

# The Book of the Revelation to John

Study 3

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Chapter 2. v 12

## Pergamos

### Revelation chapter 2 verse 12

*And to the Angel of the Church in Pergamos write; these things said He which has the sharp sword with two edges, (A symbol of the Word of God)*

The first letter was to Ephesus, the church that had left its first love; the second was to Smyrna the persecuted church. This letter was to a compromising church, a church linked inseparably to the world. Pergamos is a picture of a church that is quite content to flirt with the world while trying to keep a semblance of godliness without actually standing up for Jesus and thereby falling for anything.

The author is identified as the one who has the sharp two-edged sword. The sword is the Word of God and it is God's Word that edifies, corrects, encourages, judges, quickens, comforts, and rebukes. It is His Word that should be the foundation of all church life. All Ministers of the Gospel should know the Word of God and how to use it to build up, not only the Church but the individuals in the church. It is the Bible that shows the mind of Christ, the character of Christ and the love of Christ and our congregations should be disciplined in Christ's ways to produce Churches more like Him to combat the sin in the world.

The instruction to the Church of today is very clear;

### 2 Corinthians 6v17

*Wherefore come out from among them and be separate says the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you. And I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.*

These are strong words from Jesus, He wants His church to be separate from the world, a place where the Holy Spirit can feel at home and do His work of convicting of sin, righteousness and judgement. Would He feel at home in our Churches today or would He be embarrassed and wait outside? At its birth the Pergamos church was grounded in true faith in Jesus but pressure from the world weakened their faith and their resolve and they had given the ground that they had won for Jesus back to Satan and they found themselves in serious danger...danger of Judgement from the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who wields the sword in Judgement. Many of these members had been converted out of paganism "and did run well" but now they had gone back to their old pagan habits, they had married the world and now disaster is looming over the hill-top.

## Verse 13

*I know your works and where you dwell even where Satan's seat is and you hold fast my name and have not denied My name, and have not denied My Faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr who was slain among you, where Satan dwells.*

Christ, the Golden Candlestick was an observer in the church of Pergamos; He knew all that was going on. He knew that Satan had set his seat in that church and to set up your seat in a place shows your intention to stay there, perhaps with a mind to take over. In verse 9 speaking of Smyrna it said Satan's followers were the synagogue of Satan. Each member who followed Satan were his synagogue, here in verse 13 Satan has set up his seat or his throne in this Church and although some had held fast to the faith, they were not winning or overcoming. Make no mistake Satan's throne is not in Hell, it's in this world and according to our study he furthers his field of operation by using compromising Churches. Hell is the place of his incarceration; the world is his place of operation. The Church was spilt in its devotion and loyalty. Sometimes it is not persecution but compromise that is the fastest way to destroy Church life. Antipas was a faithful, true and uncompromising member of this Church and was slain among the membership, this shows us clearly that this persecution came from within the Church. This also shows us that some were in league with the Devil because *Antipas was slain among you*. Where were the other members of the church to stand firm in the Lord against Satan and protect Antipas?

Much of the Church today is compromising with the world. In the past decade or so the Church has lost hold of its true Biblical beliefs leaving the door open for all imposters of all kinds to enter. Churches that have departed from the true faith and have embraced the world are all around us. Our impure Churches have sold out to Satan and have long since been judged by the Lord and stripped of any power or Spiritual influence although the religious programme continues. That's where Pergamos was and that's why the Lord identifies Himself as the One with the two-edged sword, the sword of Judgement walking in their midst.

Remember, the "things" that Jesus had against these churches are typical of the Churches throughout the Church age. He knew the churches that would compromise, lose their first love, or flirt with the Devil. He also knew the churches He could rely on to be Faithful and true.

### **Satan's throne in Church?**

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We could argue, how is it that Satan is allowed to set up his throne, not only in a city on earth but in a Church in that city, a house of God? Is there some hidden interpretation to this verse? No I don't believe so, as we have discovered this was a compromising Church even though there were a few members who were faithful to Jesus. Satan only had his throne in the Pergamos Church because the members allowed it. We do not read of any opposition to Satan setting up his throne in that church or any effort to dethrone this evil that was so close at hand. We are sure there were some in that Church that stood firm in their faith and Antipas was one, I believe he was mentioned to show us that there was a spiritual war going on against Satan in that Church and the few that stood with Antipas were not forgotten or ignored by the Lord. The Lord said of Antipas that he was His faithful martyr slain where Satan dwells. We don't have any record that the Pergamos church was exposed to any powerful leadership or indeed any strong apostolic teaching, nothing that would help to safeguard its members against weak, worldly, compromising examples, let alone the spate of false prophets that took advantage of such weakness in a Church. It was very difficult for any who had attached themselves to this Church not to be sucked in by the enemy because there was already a weakness among its members. However, although Pergamum was a place where it looked as if Satan's throne was superior to the throne of Jesus, no matter how things looked on the outside, the truth was that the power and authority of Jesus Christ was and is supreme overall and that includes the throne of Satan, and that power and authority was available to every member of the Pergamum church to fight against the evil in the city.

