- **More so, we should think in terms of the liberal or dead church, as we would perhaps want to call it today,**
  - This is **those who have departed from** the true faith and **embraced the world** are all around us.
  - Those **large denominations**, for the most part, **died in terms of spiritual life and Biblical loyalty** and **have commitment and live on only in name.**
- The **modern “church” is impure.**
  - It is **plain to conclude** that the church has **sold out to Satan,**
  - It has **wed the world** and has **long since been judged by Christ and stripped of any power or any spiritual influence.**
  - That's where Pergamos was and **that's why the Lord identifies Himself as the one with the sword.**

## *2) Now, secondly, we look from the correspondent to the city itself.*

### **A. What was the city like?**

- And again I **don't want to get caught up in geography lessons and sociology lessons,**
  - but **just to give you a little bit of a feeling.**

### *1. The Location of the City*

- This particular city is **less than a hundred miles from Ephesus.**
  - **Smyrna would be about half way if you were moving north,** and that's what I told you...**the route of these letters follows the route that would be taken to deliver them.**
  - **Ephesus the starting point,** and then **on to Smyrna,** and then **on about 50 miles, 55 miles or so north** to the city of Pergamos.
- It's **about 20 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.**
  - **On the ancient side of Pergamos there is a village today,**
    - it's called **Bergama(?),**
    - it's a **Turkish corruption of the word Pergamos.**

## *2. Its' Legendary Quality*

- There is **still**, I understand, a **small Christian community in Bergama**.
- **Legend says** that Pergamos was **built by a son of Hercules**.
  - **Supposedly was built on a lofty hill** in the broad and fertile plain of the **Caicus valley** by this **son of Hercules**.
  - **By the time John penned** this letter, it **had been the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor** for somewhere between **250 and 300 years**.
- The word "**Pergamos**" **literally means parchment**.
  - Do you **know what parchment is?**
  - **Parchment is a writing material developed from animal skin**.
- And apparently it was **first developed in this area** and thus the city of **Pergamos took its name from that**.

## *3. An Important Pagan Religious Center*

- It was an **important religious center where the pagan cults worshipping**
  - **Athena, Asklepios,**
  - **Dionysius which is another name for Bacchus** the god of drunkenness and debauchery,
  - **Zeus...all of these things** were there.

## *4. The worship of the Roman Emperor was very big.*

- In fact, this was **the first city in the ancient Roman world to build a temple to Caesar**.
  - The **emperor worship** had reached the **point of cultic form**.
  - **He was no longer seen as a political or military leader but he was now seen as a god**.
- And **in this city they built the first temple to Caesar**.
  - **Further years indicated** that they **built further temples**, and so the **city had perhaps several temples of worship for Caesar**.

- It became then **the capital of Caesar worship.**
- That city which was **more given over to that than any other city in ancient Roman territory.**

### 5. *Worship Caesar and Others or Nothing Else!!*

- They had developed along with Caesar worship, of course, **all of the other pagan forms of worship.**
  - And **as long as you worshiped Caesar, you could worship** somebody else.
- What made it tough for Christians was **they didn't worship Caesar at all.**
  - **They worshiped Christ and Him alone and refused on the one day a year when you had to burn incense** to Caesar to do it,
    - and therefore lost their citizenry rights and lost their lives in some cases.
- **That would have been intensified in Pergamos** because it was the capital city for Caesar worship,
  - and probably it was required more than just one day a year in this city,
  - and **that's what precipitates the fatality that occurs in this city to one of the members of the church.**

### 6. *Something Similar Today*

- We see something very, very similar today in our Own World
  - Today, in our society you **must submit to the common definition of truth OR ELSE!**
    - There are things that are rapidly becoming crimes (or bear a heavy toll among the society!) **if you do (or don't do)** them!!
      - Gay Rights
      - Trans-sexualism
      - Heinz-Racism (69 different versions)
      - All religions MUST be regarded as OK
      - A woman's right to Abortion

- Men are good – there is no evil (except for Conservatives!!)
- Any and all roads lead to heaven
- Any and all religions are the same – EXCEPT Christianity of course!
- Etc. and Etc.
- All forced by much the same thing as then...
  - The ones with the say/power controlled what went on!
  - Then it was the religious leaders...
  - NOW it is the Political/Intellectual leaders
- My point here?
  - Men need a good and solid, trustworthy guide for structuring how or on what they will build their living!!

