

# A Study Of The Book Of Revelation

June 21, 2020

Revelation 2:12-17

## "Letter to the Church at Pergamum" *The Church That Compromised*

- I. Identification of the Author (verse 12)
- II. Commendation (verse 13)
- III. Condemnation (verses 14-15)
- IV. Plea to Repent (verse 16)
- V. Promise if Overcome (verses 10-11)

## Letters To Seven Churches of Asia (Revelation 2-3)

- Some were **good** (Smyrna, Philadelphia)
- Some were **good / bad** (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis)
- One was **bad** (Laodicea)

## Letters To Seven Church of Asia (Revelation 2-3)



- Most of us would like to be in GOOD church (no condemnation)
- None of us would have anything to do with a BAD church (no commendation)
- Reality: may be in a church that is GOOD / BAD (Some commendation and some condemnation)

## The Church At Pergamum (Revelation 2:18-11)

Get a letter – You Live Where Satan Does and  
You Have Struck A Compromise

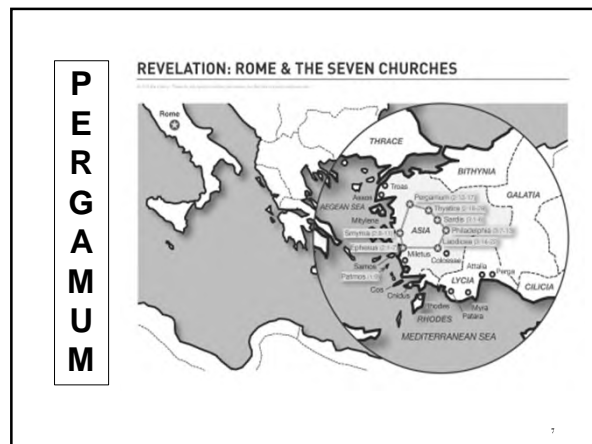
Dear  
Pergamum,  
Don't  
Compromise.

**A Church That  
Compromised**

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- 30 miles North of Smyrna
- Northernmost of 7 churches
- "The proper form of the name is *Pergamum*" (M.R. Vincent)
- 190 BC with help of Rome expelled Antiochus III (Syrian king) – King Attalus III bequeathed the city and entire kingdom to Rome.
- The official capital of Asia Minor.

Of all 7 cities  
Pergamum  
was perhaps  
the worst!



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- No mention of this church any where else in the NT.
- Thoroughly pagan city.
- A city of temples devoted to sensuous worship. Various patron deities were worshiped here: Zeus, Athene, and Dionysus.
- Especially abhorrent to Christians was the temple built in honor of Aesculapius (ehs-kyoo-LAI-PEE-uhs), the god of healing, whose emblem was that of a serpent, a symbol to Christians of the serpent of Eden.

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- Perhaps of greatest significance affecting the church was that Pergamum was the center of the imperial cult.
- In 29 BC the first temple was approved to be built in Asia in honor of the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma.
- The establishment of this temple and the development of the imperial cult gave rise to the city's enforcement of loyalty to "Lord Caesar."

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**A Church That Compromised**  
Revelation 2:12-17

**The Author:**

Revelation 2:12, "These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword" (1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21)

*rhomphaia* – "a large, broad sword used for both cutting and piercing - 'sword.'" (Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain)  
The sword indicates keen and accurate judgment.

*machaira* – cf. Hebrews 4:12 "death by violence or execution" (Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain) Used of the short Roman sword, used in Revelation 6:4; 13:10 and 13:14; Romans 13:4

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**A Church That Compromised**  
Revelation 2:12-17

**I. Its Strength**

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Revelation 2:12-17

**I. Its Strength**

**A. Works (verse 13)** "I know where thou dwellest, (even) where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth."

1. Active
2. Busy
3. Do more than think, talk, and plan

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Revelation 2:12-17

**I. Its Strength**

- A. Works (verse 13)** *"I know where thou dwellest, (even) where Satan's throne is"*
- B. Pergamum had become the stronghold of Satan's activity. He had established himself as a king on his throne in this city.**
- C. Christians were not told to leave a situation or to live in isolation.**
- D. Instead, the Lord encouraged them to stay and fight. They could still shine as a light in the midst of darkness.**

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Revelation 2:12-17

**I. Its Strength****C. Hold fast to my name (verse 13)**

The emperor insisted upon being addressed as *dominus et deus*, a title corresponding to the one given to Jesus in Thomas' confession, *"my Lord and my God"* (John 20:28).