Jesus said "*I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" and where Pergamos was concerned he said "*I will build my Church and the throne of Satan will not prevail*

against it” No matter how many true and faithful members who stood against the pagan influences that Pergamos had, this remnant, and thank God for the remnant, remained faithful unto death and Jesus called them His True Church, and they were His real Church, His saved Church, growing Church.

What made it even more difficult for the Pergamos Church was that Pergamos was the first city to build a Temple for the worship of Caesar. There was also a Temple to the god of Zeus the supreme god. The massive magnificent altar, the largest and most famous altar in the known world was shaped like a giant throne. Was this Satan’s throne? The law was that Caesar had to be worshipped first; any other god had to come after Caesar. Then there was the god of Asklepios the god of healing and this god was known all over the ancient world as the Pergamese god. If you wanted healing you went to the Asklepios Temple where hundreds of harmless snakes slithered all over the floor. You were required to lay on the floor all night long and while you slept (assuming you could) the spirit of Asklepios crawled all over you infusing you with his healing power, a teaching straight from the pit of hell and from that old serpent himself.

Then there was Gaylon the second most famous medical mind in the ancient world, the first and most famous being Hippocrates the founder and author of the Hippocratic Oath which is the ethical Statement that all Doctors and medical practitioners take when becoming Doctors even today. With all this knowledge and much Temple worship with Temples all over the place to various gods all vying for attention with all sorts of penalties for being disobedient, no wonder Satan’s throne was there. The true Christian had a very hard time keeping his faith. In the middle of all this hypocrisy, falseness, idol worship, paganism and sin, right in the centre of this work of Satan there was this little Church and the Bible says of that little Church that Jesus said “You hold fast My name” “you have not denied My faith” You have not compromised.

#### Verse 14

*But I have a few things against you, because you have there them who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling before the Children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.*

#### **Some swopped the cross for idolatry and sexual immorality.**

Some in this church were committing spiritual adultery, that is to say they had changed their faith in the cross to other things and the love of money being high on the list. Without going into detail of the sin of Balaam who for the love of money promised by Balak king of Moab, tried to Prophecy a curse on the Children of Israel to which God would not give His permission. Take time to read Number 22, 23, 24 which tells an interesting story of a man who was actually a failed Prophet, being tempted by Balak to curse Israel for very large sums of money. He bartered with the Lord; he plots with the king to get Israel out of the king’s life. There were some in the Pergamos church who God likened to Balaam. 2 Peter 15 says “*Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness*”

The Lord also says to this Church *some of you hold to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which I hate.* This refers to unscriptural Church Government and teaching which exploited the people with impure doctrines together with impure practices. The disappointment to the Lord was that the Leadership and the faithful few were not dealing with it, these false teachings, the introduction of wickedness under the disguise of worship was not being dealt with. He says “*Because you have some who hold to the teaching of Balaam*” ...*you have some who are teaching the doctrine of Nicolaitanes* and you are allowing it, you are not opposing it, you are not putting them out of the Church, it is your responsibility and you have failed. It was not a question of denied faith, of denying the name of the Lord, they would not do that, it was purely that they were soft and tolerant to falseness and error. I am sure there is a lesson here for all of us.

#### 2 Corinthians 6. 15

*What fellowship has light with darkness, what concord has Christ with Belial? Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*

## James 4

*Friendship with the world is enmity with God.*

There can be no compromise in the Church where Jesus dwells, and if compromise dwells then God is absent, this also applies to the heart of the believer, so whether it is the sin of Balaam, putting material things before God and have a greed for material things, or the sin of the Nicolaitanes of committing the sin of disobedience in eating food sacrificed to idols thereby substituting the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Eating food offered to idols was a common act of the Children of Israel of old and the Nicolaitanes in John's day. The temptation to eat idol meats was particularly strong to the new Gentile converts. After the best parts of the animal were taken for the sacrifice to idols the rest was sure to be found on the heathen entertainer's table. It is interesting to know that the Greek for 'kill' originally meant "to sacrifice". Thus the eating of that food was considered a substitute for the supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and Jesus was displeased with this in fact He said He hated it.

Together with the sin of immorality and all the sexual uncleanness based upon the perverted understanding of God's grace. They believed that because of God's grace and mercy they had a greater freedom to do what they liked. That belief is in many of our churches today.

I invited a man to our services once and he said "no thanks at the church I go to I can confess my sin on Sunday get absolution and then I can do what I like in the week until next Sunday when I get forgiven again. Can I do that in your church?" And he was actually laughing as he said it. Like this man the Pergamum church played fast and loose with the cross of Jesus and abused the love and grace of God. The Pergamum church was a disappointment to God and He judged them for their wrong doing. You may say that was the sins of the early church, we have a greater understanding of God's word today. Of course that is for the Lord to judge, as He will very soon at His return for His Saints, but if the stuff that held back the progress of the Pergamum church is in our churches today we are judged with the same judgement they were judged.