### 7. *The Example of Our Founding Fathers*

- Just as a short aside...
  - When the Pilgrims decided to leave home and come to a new land, **this is exactly why the ones who founded this country originally came here!**
    - They wanted to escape the arbitrary defining and enforcement of what was regarded as True!!
    - They wanted to be permitted to honor God in a Biblical fashion and not be forced to do “right” the way the hierarchy defined it in their unbiblical perception of what was true.
    - This is not to say that they did everything right once they were here...
  - Further, when they sought to lay out the form that would structure and guide the country, they allowed their perception of what is real and true to guide them as they wrote our Constitution!

### 8. *What Has Happened to Us?*

- Yet, beginning some 50 Years Ago, we began to cast aside all that our Fathers had tried to embed into our society...

- We saw the fruit of caring for self **over the centuries more than caring for the God** who gave us our liberty.
- **Little by little**, over the decades **since about the 50s** we **denied the truths that had brought God's blessing** upon us nationally and **began to, instead, embrace ungodliness and what God finds offensive and damaging.**
- There is **little surprise that we find ourselves in the condition we are now in.**
  - We, as a group, think we are far better and smarter **than we truly are** and believe that **everyone oughta just take our word for stuff!!**
- There is **little surprise actually** that our **society has taken on the shape that it has!!**

## B. Pergamos & Knowledge

- In the city of Pergamos also was a **large university and a library** we are told and
  - this is **quite remarkable in ancient times,**
  - a library of **200,000 volumes.**
- Now **if you stop and realize** that you're **talking about volumes which are hand written**
  - because there is **no printing,**
  - **not for a long, long, long time** like 1500,
  - and they were **having to copy those by hand,**
  - you **can understand that a volume...library volume of 200,000 is a tremendous significance.**
- In fact, it was **such a significant library** that it was **later sent to Egypt as a gift from Antony to Cleopatra.**
  - So the **city had some prominence and some significance.**

## C. What about the church?

- We **move from the city to the church.**
- **How did it start?**
  - Well again we **don't know.**
- We **do know**, according to Acts chapter 16 that Paul **passed through the area.**

- This city, **Pergamos**, was in a region of Asia Minor called **Mysia**.
- And in **Acts 16:8** it says **Paul passed through there**,

---

<sup>8</sup> *So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.*

---

- **whether** in passing through there he effected some gospel ministry
  - **which brought some people to Christ** in the city of Pergamos
  - which was probably on the toll road,
  - **the Roman toll road** through Mysia and
- **Paul perhaps went through it**,
  - **whether or not** he had ministry there, **we don't know**.

### *1. Ministry Moves From Ephesus to Pergamos*

- There's **nothing in the book of Acts to tell us** that he founded the church.
  - The best...**the best understanding would come from Acts 19:10** because in Acts 19:1-10 you remember that **the Apostle Paul had this wonderful ongoing ministry in the city of Ephesus**

---

<sup>10</sup> *And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19:10)*

---

- and it was **so powerful and so far-reaching** that verse 10 says that **all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord**, both Jews and Greeks.
- So **at some point during the time of three years** ministering in Ephesus, **it seems certain that the word was bouncing out**.
  - People were **traveling and moving**,
  - Christians were **going up north through** these various cities and
  - **taking the gospel** and it was **echoing through all of Asia Minor**.

2. *During that period of time, no doubt, the church at Pergamos was founded.*

- But it was in a very pagan atmosphere, completely perverse to Christian testimony.
  - In the middle of that was **situated this little church to which Christ addressed the letter.**
  - In fact, in verse 13 you will note that He says,

---

<sup>13</sup> *“I know your works, and **where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.** And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, **where Satan dwells.**”*

---

- Satan's got his **operations all over the world but he's got his throne there.**
  - That's quite an amazing statement.

