

PERGAMUM

TRUE LOVE

I. BACKGROUND

A. Geographical/Commercial/Political

1. 55 miles North East of Ephesus
20 miles from Smyrna
2. About 20 miles inland
3. Roman capital of the Province of Asia- center of Roman authority- Roman governor may have violently opposed the Christians

B. Spiritual

1. Center for Pagan Deities
 - a. Zeus – “ The Savior”: throne-like altar built on a stone crag above the city.
 - b. Athena – Victory
 - c. Dionysius – god of kings: commonly represented by a bull
 - d. Asclepius – god of healing: commonly represented by a serpent
 1. Large Medical School and Medical Center
 - a. People came from far and wide to learn or be treated
 2. Large Library
 - a. Over 200,000 volumes
 - b. Rivalled the library in Alexandria, Egypt
 - c. “Parchment”: invented in Pergamum and given its name because Egypt banned the export of Papyrus. Invented for the library.
 - e. There was even an altar to Unknown gods, as in Athens. See Acts 17:23.
 2. Center for Imperial Cult – temples were erected in honor of Emperor Augustus, Trajan and Septimus Severus.
 3. Result: Tough Neighborhood for Christians
 - a. Reject local gods: threat to the peace and prosperity they provide
 - b. Reject Roman Deities: unpatriotic; potentially treasonous

C. Other References

1. Pergamum is only mentioned twice in Scripture
 - a. Rev. 1:11
 - b. Rev. 2:12-17

II. THE LETTER TO PERGAMUM – Rev. 2:12-17

A. Who sent the letter

1. Christ
2. How Christ Describes Himself – Rev. 2:12
 - a. “ Him who has the sharp, double - edged sword”
 1. See also: Rev. 1:12-16 “out of His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword”
Rev 2:16 – “ ..with the sword of My mouth”
 2. This is a Jarring image – perhaps this was Christ’s intent
 - a. Beware of boxing Christ into the “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild” image
 - b. Some things Christ takes very seriously and if He’s crossed, He will fight

- b. Unlike the letters to Ephesus and Smyrna, Christ's letter to Pergamum opens with a threat.
- B. "I Know Where You Live" – Rev. 2:13
 - 1. Where Satan Has His Throne (repeated – "where Satan lives")
 - a. Possible Interpretations
 - 1. Pergamum was addicted to idolatry
 - 2. May refer to the throne altar to Zeus ("the Savior")
 - 3. May refer to the shrine of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, who was depicted as a snake. Satan appears as a snake or serpent in Genesis 3 and also in John's visions (Rev. 12:9, 14-15; 20:2)
 - 4. Emperor worship – "Satan's throne" may simply be referring to the true power behind the Emperor cult.
 - 2. "I know where you live..."
 - a. He's been in the neighborhood
 - b. He's aware of our environment
- C. The Church's Strengths – Rev. 2:13
 - 1. Staying Power
 - a. "Live" or "Dwell" : indicates "to stay permanently." This group of Christians, didn't split when the going got tough
 - 2. Faithful Allegiance
 - a. Despite where they lived; "You remain true to My name."
 - 1. Romans 1:16 – I am not ashamed of the gospel
 - 2. II Timothy 1:8-9 – Do not be ashamed to Testify about our Lord
 - b. "Did not renounce faith in Christ, even in the days of Antipas."
 - 1. Antipas
 - a. This is the only mention of him in Scripture
 - b. No details
 - c. Legend:
 - i. Bishop (Elder) in the Church of the Pergamum
 - ii. Died during Domitian's reign (81–96 A.D.)
 - iii. Priests of the idol to Asclepius roasted him to death in a brass cauldron
 - 2. Despite This, the Church hung in there
 - What Christ was asking the Church at Smyrna to do, the Church in Pergamum had already done
- D. The Church's Weakness – Rev. 2:14-15
 - Two Serious Flaws
 - 1. The Church Tolerated False Doctrine
 - Two Kinds
 - a. BALAAM
 - 1. Numbers 22-25 ; 31:16; II Peter 2:15; Jude 11
 - 2. A Prophet who encouraged the Moabites to seduce/intermarry with the Israelites in order to turn them away from God
 - b. NICOLAITANS - see page 9