1. Christ is Lord of Lords (Revelation 17:14) – not acknowledge any other Lord (i.e. Caesar)
2. Recognize His authority (Acts 4:7)

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Revelation 2:12-17

**I. Its Strength**

- A. Works (verse 13)**
- B. Hold fast to my name (verse 13)**
- C. Did not deny my faith (verse 13)**
1. *"THE faith"* Jesus taught others to believe (Philippians 1:27; Jude 3) – Objective Faith
  2. The *"faith"* Jesus taught others to have (Hebrews 10:39 – 11:1) – Subjective Faith

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Revelation 2:12-17

**I. Its Strength****D. Faithful in spite of Martyrdom (verse 13)**

*"martyr"* from *martus*, meaning *"witness."*

Stephen, *"thy witness."* Acts 22:20

Jesus, *"faithful witness."* Revelation 1:5

1. We know very little about Antipas.
2. Possible that Antipas was not a specific person but stood for all who had died as martyrs.
3. Legend has that one named Antipas was roasted to death in a brazen bull.
4. Even that didn't shake them!
5. At Smyrna, the persecution came primarily from fellow citizens, especially the Jews. But the persecution at Pergamum was promulgated by State persecutors.

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**A Church That Compromised**

Revelation 2:12-17

**I. Its Strength****II. Its Temptation**

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Revelation 2:12-17

**II. Its Temptation**

**Where Satan Dwells  
(verse 13)**

- A. Surrounded by pagans, heathens, and worldliness.**
- B. Throne – Satan's influence controlled the people of the city.**
- C. Temptation to compromise.**

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## Revelation 2:12-17

"Everyone has a choice to make. Either compromise faith and blend with the evil, or face the ridicule from the majority as foolish, fanatical, and too radical about faith."

Robert Harkrider, *Revelation*, Page 36

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## Revelation 2:12-17

## II. Its Temptation

### Where Satan Dwells (verse 13)

- A. Surrounded by pagans, heathens, and worldliness**
- B. Throne – Satan's influence controlled the people of the city**
- C. Temptation to compromise**
- D. Could overcome and conquer! (verse 17)**

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## Revelation 2:12-17

"The principle of the Christian life is not escape, but conquest. It may be that we often feel it would be very much easier to be a Christian in some other place and in some other circumstances, amongst people who are more sympathetic ... If in the early days Christians had run away every time they were confronted with an engagement very difficult, there would have been no chance of a world for Christ."

William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 1:112-113

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## Revelation 2:12-17

## A Church That Compromised Revelation 2:12-17

### I. Its Strength

### II. Its Temptation

### III. Its Weakness

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## Revelation 2:12-17

## III. Its Weakness

*"But I Have A Few Things Against Thee"*

### A. "Those that hold to the teaching of Balaam" (verse 14)

1. Numbers 22 - 25:1-8; 31:16 – Seduced Israel with harlots to cause them to sin – so would not be blessed.
2. 2 Peter 2:15-16 – wages of unrighteousness.
3. Jude 11 – error of Balaam for profit.
4. Stands for doctrine of compromise.

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## Revelation 2:12-17

## III. Its Weakness

*"But I Have A Few Things Against Thee"*

### A. "Those that hold to the teaching of Balaam" (verse 14)

1. "to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication."  
– Christians were encouraged to embrace these idolatrous practices for the sake of getting along / safety.
2. Things associated with idolatry (Acts 15:20, 29; 1 Corinthians 10:23ff).

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Revelation 2:12-17

**III. Its Weakness***"But I Have A Few Things Against Thee"***A. Those that hold the doctrine of Balaam (verse 14)****B. Those that hold the doctrine of Nicolaitans (verse 15)**

1. Don't know who they are. (2:6)
2. Some think it refers to the Gnostics (what flesh does is immaterial) – thus could compromise for safety.
3. Philosophy that a little compromise would not jeopardize your soul.

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Revelation 2:12-17

"The fault of the Nicolaitans was that they were seeking to adjust Christianity to the level of the world rather than lift the world to the level of Christianity. In other words, they were following a policy of compromise simply and solely to save themselves from trouble they were afraid and unwilling to face."

– William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, I:115

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**Doctrine of Balaam****Doctrine of Nicolaitans****Same Doctrine**

"It is significant to mention here that the term *Nicolaitane* is the Greek equivalent of the name *Balaam* in the Hebrew, and they both meant 'the destroyer of the people.'"

– Foy E. Wallace, Jr. *The Book of Revelation*, Page 93

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Revelation 2:12-17

**Doctrine of Balaam****Doctrine of Nicolaitans****Same Doctrine**

"Since the names mean the same, Jesus probably had the same error in mind." – Dan Winkler, *Spiritual Sword*, Volume 29, Number 1, October 1997, Page 23

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**III. Its Weakness***"But I Have A Few Things Against Thee"***A. Those that hold the doctrine of Balaam (verse 14)****B. Those that hold the doctrine of Nicolaitans (verse 15)****C. Tolerating those who held this doctrine**

1. Consider those being addressed

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Revelation 2:12-17

"It was not dictated to those preaching and practicing cultural relevance. It was sent to those who had remained true but were extending their fellowship to the participants of error."

– Winkler, Page 23

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Revelation 2:12-17

### **III. Its Weakness**

*"But I Have A Few Things Against Thee"*

- A. Those that hold the doctrine of Balaam**  
(verse 14)
- B. Those that hold the doctrine of Nicolaitans**  
(verse 15)
- C. Tolerating those who held this doctrine**
  - 1. Consider those being addressed.
  - 2. As much a problem with toleration of those in error as with those in error themselves.

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