3. *The fastest way to destroy the church's life and testimony*

- Make no mistake, my friend, **his throne is not in hell, it's in this world.**
  - This is **the field of his operation.**
  - **Hell is the place of his incarceration, this is the place of his operation.**
- His from this **power was unleashed city and**
  - **some in the Pergamos church had fallen victim to Satan and**
  - **become thoroughly engulfed and meshed and even married to the world.**
    - Frankly, **not persecution but this kind of compromise is the fastest way to destroy the church's life and testimony.**

### 3) *Pergamos' Commendation*

- Now, **let's look a little more closely at the letter** and see the commendation.

- There's **some good things** to say.
- He says them in **verse 13**.

---

<sup>13</sup> *"I **know your works**, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

---

- "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is."
  - They **existed at the headquarters of satanic opposition**.
- Now people say, "Well how would you interpret that?"
  - Well, I would **just interpret it the way it's written**.
  - Satan had obviously established the center of his operation there.
  - I don't know why, but he had.
  - It **was the headquarters for his authority**.
  - **Not talking about some mystical, magical** kind of stuff...
- You must **note also that He says here**,

---

*"Where you dwell where Satan's throne is,"*

---

- ...a **mark of permanent residence**.
- **Satanic power was manifest** right out of that city.

### A. Smyrna and the Synagogue of Satan

- Now **in Smyrna they had a synagogue of Satan**.
  - We noted that **back when we were in verse 9**.
- But **here is the very throne of Satan**.
  - The **synagogue of Satan**, we might remember together, was **perverted Judaism**.
  - The throne of Satan was **this Gentile base of false religions**.

#### 1. *Feeling the Heat*

- And so, **Satan had set up his enterprise there** and
  - **this little church was feeling the heat** of it and
  - it was **in some ways succumbing** to it.



## 2. Without any Apostolic Ministry

- Further we know that this church was without any particular apostolic ministry.
  - We don't have any record that they had been exposed to any powerful leadership,
    - No record that they had been exposed to any great solid teaching.
  - But as I have said before, true faith is not fragile,
    - only false faith is and
    - they were standing against it.
- Some of them, however, who had attached themselves to the church were being sucked into the world.
  - They were having to meet the enemy on his own ground and it was **not easy**.
- But they would succeed, the true church, because you remember the words of Jesus,
  - Speaking of the Revelation of the Church Jesus said...

---

<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

---

- I will build My church and the throne of Satan will not prevail against it.
- There was a true church here,
  - there was a growing church here,
  - there was a real church there,
  - a saved church,
  - They were **waging an uncompromising war right at the throne of Satan**.
- They were doing well enough to be commended.

---

*"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith."*

---

- They were true. I say it again, true faith is not fragile, it is indestructible.

- It survives everything, even the onslaughts of hell.

#### 4) *Now just what is Satan's throne?*

- What are we talking about?
- **What can He mean here?**
  - Well it **could refer to the emperor worship** which was set up there, **the worship of Caesar** which then **flows out pervasively through the whole Roman Empire**,

*1. Remember, this was the first city to build a temple to Caesar.*

- It could refer to the magnificent altar to Zeus.
  - Zeus was sort of the head of the Pantheon, the supreme god.
  - Today, it is **one of the wonders of the ancient world**, this magnificent altar to Zeus, the **largest most famous altar in the world** was there.
- It was **shaped like a huge throne**.
  - It looked like a throne and it was set on the **Acropolis**.
- The **Acropolis speaks of the highest place**.
  - They would always put their worship point at the **heights in ancient times**,
  - and so they had **built this famous throne**, as it were, or altar to Zeus.
  - **Perhaps we can understand that it was this that is referred to as the throne of Satan.**

*2. Another Element of the Worship*

- But there's **another element of their worship** that fascinates me and
  - it certainly **must be included in any understanding of Satan's throne**.
- **Not only was he orchestrating Caesar's...the worship of Caesar**
  - from there to **flow out to the Roman world**,

- the known world,
- **not only** was there this **massive altar on the Acropolis that looked like a throne**
- and **a Satanic one at that because it reflected a false religion,**
- but there was the very **bizarre and strange worship of Asklepios.**
  - Asklepios was **the god of healing** and Asklepios was **known all over the ancient world as the Pergamese god,**
  - the god **most associated with Pergamos was Asklepios.**

*3. A very famous individual came from Pergamos,*

- his name was **Gaylon(?)**.
  - And Gaylon was **the second most famous medical person in the ancient world,**
    - the **most famous being Hippocrates.**
- Any doctor before he **goes through the processes takes what is known as the Hippocratic oath**
  - which is **the ethical statement** made by Hippocrates that should be the **standard by which any medical practitioner applies his trade.**
  - But **next to Hippocrates was Gaylon was the second great shining medical mind** of the Ancient World.