2. The Church Tolerated Behavioral Problems
 - a. Specific Mention: sexual immorality (common with idol worship); eating things sacrificed to idols
3. What's Going On Here?
 - a. In a Tough Place to Minister (where Satan lives) this Church chose to COMPROMISE
 - b. Apparently: (not a lot of Facts given)
 1. The leaders and probably the majority of the members still "remained true to Christ's name."
 2. But, they were tolerating in the Church's fellowship false doctrine and immorality
 3. They'd "given in" to Social/Sexual Pressure
4. What Does This Tell Us About Christ?
 - a. He Accepts No Rationalizations
 1. "Look Where We Live" (Bad Environment)
 - v.12 – I know Where You Live
 2. "Look At Our Adversary" (Satan)
 - v.12 – I know Your Adversary
 3. "Don't Be Too Idealistic"
 - "You're Going To Extremes"
 - " You Expect Too Much"
 - "To Err Is Human and We're All Human"
 - v.6 – "the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also Hate"
 - b. He Accepts No Compromise
 1. We Are Called To Obey
 - John 14:15 – "If You love me, you will obey...."
 2. We Are Not Called To Majority Rule; Public Opinion Polls; Everybody's Doing It
 - John 14:15 – "...what I command."
 - c. He Demands A Pure Church
 1. The Church must deal with False Doctrine and Sin in its ranks
- E. Christ's Command – Rev. 2:16
 1. REPENT (Compromise is sin)
 - a. This is urgent; don't wait
- F. Christ's Warning – Rev. 2:16
 1. REPENT, OR ELSE
 - a. "I will soon come"
 1. Christ won't waste time: no messing around
 - b. "I will fight...with the sword of my mouth"
 1. If you don't deal with it, you're going to have a fight on your hands.....WITH ME
NOTE: Christ is saying this to His own church
 2. Sword Of My Mouth
 - a. "Sword" – metaphor for the word of God
 1. Christ Himself is "The Word"

- a. John 1:1 – “In the beginning was the word...”
 - b. Rev. 19:13 “...His Name is the Word of God...”
 - 2. Scripture is “ The Word”
 - a. Ephesians 6:17 – “Sword Of The Spirit”
 - b. Hebrews 4:12 – “the word of God is sharper then any double- edged sword”
 - b. Why Double-Edged? DUAL FUNTION
 - 1. Provides The Truth
 - II Timothy 3:14-17 – all scripture is God breathed. Christ saves those who follow Him and obey.
 - 2. Renders Judgment
 - John 12:47- 48 – Destroys those who disobey
 - c. God’s Word is our Standard Of Faith and Practice
 - 1. Staying Power and Faithful Allegiance Are Not Enough If We Allow The Truth To Be Compromised.
- G. Christ’s Promise – Rev . 2:17
 - 1. To Him Who Overcomes, Christ Gives:
 - a. Hidden Manna
 - 1. Picture of Restored fellowship with God/Christ
 - 2. Christ is the “Bread of Life” John 6:31-35; 48-51
 - b. White Stone
 - 1. Acquittal: Ancient custom of giving a white stone to the innocent and a black stone to the condemned
 - 2. Some scholars believe that in the ancient world, victorious athletes received a trophy in the form of a stone with their name inscribed on it. Not only did it signify their victory, it also served as their admission to the great banquet of victors. In terms of eternity, God’s faithful servants will be welcomed into God’s blessing and provision in heaven.
 - c. New Name Written On It
 - 1. The name of adoption: New Identity; New Character
 - 2. Christ’s Name Rev. 3:12
- H. Closing Thoughts on Compromise
 - 1. Compromise rarely occurs quickly.
 - 2. Compromise always lowers the original standard.
 - 3. Compromise is seldom offensive.
 - 4. Compromise is often the first step toward total disobedience
- I. The Church Must Deal With False Doctrine and Sin In Its Ranks
 - A. Scriptural Precedent
 - 1. Christ: Matthew 15:18
 - 2. Paul: I Corinthians 5
 - B. It doesn’t matter how many there are, but are there any?
 - C. How Does The Church Deal With This?
 - 1. Some Truths Cannot be compromised
“Unity in Essentials; Liberty in Non- Essentials; Charity in All Things”
 - 2. Liberty in Non-Essentials

3. Balancing The Truth and Love (Charity)
 - a. Some – Love is so paramount, Truth is neglected. Love becomes sappy sentimentality if not strengthened by Truth.
 - b. Others – Truth is so paramount, they become harsh, unloving, bitter. Truth becomes Hard if not softened by Love.
 - c. Ephesians 4:15 – Speak the Truth in Love
 - d. Philippians 1:9-10 – “...this is my prayer; that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight...”
 - e. Christ loves, speaks and is Truth