

save in James 4:2. The church is given the privilege to fight against His enemies without them! These are strong words which are softened in these days of compromise and worldliness. God's attack is with His Word!

b. Hear

Throughout these letters to the churches, the word is given to individuals to "hear" what the Spirit is saying to them, along with the Lord. If only it were possible to get people to hear in the right way. "Hearing" implies action! God help the hearing ear to hear!

5. The church's CAPSTONE OFFERED v. 17.

To the truly saved person who enjoys the delight of an overcoming life in Him, three items are offered:

1. Eat hidden manna

In the O.T., the manna was for daily use (Ex. 16:14-22). It was not to be stored (Ex. 16:23ff.). What then is the hidden manna? Christ (John 6). We will feast on Him eternally!

2. Given a white stone

In the courts, a white stone indicated acquittal and a black one condemnation. The experience of total acceptance is implied here.

3. Provided a new name

No indication is given what this name will be. Those receiving it will know at that day. It may indicate some precious thought of our Lord for each believer. Certainly, it will be related to the perfections of God and glory! It may well center on Christ Himself.

Conclusion God's ideal is full worship of the Lord. The toleration of evil and worldliness is faithfully discouraged. Those who take their stand with HIM are fully rewarded.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"Pergamus: The Worldly Church"  
Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction

1. The church at Ephesus (vv. 1-7) illustrates the apostolic era (to 100 A.D.). It was a church which had left its first love--the Lord. Then came Smyrna, the church of persecution days (100-400 A.D.). They took it for the Lord's sake. Now comes Pergamus, a word which means "marriage" or "elevation." It represents the church of compromise and worldliness (400-600 A.D.).

2. Pergamus was 55 miles north of Smyrna. It was a union city of paganism, cathedrals, university, and a royal residence. The Gospel had enormous competition here. The effort to infiltrate the truth had fertile ground in this city. Constantine, the emperor, drove the final wedge and established a church-state union!

3. But our Lord was on the scene. He is described as the One Who has "the sharp sword." This means He deals sharply with evil (cf. 1:16) and connotes His cutting Word (Heb. 4:12). In the Greek, each noun has its own definite article in the phrase about the sword so as to single out each point with force. Mark what He says to the church:

1. The church's CONDITION KNOWN v. 13.

The familiar "I know" is recorded here. What our Lord knows about the church is provided:

a. Where you dwell.

If only our Lord could have said: "I know where you sojourn?" But no. He knows where they dwell! They had become associated with the "earth dwellers" (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8).

b. Where Satan dwells.

The same intensive form of the verb "to dwell" is employed here as above. Indeed, it is stated that Satan has his "throne" at Pergamus! This denotes that pagan religions held sway here. Three forms are known to have been there: 1) The old Greek deities, Zeus and Athena. 2) A healing cult associated with Dionysius and Aschapius. 3) The common emperor worship. A temple was erected here to Augustus Caesar.

2. The church's COMMENDATION GIVEN v. 13.

a. You hold My Name

The present tense is used in the verb "hold." This points out that the church had not engaged in emperor worship. They still affirmed Christ as Lord.

b. You hold My faith

The aorist of the verb "deny" shows that the church had not denied any personal faith on the Lord. It is the objective genitive here: "thy faith on Me."

c. You hold My suffering

The church had suffered at least one case of martyrdom. It was a man named Antipas. This name means "against all." Apparently he was a strict separationist. He held out against the worldly entanglements. Tradition has it that he was burnt to death in a brazen bull. Three items are recorded about him: 1) He was a witness (Acts 1:8). Later this word came to mean "martyr." 2) He was a faithful one (Heb. 3:2). 3) He was slain. The passive verb and the prepositional phrase note that outsiders slew Antipas "by your side" i.e. right in your presence. The "throne of Satan" killed God's man. They are still doing this; if not physically, then with words!

3. The church's CONDEMNATION RECORDED vv. 14, 15.

How many things the Lord actually levelled against the church are not known. They are considered "few." Here are some of them:

a. They tolerated evil

This is what is meant by the teaching of Balaam. The verb "hold" is present tense, hence the church permitted this to go on in spite of their jealousy for the "Name" of our Lord. Three items are included in this debauched teaching:

1) Stumbling block Israel had interference put in her way of serving the Lord. Balaam "taught" Balak to do this! The verb here is imperfect which notes that Balaam was the prototype of all who are corrupt teachers. What he was in himself was wrong. We have Balaams today! Thank God for those church congregations which have discernment and remove

them from the membership rolls! They are a stumbling block to spiritual growth.

2) Idolatry In this case, it is a witness that idolatry was accepted. To entertain oneself in the feasts of idols is wrong. Paul wrote about this, too and warned even the "enlightened" brethren about the problem (1 Cor. 8). Anything which comes between the Lord and you is idolatry.

3) Fornication Idolatry has a handmaid and this is it. The Jerusalem Council warned about this and the problem of idolatry (Acts 15:29). This "good church" allowed these evil things to go on in its assembly! Church discipline should have been exercised!

b. They allowed the Nicolaitanes

It is admitted that there are varying views as to the precise meaning of this term, but it is obvious it is inconsistent with a separated assembly. The Ephesians had the "deeds" of this group as an object of "hate" (v. 6). Here the "doctrine" of this group is mentioned as being "held" by some. Hence, their denial of what the Jerusalem Council had advocated brought on laxity in testimony. This ideology probably means that the church wanted to live close to the world "so that they might be won," a false philosophy prominently held by the neo-evangelical movement today. Although some MSS omit the phrase, it is probably genuine: "which thing I hate" (v. 6).

4. The church's COUNSEL INDICATED vv. 17, 18.

a. Repent

This is an aorist imperative and marks urgency! The verb employed is a most serious one and means a change of mind. The inferential "therefore" which appears in the Greek is omitted in the A.V. If this is not heeded, two actions will be taken:

1) I will come. This threat of His imminent coming is to be taken seriously. The word "quickly" adds the strength of immediate action. This is not a reference to His second coming, but His coming in judgment of sin.

2) I will fight. The word "polemic" is rooted in this Greek verb. The verb is not found elsewhere in the N.T.,