*4. In the city of Pergamos was a medical school.*

- And this was **a famous place of medicine.**
  - **Mingled into** their medicine, of course, was **a lot of superstition.**
  - And the **emblem or the idol of Asklepios was a snake.**
- If you have ever **seen the medical symbol,** you will notice that **in the middle of a medical symbol**
  - **winding its way around the pole is a snake...that is the ancient god Asklepios, the god of healing.**
- When you **went to the temple of Asklepios** you went there to be healed.

- In the temple **harmless snakes slithered all over the temple floor.**
- And **in order to be healed you had to go in there and lie down and stay there.**
- You **slept on the temple floor and while you slept the defused multiplicity of the deity of Asklepios **crawled over your body and infused you with his healing power.****

*5. Satanic? Yes. Right from the old serpent himself.*

- So when you hear that Asklepios was there, the serpent god, **that sounds Satanic.**
- **When you know that Zeus was there** and big upon the hill looming over the whole place was **an altar to this false god, you know that Satan was there.**
- **And when you know they were worshipping** the Caesars, **you know that Satan was there.**
  - *And when you put it all together, **certainly this is Satan's throne.***

**B. In the middle of all of that, in the middle of the powerful work of Satan was a little church.**

- And I love this, **He says,**

---

*"And you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith."*

---

- **That's the commendation.**
  - You hold fast My name. "*My name*" **always means who I am, person and work.**
- In other words, **you have been faithful to Me.**
  - He's **talking about personal faithfulness** to Him.
  - And **then He says you did not deny My faith.**
    - You **did not deny My truth, My gospel, the message of salvation by faith.**
    - You **didn't deny Me, you never denied who I was and you never denied your faith in My gospel, My truth.**

- You never deviated in your theology and you never deviated in your fidelity.
- You believed the truth and you sustained that belief faithfully, you stayed true, you didn't compromise.
- The courage of their faith is evident.
  - They stood boldly for Christ.
  - They weren't ashamed of His testimony, **even in the place where Satan's throne is.**
  - It wasn't easy...back to verse 13...

---

<sup>13</sup> *"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

---

- you held fast My name, you hold it right now...**present tense...**
  - you have not denied My faith, you don't deny it now,
    - *even in the days of Antipas,*
  - My witness, My faithful one who was *killed among you where Satan dwells.*
- Antipas, we don't know who he was though surely not a reference to HEROD Antipas...probably their pastor, one of their leaders.
  - My witness, My martus, My martyr,
  - My faithful one...
    - notice the "My's, would you?
      - My name, My faith, My witness, My faithful one...
- Christianity is so personal, isn't it?
  - So personal.
    - You didn't deny My name,
    - you didn't deny My faith,
    - that's your commitment to Me.
    - And then there is My witness, Antipas,
    - My faithful one,
    - that's My commitment to him.
  - I belong to you and **you don't deny it,**

- you belong to Me and I don't deny it either.
- **I'm yours and you're Mine.**
- He identifies Antipas only as My witness, My martus.
  - And that word went through an interesting metamorphosis.
  - It basically means witness, martus, but it came to be martyr.
  - Because so many of the witnesses that were faithful to Christ died, the word martus eventually became transliterated into English as martyr.
- And here is a person who is right in the transition,
  - a witness becomes a martyr because the witness pays the price.
    - You were faithful, you never denied My name, or My faith,
    - **even in the day of Antipas.**
  - My witness, My faithful one who was killed among you, in your midst.
- Tradition says, fascinating, he (Antipas) was burned to death inside a brass bull.
  - They had created a brass bull hallowed out, they set a fire and put him in it.

*You saw that, it happened among you, you watched My faithful one, you watched My witness become My martyr and you never deviated from your faith and you never denied My name.*

---

### **C. A Challenge to All of Us Today**

- The faithfulness of that little church should be a challenge to all of us today.
  - Antipas paid the supreme price for not compromising.
  - Some of us aren't even willing to sacrifice our popularity or our wrong desires for the sake of staying separated from the world.

