

“Pergamum: The Church of Compromise”

Revelation 2:12-17

Last Sunday: The Study of Smyrna, the Church of Suffering

Today: The Study of Pergamum, the Church of Compromise

Five Parts to Each of These Seven Letters:

- Description: Christ’s self-description; to understand the commendation/rebuke (2:12)
- Commendation: What the church is doing right (2:13)
- Rebuke: What the church is doing wrong (2:14-15)
- Exhortation: Urging the church to take action (2:16)
- Promise: If you overcome, you will receive this reward (2:17).

Pergamum the City:

- Political capital of the Roman province of Asia
- Built upon a very steep mesa
- Center of education and parchment production
- Famous for its architecture such as temples of Zeus, Athena, Bacchus (god of wine), etc.

Pergamum the Church:

- Had compromised with the world
- Historicist: the church compromised with the world (church history: AD 313-7th century)
- Joel Beeke, “The letter to Smyrna reveals the church in the world, whereas the letter to Pergamum reveals the world in the church.”
- How does a believer compromise? In two ways: life (how he lives) and doctrine (what he believes). *1 Tim. 4:16

2:12 “The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword...” What is meant by this?

1. “I know you have compromised your life/doctrine.”
2. “I know you are surrounded by darkness.”

2:13 “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.” Four options:

1. Altar of Zeus
2. Temple of Asclepius
3. Temple of the Emperor
4. Headquarters of the Babylonian religion

2:14 “You have some who hold to the teachings of Balaam who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel...”

- Num. 22-24, the Moabite King Balak who hired Balaam, a false prophet, to curse Israel

2:15 “So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolatians.” Who are they?

1. Nico = Victory; Laos = people. “Conqueror of the people.” The elders were dictators of the congregation. They divided up the church between the laity and clergy (3rd John).
2. Teachers of cheap grace
 - a. Perhaps named after Nicholas of Antioch
 - b. Overemphasize freedom; underemphasize holiness (not legalists, but libertines)
 - c. Do not deal rightly with sin in their church

2:16 “Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon.”

What does it look like when you love your brother enough to confront his sin? Six Qualifiers:

1. Make sure the issue is sin, not just preferences (Mt. 18:15).
2. Watch out for the plank in your own eye (Mt. 7:1-5).
3. Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).
4. Watch yourself, lest you also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).
5. Do not confront every sin (Pr. 19:11).
6. Beware, lest you find yourself enjoying confronting (Ti. 3:10).

Whatever Happened to Pergamum, the Church of Compromise?