

REVELATION

The Church at Pergamum:

Pursue right doctrine

and

right practice



Theater from ancient Pergamum, Modern Bergama



Why is the city of Pergamum important for our understanding of the New Testament?



1. Church was faithful in the face of opposition.

A. Difficult to live as a Christian in Pergamum.

- ❖ Revelation 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**.

Worship of Caesar



Worship of Zeus



Worship of Asclepius



1. Church was faithful in the face of opposition.

A. Difficult to live as a Christian in Pergamum.

- ❖ Variety of cults made faithfulness in Pergamum difficult.
- ❖ Ultimately all false worship is rooted in Satan.

1. Church was faithful in the face of opposition.

B. To their credit, the church in Pergamum remained faithful.

- ❖ Revelation 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**.

1. Church was faithful in the face of opposition.

B. To their credit, the church in Pergamum remained faithful.

- ❖ G.K. Beale: “Light and darkness cannot dwell together in peaceful coexistence. Therefore, a witnessing church will be a persecuted church.”
- ❖ This church held on to Jesus’ name even as Antipas was faithful to death.

1. Church was faithful in the face of opposition.

B. To their credit, the church in Pergamum remained faithful.

- ❖ Antipas was a faithful witness (Rev 2:13).
- ❖ Jesus is a Faithful Witness (Rev 1:5).
- ❖ We must be a faithful witness:

μάρτυς (martus)

=

“witness”

2. Church struggled with compromise in practical living.

- ❖ They maintained right *doctrine*, but did not maintain right *practice*.
- ❖ Their suffering did not automatically validate *everything* that they did.
- ❖ This church compromised in practical living. **We must pursue right doctrine *and* right practice.**

2. Church struggled with compromise in practical living.

A. Even though they were faithful, they sinned in practical ways.

- ❖ Revelation 2:14-15: 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. So also you have some who hold the **teaching of the Nicolaitans**.

2. Church struggled with compromise in practical living.

A. Even though they were faithful, they sinned in practical ways.

❖ Some followed the example of Balaam.

- Balaam had told Balak to infiltrate Israel.
- Numbers 25:1-3: While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.
- 24,000 died in a plague because of this sin.

2. Church struggled with compromise in practical living.

A. Even though they were faithful, they sinned in practical ways.

- ❖ Some in Pergamum were sinning in same way.
 - Involved in feasts at idolatrous temples and immorality
 - Some also followed teaching of Nicolaitans.
 - Satan's direct attack of persecution didn't work, but he was deceiving them like he deceived Eve in Eden.

2. Church struggled with compromise in practical living.

A. Even though they were faithful, they sinned in practical ways.

❖ Why would they compromise?

- Perhaps want to believe in Christ without giving up old lifestyle
- Perhaps think it will help their witness
- Perhaps think it will relieve pressure
- Perhaps want economic/social advantage

2. Church struggled with compromise in practical living.

A. Even though they were faithful, they sinned in practical ways.

- ❖ Whatever their reason, God said it was wrong.
 - Following everyday practice of culture
 - Hillary Clinton: “Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed.”
 - Courts today often call on Christians to follow the court instead of what they believe.

2. Church struggled with compromise in practical living.

B. God cares how we live as a Christian.

- ❖ The world calls us to follow them, but we must faithfully live as God has called us to live.
 - We can face **social** pressure from the world.
 - We can face **economic** pressure from the world.
 - Craig Keener: “In short, when we value what the world does instead of valuing the kingdom, we forfeit our role as witnesses for Christ’s kingdom in this world.”

3. Christ responded to the compromise in the church.

A. He warned them to repent.

- ❖ Revelation 2:16: Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.
- Revelation 1:16: In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.
- Revelation 19:15: From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

3. Christ responded to the compromise in the church.

B. He gave promises to the faithful.

- ❖ Revelation 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.

3. Christ responded to the compromise in the church.

B. He gave promises to the faithful.

- ❖ Israel turned from the Lord to idolatrous feasts, but **manna** sustained them throughout the wilderness.
- ❖ A **white stone** was used to give a verdict of innocence and as a ticket into a celebratory feast.

Conclusion: What do we do with what God has revealed?

- We must pursue a faithful lifestyle.
- Where are we tempted to compromise?

NEXT TIME:
REVELATION 2:18-29

- The Church
at Thyatira