- You have to ask...what in the world has happened to our sense of values?
  - Here's a man who would rather die than compromise.
  - We would readily compromise rather than change the simplest pattern of our selfish lives.
- So, Pergamos, for the most part, was faithful.

## 5) *Then, fifthly, comes the condemnation.*

- This is sad...the condemnation. Verse 14,

---

*"But I have a few things against you."*

---

- I just hate to read that.
  - So much good,
    - so many faithful, but I have this against you.

---

*"Because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam."*

---

- Verse 15,

---

*"You also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans."*

---

- What's He saying?
  - This is what I have against you, you have these people there who believe these false things and you are allowing it.
- You're not dealing with it.
  - You're allowing them to feel comfortable.
  - I have a few things against you...two, namely...

---

*"Because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam."*

---

- You have them, it's your responsibility, you're not putting them out of the church.

### **A. They Weren't Dealing With It.**

- It wasn't a question of their denying the Lord's name, they wouldn't do that.

- It wasn't a question of denying the faith, they wouldn't do that.
- It was a question of being soft and tolerant to error.
  - There are some in your church who have wed the world and you're allowing them to feel comfortable.

## **B. And He directs Himself at two heresies.**

- One identified with an Old Testament character,
  - the other identified with a New Testament period character, anyway, by the name of Nicholas.
- He says you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam.
  - We don't have the time to go back but you can take your Bible, go back to Numbers 22, 23, 24, and 25 after the service and you'll fill in the whole story of this fascinating character by the name of Balaam.
- You have some at Pergamos who hold the teaching of Balaam.
  - Rather than go into the whole thing, the Lord directs Himself at exactly what He has in mind.

### *1. What was the problem with Balaam?*

- What's the doctrine of Balaam or his teaching?

---

*"Who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality."*

---

- Balaam was a prophet for hire.
  - Balak, king of Moab, wanted to get rid of Israel.
  - The Moabites and the Israelites were always after each other.
- Balak wanted to get rid of Israel.
  - So he went to Balaam who was a prostitute prophet and could be bought.
    - And he paid him to curse Israel.
- He felt that if Balaam would curse Israel, he had such prophetic powers that Israel would be under the curse.
  - Three times Balaam tried to do it.



- Every time he tried to do it he failed.
- So he got another plan.
  - If he couldn't curse them, he'd earn his money another way, he'd corrupt them.
- So what did he do?
  - He devised a plot.
- His plot went like this,
  - the Moabite women will move in among the Israelite men
  - and the Moabite women will sexually seduce the Israelite men, drawing them in to inter-marriage.
- And once they're inter married it will pull them in to all the idolatry life of Moab.
  - Life of Moab could...the life of Moab could be reduced to a simple statement,
    - it could be described as fornication and idolatrous feasts.
    - It could be described as gluttonous orgies of lasciviousness.
    - It could be described as debauchery and prostitution.
    - It could basically be described as a life of partying and good times!
    - Could be described as a life given over to SELF
- And so, Balaam tried to work his plot and
  - have the women of Moab seduce the men of Israel into inter marriage
  - and then he could bring Israel into a blasphemous union with Satan and idols and fornication
  - and that would debase Israel,
  - that would destroy their spiritual power.

## *2. It Worked*

- You want to know something? It worked.
  - The doctrine of Balaam is the teaching that the people of God can inter marry with the heathen and thus will become what the heathen are.
  - This is not referring to mere sexual mixture and indulgence!

- It is referring to giving self over to the world!
- Everything is OK
- The Flipside is that there is NOTHING that is not OK

### 3. *Some Say It's All OK*

- There were some people in the Pergamos church saying it's okay to inter marry, to inter mingle with the pagan system.
  - We are not to be separate,
  - we are not to be aliens,
- Rather, it is essential that we intermarry with unbelievers,
  - we're to get involved in life around us,
  - mixing the old patterns,
  - the old morals, or lack of,
  - the old idolatry with the new Christianity.
- Of course our Lord had called for a clean break but always there are the seducers,
  - always there are those who come in and want to get God's people to break from the separation and mingle with the world.

