



The Church at Pergamos

AND to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; ¹³ I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. ¹⁵ So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶ Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. (Rev 2:12-17)

Today's text contains some of the most beautiful promises God ever made known to us, but we must have ears to hear, and eyes to see, "*what the Spirit saith to the churches*". But ere we venture into the Manna God has revealed to us herein, let us first describe the setting of the Church at Pergamos. It was a city of wealth and fashion, though not a commercial center as was Ephesus. The city of Pergamos was the capital of the Roman Province of Mysia, and it was here that *Pergamena Charta*, or *parchment*, was discovered as a writing medium. The city of Pergamos was famous for its wonderful library which was later destroyed, along with the city, by Calif Omar (yet another example of Moslem misanthropy). In traveling on his first voyage to Europe, Paul passed through Pergamos enroute to the port of disembarkation at Troas. Pergamos is approximately twenty miles from the Mediterranean Sea. There is one other characteristic of the city for which it was widely known to the world – its religions. It was a city of many false gods including that of Aesculapius who was considered the god of medicine. The serpent was his symbol – another reason God refers to the site as where Satan's seat (or Throne) is. We still use the caduceus to symbolize medicine along with the two-edged sword. Satan, the Serpent, brought to us a deadly disease – Sin. The two-edged sword of the Lord will be the cure for the disease as well as the demise of the Serpent.

¹² *And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.* Here again, as with all seven churches, our Lord addresses the leadership of the church (angel) but, in every case, by the specific name of the Church. It is possible to have the full knowledge of the Word of God and to be remiss in dividing it according to the Will and Meaning of the Holy Ghost. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Tim 2:15) Christ, as the Word, is the Bread of Heaven. A good father will distribute the bread equally to each of his children without partiality or favor. There is a reason, as every word of God has power and purpose, for the *sharp sword with two edges.* Like most modern churches today, Pergamos was not rightly dividing the Word. The preaching involved some social and cultural compromise. The purpose of the two-edged sword was to separate the true believers from the posers (hypocrites). *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* (Heb 4:12) This provides us a reason for preaching, not only to those with ears to hear, but also to the incorrigible and reprobate sinner. The Word is a sword with two opposing edges – one to convict and convert; and the other to convict and condemn. The condemned can never go before the Throne of God and claim *“nobody ever told me”* if the church does its mission of carrying the Gospel into all the world.

As with the other churches, the Lord finds a few commendable characteristics in the Church at Pergamos: ¹³ *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* The Church was located in the precarious setting of wicked idolatry. Yet, they never denied the name of Christ, or faith in Him, under such adverse conditions. They might have easily walked lightly in faith by whispering Christ’s name among themselves, or compromising with the satanic elements in order to “get along” as many do today; but they did not! The name of Christ is a powerful Name that incorporates all that He is: Master, Lord, Savior, Redeemer, King of Kings, Prince of Peace, etc. So, this name is potent with meaning and power. In fact, *“there is no other name given under Heaven by which men may be saved.”* (Acts 4:12)

There was one martyr of note at Pergamos mentioned by Christ – Antipas. We do not know who Antipas was other than the fact that he was martyred, along with many others, for Christ’s sake. Though we mortal humans may not long remember the faithful of God, our Lord does not forget – He remembers!

Our Lord is a good and merciful teacher. In critiquing students in flight school, we learned to always begin with any positive comments we could recall so that their hope would not be destroyed; then follows the critique of shortcomings. We take good measure of wisdom when we view the way the Lord teaches and rebukes. After pointing out some commendable characteristics, He now lists the shortcomings of the Church at Pergamos: ¹⁴ *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.* Being a kind and gracious gentleman, the Lord refers to a ‘few’ things which He has against the Church – but those ‘few’ things are profound. The doctrine of Balaam means to mix idolatrous religious practices among those things that are Holy. The antichrist church does so today. Mixing false religion with pure will always lead to sins of decadence and reprobation. The men of Israel began to practice illicit conjugal relations with the harlots of Moab and Midian. This was the result of Balaam’s counsel to Balac. Satan will always mistranslate the Word and dilute true faith. He has gotten better at it today.

"5 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Here again, the practice of the Nicolaitans come before God's Bar. It represents an extenuation of the sins of Balaam with a notable difference. The idolatry of Balaam was up front and unashamed; however, the Nicolaitans brought idolatrous practices into the true church and claimed it was biblical and righteous. God hates that. He hates for us to pretend that the sacred and Holy Estate of Matrimony can exist between two persons of like sex. Or that murder can be acceptable if it involves the murder of the most innocent of human beings while still in the sanctity of the mother's womb. Not all men and women of the Church at Pergamos were involved in compromise of religion, but the innocent may often suffer along with the guilty. It is wise for us to zealously defend the doctrines of faith to which we subscribe. *16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* (Rev 2:16 (KJV))

As with the Marriage at Cana of Galilee, God has saved our best wine in this text for last. Do we have ears to hear what the Spirit says? It is such a blessing to have our ears open to the beauty of God's Word. The world will believe it to be foolishness, but to the believer, it is as drops of Golden Manna falling from Heaven. *17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give:*

There are three or four gifts of beauty here listed which the Lord will give to those who overcome in the faith. Let us examine them in order:

1. *"to eat of the hidden manna"*, This is the Manna that comes down silently and in the dark hours of the night while men sleep. It comes as no result of cultivation or harvest, but freely! It is the wisdom and knowledge of understanding things heavenly. What a blessing to be so chosen! The world knows nothing of this Manna, and cannot find it.
2. *"and will give him a white stone,"* In the New Testament period, the White Stone symbolized, in a court proceeding, the innocence of the accused. Though he may have been guilty (which we all have been), the White Stone offers complete justification before the Law of God – because of our Lord!
3. *"and in the stone a new name written,"* I would certainly be ashamed to go to Heaven with my old tarnished and mud-caked name. There will be too many in Heaven who remember the old 'me' and all of the horrendous sins I have committed. But my Lord will give me a New Name – clean, unsoiled, and having no unsavory reputation ascribed thereto. How gracious of Him.
4. And finally, *"which no man knoweth saving he that receives it."* It is a very special name. It is a Name that will include that of our Lord "Christian." It is a LEGAL Name and a Spiritual one. Only YOU and your LORD who gave it will know that Name. He is the Good Shepherd who calls His own by Name.

It is such a rare privilege to be so blessed as to understand these things from God's Book of Treasure.

Tomorrow, we will look at the Church at Thyatira. I encourage my friends to read ahead for preview and enlightenment.