## Verse 17

*He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches. To him who overcomes I will 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 knows saving he who receives it.*

He that hath an ear let him hear is a statement often used in the Bible, what God is saying is I gave you two ears and I want you to listen and listen good! Three of the oldest manuscripts read "repent therefore" so the Nicolaitanes and the whole church of Pergamos was called upon to repent, turn away from these sins and return to their first love Christ, and get back to the Cross.

## **The Overcomer**

*To him who overcomes 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 knows saving he who receives it.*

To 'overcome' is called for many times by the Lord. He knows that we have persecution, trials, and all sorts of problems that stretch us sometimes to the limit. He knows when one trial is barely over another comes to drain our strength and even our faith. But He knows the end from the beginning and encourages us not to give up but fight the good fight of faith and persevere. (See Job study) It is so important to the Lord that we overcome that He gives us an incentive. Here the reward is hidden manna and a white stone.

## **Hidden Manna**

In the Old Testament manna was provided by God to feed His people Israel in the wilderness after many years of slavery in Egypt, they complained and murmured against Moses and Aaron and Moses went to God for an answer. In Exodus 16v4 the Lord said to Moses I will rain down bread from Heaven for you and the people. They were to collect certain types of manna at certain times of the day

and only so much on each occasion. This was a test of obedience; the murmurings tell us that God hears what we say including our complaints and holds us all responsible for our actions in every detail. We read in Exodus 16v32 that Moses was to take a portion of this bread and lay it up in a jar or pot believed to be gold, in the Ark of the Covenant alongside the tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod, The Oil and the Manna. This was to be a constant reminder to Israel of God's provision and a promise that the true Bread of life that was yet to come.

### John 6v31-35

*Our fathers did eat Manna in the desert as it is written; He gave them bread from Heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them verily verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven for the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven and gives life unto the world. Then they said unto Him Lord ever more give us this Bread, and Jesus said unto them I am the Bread of Life.*

Moses gave the Israelites bread that came from heaven but the verse says that God the Father gave the true bread that gives life to the world John 3v16 God so loved us that He gave His Son, the true Bread of Life and Jesus said

*I am the bread of Life He who comes to Me shall never hunger. I am the Living Bread that came down from Heaven; if any man eats of this Bread he will live forever yes the Bread which I shall give is My flesh for the Life of the world.*

Christ is now risen, ascended and seated at the right hand of God; it is He who is the "Hidden Manna" that sustains us as we walk through this dry and thirsty land. Although He is hidden from the world, those who have faith in Him, those who are the overcomers they are the ones who are sustained and strengthened by this Hidden Manna while on earth and it's not only Jesus that is hidden, we too are hidden together with Him.

### Colossians 3v3

*...your life is hid in Christ in God.*

### A White Stone

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*..and will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knows saving he who receives it.*

There are a number of opinions as to what this white stone is, what it is used for and where it came from. I would ask you to look it up in whatever books or internet places you use and draw your own conclusions. For me the following witnesses with my spirit.

### Deuteronomy 27v1/2/3

*And Moses with elders of Israel commanded the people, saying keep all the Commandments which I command you this day. And it shall be on the day when you shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord your God gives you*

*, that you shall set up great stones and plaster them with plaster; And you shall write upon them all the words of this law, when you are passed over, that you may go in unto the land which the Lord your God gives you, a land that flows with milk and honey; as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you.*

The earliest time that stones were mentioned was when God's Law was to be inscribed as a legal "written document". He wanted these stones whitewashed and of the size that could be carried, kept

and noticed so He asked the elders to plaster them with plaster then write on them His Law and they were to take them over Jordan into the Land that God had set aside for them.

There are a number of references to Stones in the Old Testament being used by God to establish His Law and Precincts at the outset of Israel's journey which were kept by them for many years. Stones were a type of Christ and in;

Matthew 21v42.	The stone which the builders rejected the same has become the Head of the Corner, (everything hinges on Christ.)
Genesis 28v22.	This stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house.
Genesis 31v45.	And Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar.
Genesis 35v 14.	And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with Him (God) even a pillar of stone and he poured a drink offering thereon and he poured oil thereon. (Type of the Holy Spirit)
Exodus 24v12	And the Lord said unto Moses, come up to Me into The Mount and be there; and I will give you Tables of Stone and a Law and Commandments which I have written.

There are lots more references throughout the Bible, I have given a few in the beginning of the life of Israel where much of God's Law was given to Moses, and where Jacob (Israel) met and proved God. These dealings involved stone on which much writing was inscribed. This as we know included the most important the Ten Commandments. In the New Testament we are reminded that Jesus is the Chief Corner stone of His Church. The white stone is also a brilliant diamond which was one of the twelve precious stones in the Urim borne by the High Priest in his breastplate next to his heart. The High Priest used this white stone in some divinely appointed way to get directions from God when needed. It is to the overcomer Christ will give a white stone with your own new name written in it which no man will know but Christ Himself, The name that Christ gives you is inscribed *in* the stone so it cannot be erased or removed.

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Be blessed

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