### 4. *God absolutely condemned such a union in Israel*

- and here the Lord Jesus Christ condemns such a union in Pergamos.
- We're reminded of 2 Corinthians 6 where Paul says,

---

*"What fellowship has light with darkness, what concord has Christ with Belial? Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." (6:14)*

---

- But here there were some people in the church saying
  - you can be a Christian and worship idols,
  - you can be a Christian and commit fornication with a heathen priest, priestess at the temple or priest.
  - You can go to the debauchery and the orgies and the festivals and the feasts and still come here and pay your homage to Jesus.

- They were teaching that.
- And what was worse, the saints were doing nothing about it, absolutely nothing.
- James 4 says,

---

*"Friendship with the world is enmity with God."*

---

- One of the things that MUST be more than just an academic concept for us is the truth that it isn't OK to mix with the world...there MUST be a division!
- There can be no compromise, there can be no inter marriage with unbelievers.
- But you have some there and they're advocating it and they're teaching it and you're not stopping them.
  - And so, people are eating things sacrificed to idols and committing acts of immorality.
- Back at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, the Apostles sent out a message to the churches and said,
- "Don't eat things offered to idols,
  - it sucks you back into idolatry,
  - it may be an abuse of your Christian freedom,
  - it makes weaker brothers stumble,
  - it conjures all the old life patterns,
- and the council at Jerusalem also said stay away from all immorality.
  - And they were really mandating not the obvious private sexual sin,
    - but the public orgies that went on in pagan life.
  - This issue was settled long ago,
    - having been discussed and mandated from the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15
    - and still here we are in Pergamum are some decades later saying God tolerates this.
- Then there's another thing He has against them.

### *5. Another Thing Against Them*

- Verse 15,

---

*"Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans."*

---

- That little phrase "*in the same way*" is important because the teaching of the Nicolaitans led to the same behavior.
    - Nicolaitans were comparable to those who were following Balaamism.
    - Some think this goes back to Nicholas who once in Acts 6 was appointed as a deacon but later defected and became an apostate, we can't verify that.
  - But apparently this man, whoever he was, Nicholas, like Balaam had advocated a mingled life style.
  - He may have been kind of a pre-Gnostic, someone who believed he had entered in to ascended knowledge.
    - He no doubt was a Libertine who believed that you could conduct yourself any way you wanted it.
    - It advocated an extreme indulgence in sin, uncleanness, immorality and orgies based upon a perverted understanding of God's grace.
      - It was an abuse of freedom.
  - You have people like that today who think they're free in Christ to behave themselves any way they want.
    - I remember hearing of a Pastor having an experience with a well-known and popular preacher and writer whose wife came to me and said, "*Could you help me? I have a burden for my husband, he needs help desperately.*"
    - And I said, "*What's the problem?*"
  - She said,

*"It's his life style. Women in every city, this has been going on for years, bar rooms, drinking, wasting money, involved in all kinds of sin."*
- 
- This Pastor said, "*Well I'll be happy to meet him and confront him.*"
    - So this Preacher called and set up an appointment for a meeting place.

- He walked in a restaurant where He was to meet him and he was sitting with two unseemly women at a bar, drinking.
- He says that he walked up to him and said,

*"I'm here to speak with you," and pulled him away and said, "This is the first and last time I'll ever meet you in a place like this."*

---

- They went on to discuss the life style, the patterns of the life style.
  - And one he was meeting defended himself on the basis of grace and Christian freedom...and he later went on to divorce his wife and marry for a third time.
- There have always been the Nicolaitans who in the name of perverted grace and ascended knowledge think they can live above God's standard.
  - There are always those of the ilk of Balaam who want to seduce God's people into idolatry and immorality and pagan-ness and tell them it's okay.

### **C. The point here is this, what was wrong in this church?**

- The core of Christian people holding fast to the name of the Lord,
  - that is to His person,
    - not wavering on who He was and what He did,
    - not denying the faith, firm in the gospel and believing it,
    - BUT were soft in dealing with error...serious error and
      - all error is serious.
- I heard the other day about a Christian magazine, national magazine that's doing an article on Dr. MacArthur,
  - they haven't interviewed Him so I don't know if it's true,
  - but maybe they're doing it and are not interviewing him on purpose.
- But I'm sure the essence of the query of the article from what I've heard is...

