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W.A. R. Bible Study

The Seven Churches of Asia Minor Bible Study

The Church in Pergamos Part 2 – Lesson 5

The Compromising Church

The Danger of Trading Eternal Truths for Temporary Trinkets

Revelation 2:15-17

Years ago Rev. Timothy Fleming preached a sermon entitled *Holding On To Hope While Hell Is On Your Back*. It's one of his most celebrated sermons, exploring how believers experience deep suffering by clinging to God's promises and not compromising to the world's pressures. The sermon encourages Christians to remain anchored in hope—*holding onto heaven*—even when life's circumstances feel like *hell on your back*. It's a call to trust God's faithfulness, not turn away in despair.

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Context

The Church of Pergamos was not a perfect church. However, Jesus commended the Church for what was right and corrected the church for what was wrong. The Church was strategically located in a place where temptation was met on every side. The Pergamos church members lived in a challenging place, surrounded by pagan influences, yet they held fast to Christ's name and did not deny Him during difficult times. Jesus, Himself refers to Pergamos as the Seat of Satan because of it's heightened idol worship.

However, some of the members of the Church attempted to mix Christianity with pagan worship because of cultural pressures and perhaps to gain power, position, and prestige. Some of the members of the Church of Pergamos compromised by gravitating to the teaching of Balaam by eating foods that had been sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immoralities.

Jesus mentions the Nicolaitans: *The Nicolaitans are mentioned only in this letter and in the letter to the Ephesian church (Revelation 2:6). They were likely a group similar to those who held the teachings of Balaam, though the exact nature of their doctrine and practice is unknown.*¹ In these final verses, Jesus calls for the Church of Pergamos to repent of their sins and not to compromise their faith. He is calling for His people to raise the standard and not to compromise the Truth for worldly gain. Jesus is calling for His people not to align with those who are ungodly, unprincipled, and power hungry.

Jesus' call for repentance came with a warning that judgment that would take place if the church of Pergamum did not repent. However, Jesus gives a promise of eternal reward to those who overcame the pressures of earthly compromise. Let's observe verses 15, 16, and 17:

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/church-in-Pergamum.html>

Verse 15: **The Slippery Slope** - *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.* Not only did they fall into the sins of Balaam, but there were also some of the church members of Pergamos that mingled into the teachings of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans were a group whose teachings and practices went against the teachings of Christ. They were likely to be a group that compromised with Pagan Culture. We are reminded in Revelations 2:6 that the Church of Ephesus hated the works of the Nicolaitans. *The name “Nicolaitans” is derived from the Greek word nikolaos, a compound of the words nikos and laos. The word nikos is the Greek word that means to conquer or to subdue. The word laos is the Greek word for the people. It is also where we get the word laity. When these two words are compounded into one, they form the name Nicolas, which literally means one who conquers and subdues the people. It seems to suggest that the Nicolaitans were somehow conquering and subduing the people.*²

Verses 16- **The Selections** - *Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* Five of the seven churches were commanded to repent. *Repent is a command*

² <https://renner.org/article/who-were-the-nicolaitans-and-what-was-their-doctrine-and-deeds/>

*that applies to Christians, not only to those who first come to Jesus.*³

Jesus allows the members of the Church of Pergamos to make a selection; *repentance or repercussion*. If the Church repents there would be a blessed reward. However, if the Church of Pergamos compromised judgement would take place and they would face the Jesus who has the two-edged sword. This passage is a reminder that judgment will begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17).

Verse 17 - ***The Spirit, The Subduer, The Supply*** - *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.* The Spirit speaks to the church. The Holy Spirit speaks to the Church through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit speaks through believers. The Church must be in tune with the Holy Spirit to hear His voice. The danger of false teaching and immoral conduct can cause great harm for the Church of Pergamos. The Subduer; To those who overcometh or those who are able to subdue their passions and not compromise will be rewarded. The Supply will be eternal rewards; not earthy rewards. *I will give to eat hidden manna: Manna was*

³ Unknown

a welcome source of food to the Israelites during their journey through the desert en route to Canaan. The overcomers at Pergamum refused to eat food offered to idols, but they will enjoy bread from heaven. The feast Jesus prepares for His faithful servants exceeds by far anything the Devil offers us.⁴ Hidden manna cannot be corrupted by a corrupt world system of compromise. And I will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it: Jesus also promises a white stone with a new name inscribed on it. Only the recipient of the honor knows the inscribed name. We cannot say with certainty what this stone represents, but we can be sure the recipient enjoys approval from Jesus and fellowship with Him. In ancient Greece, stones were sometimes used in jury cases to indicate a vote, with black used for guilt and white for innocence. Important buildings were also made with white marble. More likely, however, this is a reference to the Roman custom of giving victors in athletic competitions a white stone inscribed with their name. This token served as their "ticket" to enter into an awards celebration later on.⁵

⁴ <https://www.bibleref.com/Revelation/2/Revelation-2-17.html>

⁵ <https://www.bibleref.com/Revelation/2/Revelation-2-17.html>

The white stone gives the impression of an invitation to the heavenly banquet.

Bible Questions

1. Why does Jesus hate the Nicolaitans and why do you think He makes it clear to this Church of Pergamos?
2. What is the Church of Pergamos asked to repent of, and what are the consequences of they do not repent?
3. What is the Holy Spirit saying to the Church of Pergamos?
4. Why is *hidden manna* and a *white stone* considered a reward?

Keeping It Real

1. Why do you think so many Evangelicals have compromised embracing the Big Beautiful Bill?
2. What do you think the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today?
3. What pillar of F.O.O.M.M. does this lesson speak to?
4. How does the C.F.V.S. make this lesson important for future generations?