

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“The Worldly Church”

Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction

1. The church at Ephesus had left its first love (2:4). At Smyrna, the church suffered grave persecution (2:10). The Pergamus church was presumptuous, allowing compromise and worldliness.

2. Pergamus was 55 miles north of Smyrna. Its name means elevation, tower. The City was a union of paganism, cathedrals, university, and royal residence. To infiltrate the truth found fertile ground here. The emperor, Constantine, drove the final wedge and established a church-state union.

3. The Lord here speaks to the church and He has the sharp sword with the two edges (cf. 1:16) devoting His cutting word (Heb. 4:12). Each noun in this phrase has its own definite article so as to single out each with force (the sword, the two mouthed, the sharp).

4. Read the Lord’s message to this church:-

1. The Church’s CONDITION KNOWN v. 13

The familiar “I know” is recorded (cf. 2:2, 9). What does the Lord know? He knows:-

a. Where You Dwell

“Where” () is an interrogative adverb and used here as an indirect question. The church was associated with the “earth dwellers” (cf. 3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8). The intensive verb “to dwell” is used ().

b. Where Satan Dwells Reigns

“Where” () is a relative adverb referring back to the first “where.” The verb “dwell” is repeated for Satan, but the fact is stated that he has his “throne” () there. This affirms that pagan religions held sway there. 1) Greek deities, Zeus and Athena. 2) A healing cult associated with Dionysius and Aschapius. 3) common Emperor worship. There was a temple to Augustus Caesar.

2. The Church’s COMMENDATION GIVEN v. 13

a. You hold Fast () My Name.

The verb is present tense and is the root for “strength, power,” hence a forceful term meaning to “take hold of.” The object of the verb is “My Name.”

b. You hold My Faith

The verb “not deny” supports fidelity to his “faith” meaning “Thy faith in Me” (an objective genitive).

c. You hold My Suffering

The church suffered at least one case of martyrdom. That was Antipas, a name meaning “against all.” Apparently he was a strict separationist and held out against worldly entanglements. Tradition has it that he was burned to death in a brazen bull. Three items are recorded about him: 1) He was a witness (Acts 1:8). Word means “martyr.” 2) He was faithful (Heb. 3:2, cf. 1:5; 3:14). 3) He was slain. The passive verb and the prepositional phrase note it was done by outsiders “by your side” (i.e. right in your presence). The “throne of Satan” killed God’s man.

3. The Church’s CONDEMNATION RECORDED vv. 14, 15

Among the “few” things against the church, these are listed:

a. They tolerated evil

In spite of their jealousy for the “Name” of the Lord, the church permitted (have = present of) those who “hold” () -- same word as “held” My Name, v. 13) the teaching of Balaam. Three items are included in this debauched teaching: 1) Stumbling block. Israel had interference put in her way of serving the Lord. This is what balaam taught Balak to do. The imperfect verb “taught” () notes Balaam kept at it. He readily is a prototype of all corrupt teachers. What Balaam did was wrong.

We need discernment to mark such in our congregations and remove them. We cannot do with stumbling blocks interfering with spiritual growth. 2) Idolatry to eat things sacrificed to idols is wrong. Paul warned 1) about this, even to enlightened brethren (1 Cor. 8). Succinctly, anything which comes between the Lord and you is idolatry. 3) Fornication. Like the verb “to eat,” the verb “to fornicate” is an aorist infinitive. Hence, these are real objective historical acts and are incompatible with true faith. Idolatry and fornication are handmaidens. Note the decision of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:19).

b. They allowed the Nikolaitanes

As noted, the church at Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, but at Pergamos this doctrine was “held” (-- same verb in vv. 13, 14). Whatever one may perceive this to be, it was a denial of the Jerusalem Council and brought laxity in testimony. Moreover, some MSS add, as in the KJV, the Lord hated this teaching (cf. 2:6). It is very possible that this ideology indicated the church wanted to live close to the world “so that they might be won.” A false philosophy prominently held by neo-evangelicals and seeker-sensitive groups. Sad!

4. The Church’s COUNSEL INDICATED vv. 16, 17

a. Repent

The aorist imperative marks urgency. Moreover the Greek verb implies a change of mind (), hence the appeal is very serious. An inferential “therefore” before the verb is omitted in the KJV. If there is no repentance, two actions will be taken: 1) I will come. The threat of our Lord’s intervention is to be taken seriously. The particle “quickly” adds strength to the warning. Obviously, this is His coming then in judgment. It is not a reference to His second coming. 2) I will fight. The word “polemic” is rooted in this Greek verb (). This verb is only found twice in the N.T. (here and James 4:2). There is no softening of the words about His enemies. He attacks with His words. In these days of compromise and worldliness, there needs to be some sort of militancy as described here.

b. Hear

The letter to Pergamos included what every church letter has -- a call to hear what the Spirit is saying along with the Lord Himself. If only it were possible to get the church to hear. Hearing implies obedience. God help the hearing ear to hear!

5. The Church’s CAPSTONE OFFERED v. 17

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

a. Given Hidden Manna

While some MSS omit “to eat,” the point is clear. When the earthly struggle is over, the hidden manna, Christ Himself (cf. Ex. 16:14-22; Jn 6:31, 35) will be the heavenly food in contrast to the idol meats (v. 14). The idea “hidden” is a reminder of the pot of manna laid up before the Lord (Ex. 16:33; Heb. 9:4).

b. Given A White Stone

The white stone, in the courts, indicated entire acquittal while a black one meant condemnation. Thus, the experience of complete acceptance before God is implied here.

c. Given A New Name

No indication is noted 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. That, in turn, will be related to the perfections of God and His glory. Somehow it will all center on Christ Himself.

Conclusion The Father’s ideal is full worship of His Son. Toleration of evil and worldliness is strongly discouraged and rejected. Those who take their stand with the Lord will be abundantly rewarded.