- why does John MacArthur write all these controversial books?
- What's...what is it to him?
- Why does he write these books?
- It seems to me that the answer is as simple as understanding this text,
  - Dr. MacArthur wants to be faithful to hold fast the name of the Lord,
  - He wants to be faithful and not deny the faith
  - and he says that he also wants to be faithful to expose error...lest the Lord Himself come against me and my church with a sharp two-edged sword.
    - It is my desire that I and WE will put forth the same desire and carry out the same priorities!

## 6) Verse 16 brings us to the command.

### A. A Very Simple Command

- The command is very simple.

---

*<sup>16</sup> Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

---

- "Repent," turn around and go the other way.
  - The implication is that what he is talking about is really a matter of sin.
  - He's not saying to them,

*"Now, folks, you're just too loving."*

---

- He says,

*"Repent, this is sin and if you don't repent and do something about it I am coming to you quickly and when I get there I'll make war against them with the sword of My mouth. If it has to be, I'll come and I will slice them up if you don't repent."*

---

## 1. *We can't tolerate evil in any form.*

### a. *You can't allow it.*

- First Corinthians 5:6 Paul says,

---

*"A little leaven does...what?...leavens the whole lump."*

---

- If you allow that, it festers and it grows.
  - The church must be in constant judgment on teaching.

### b. *There's no room for compromise.*

- If we fail to exclude unbelievers from the fellowship of the body, we're in error.

## 2. *Unlike what many, many Preachers say today...*

- The church isn't designed for unbelievers to come and say whatever they want and be accepted as they are,
  - it's designed for saints to hold the truth and unbelievers to come and hear the truth and in hearing it be saved.
- And when you allow unbelievers to come in and take part and participate in the church, you're going to have people who
  - live a Balaam life style and
  - a Nicolaitan life style and
    - they'll mingle not just themselves but the church itself with their fornication
    - and the church with their idolatry
  - and to this the Lord says...I'll come with a sword in My mouth and I'll slice that Church and its' people up.

## **B. The church is never to be a place of the mingling of those things.**

- It's never to be a place where unbelievers feel safe and secure.
  - It's to be a place where unbelievers feel
    - frightened though loved,
    - fearful though welcome and
  - where they can hear the truth and be saved.

1. *You can never suppress error by compromising with it.*

**a. *Yes, we want to reach out in love.***

- Yes, we want to bring in unbelievers to hear the truth of Christ and
  - experience our love and experience our kindness and our graciousness.
  - But never give them the false security that they belong
    - until they know Jesus Christ which knowing is made manifest in their life.
- Compromise is so serious Christ says if you don't stop, I'll make war against them with the sword of My mouth.
  - That in itself could be a reference back to Balaam.
  - Back in Numbers 22 it says,

---

*"The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand."*

---

- And you know what Balaam did?
- Smart guy, he bowed all the way to the ground.
- The Lord pulled a sword on Balaam, the Lord will come with a sword against a compromising church.

**b. *You have to judge error, you have to keep the church pure.***

## **7) *Final Counsel***

- Then finally the counsel in verse 2:17.

---

*"He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

---

- Which is a long way of saying...listen, listen.
- Don't miss this.
- You've got to hear this message.
- And it's the Holy Spirit inspiring it as John writes it, as Christ gives it.
- And then this counsel is so wonderful,



---

*"To him who overcomes,"*

---

## **A. Who is the overcomer?**

- Every time you see it in the book of Revelation, who is it?
  - The believer.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:4 and 5 says,

---

*<sup>4</sup> For **whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.***

*<sup>5</sup> **Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?***

---

- "Who is the overcomer?"
  - The one **who believes.**"
- And **what is it** that overcomes?
  - Our faith, our belief.

## **B. A Promise Given**

### *1. What He Says to the True Christians*

- To the true Christians, He says, here is a promise after these fearful threats.
  - He doesn't want panic.

---

*"To those who are the overcomers, the true believers, I'll give some of the hidden manna."*

---

### *2. What's the hidden manna?*

- Well you know what the manna was?
  - Manna was, well I guess the closest thing we could call it is angel food cake.
  - Manna was some kind of honeyed bread out of heaven.
- Remember when the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness and God was delivering this marvelous heavenly bread?
  - And now He says I'll give you the hidden manna.

### 3. *Why does He say hidden?*

- Well, according to Exodus 16:33 when they traveled, they took the ark of the covenant and inside the ark they hid some...what?...some manna.

---

*<sup>33</sup> And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations."*

---

- What did that represent?
  - Oh I think it represented the bread of life.
    - Who's that? Jesus Christ.
- Just as Israel received manna from heaven as its food,
  - for the true believer He says I'll give you Jesus Christ.
  - I'll give you the true bread,
    - the spiritual bread from heaven which the world doesn't see,
    - I'll give you that bread which will sustain you.
- Go back to John 6:51 and hear Jesus say,

---

*<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*

---

- "I am the bread of life."
  - I'll give you Christ.
  - I'll give you all that is in Christ.
  - I'll give you all the benefits of knowing Christ. You're an overcomer and I'll give you all you need to sustain your life forever.

### 4. *The White Stone (2:17b)*

---

*<sup>17</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. **And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.**" ' "*

---

- Then He says,
  - "And I'll give him **a white stone.**"
    - You say...what is that?
    - Well, I don't know.
- A lot of options.
  - Interesting to think about them all.
  - Some say it's the white stone that's similar to the one on the breastplate of the high priest called the urim and the thummim by which the high priest could determine the will of God,
    - and so what it means is I'll give you a stone, or the ability by which you can determine My will.
- Some say it represents simply a diamond and I'll give you something that is very precious, namely eternal life.
  - I'll give you something that is very precious that would only be given to one who is deeply loved,
    - and since I love you so greatly like a man giving a woman an engagement ring,
    - I'll give you a diamond to show you My love.

### 5. *An Interesting Historical Note*

- But there's an interesting little historical note,
  - a. when a victor won in the games,*
    - whatever great games were being held,
    - it was not uncommon for the victor to be given as part of his prize a white stone.
    - And the white stone was his admission pass into the festival that was held following the games for all the victors.
    - Could it be that the overcomer will receive the ticket to the eternal victory in heaven?
- And then He says,

---

*"And a new name written on the stone,"*

---

- and I read where they would do that.
- They would give the victor, like a trophy, a stone with his name and he alone could use it as his pass.

## ***b. A Name Written on That Stone***

---

*"A new name written on the stone which no one knows, but he who receives it."*

---

- I can't tell you how many people have asked me, over the years...what is that name?
- A lady came to me one time when I preached on the book of Revelation and say,

### ***c. "What is the name that no man knows?"***

- Folks, I don't know what the name is.
  - If I knew what the name was then this verse couldn't say what it says, it would have to say,

*"And no one knows except Bill Farrow."*

---

- The only one who knows what it says is the person who receives it, that's how personal it is.
  - What it is to me is some kind of personal message from Christ to the one He loves which is given as an admission pass into eternal glory.
  - I'll know mine and you'll know yours and we'll know the Lord wrote them for each of us and for none of the others of us.

## ***6. We don't want to be a compromising church.***

- And so we've got to deal with issues lest the Lord come against us and smite us with a sword out of His mouth.
  - We want our faith to be real,
    - we want to hold fast to the name.
    - We want not to deny what we know to be true.
    - We want to deal with error in our fellowship.
    - We want to be the true church,
      - the true believers,
      - the overcomers who someday will be given Jesus Christ in all His fullness as the hidden manna,

- who someday will be given the white stone to give us admission in to the eternal feast in heaven.
- And on that white stone will be written a special message privately from the living Christ to those He loves.

### *7. When the Hidden Manna Isn't for You*

- If you don't know Jesus Christ,
  - the hidden manna isn't for you,
  - the white stone is not yours.
- And all you have is the sword of His judgment.
  - I'm not under any illusion,
  - I Have to believe that there may be people in this church in that category,
    - It could be that they are living out the doctrine of Balaam,
    - They are living out the teaching of the Nicolaitans,
    - They are here and perhaps as far as anyone around you knows you are worshiping Christ and you go from this place into idolatry and immorality.
- And the fact of the matter is that the Lord will come and make war with you sooner or later unless you repent.

### ***Conclusion***

- Father, we thank You again for the Word and for its power and conviction. Thank You for instructing us. We give you praise in our Savior's name. Amen.