

war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

Initial Questions 2:12-17

1. Where was the phrase - "the sharp two-edged sword" used in *The Revelation* before this verse?
2. What was the teaching of Balaam?
3. Where is the Old Testament background for vs. 14 located?
5. Is it possible today that entire congregations like the 1st century Church in Pergamum needed to repent?

The Church in Pergamos Chp. 2:12-17

Pergamos, (the Greek form is Pergamum) stood approximately 55 miles N.E. of Ephesus in the valley of the Caicus. Pergamos was the capitol city of the Attalid realm. Later, the Romans made it the capitol of the province of Asia. The inland location of the city precluded it as a candidate for taking over the trade of Smyrna and Ephesus.

There are at least two things which should be remembered about Pergamos: (1) That it had a great library of 200,000 books, and the word parchment is derived from the city's name; (2) It was internationally famous as a center of Asklepios worship. Asklepias was the god of healing. Asklepios' chief descriptive title was (*sōter*) saviour. The emblem of this Asian saviour is the serpent.

Pergamos was the outpost metropolis of Greek civilization. Beyond the city's borders lie the hordes of barbaric Celts. It is particularly important for our study of the Revelation, to know that Pergamos gloried in the presence of the Temples to Athene, Zeus, and was a center of the Caesar Cult. Caesar claimed to be god, but the Church in Pergamos acknowledged only one saviour (not *asklepios*) and one God (not Caesar) but rather the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 12

John is once more commanded to write (same form as the other instances). Who is speaking, and how is He described?

Christ is speaking as "the one having the sharp two-edged sword." He speaks the word of God, and it "shall not return unto Him void." (The nature of the Word of God, in both O.T. and N.T. will be traced in a *Special Study* in this volume.)

Verse 13

"I know where you dwell where the throne of Satan is." The word says that the Church was not to run away and hide but rather they were to dwell there permanently. (Here *katoikeis* or permanent resident versus *paroiken*, pilgrim or stranger.) The King James translation of *thronos* as seat is faulty. It means a throne from which he reigns as their 'lord.' There is no neutral ground - either Christ is our Lord, or Satan is our lord - which is it to be?

"And thou holdest (*krateis* - sing. pres. act. they were constantly holding on to the faith; and they were doing it individually (force of the sing.) the name of me." Semetic background is present here in the use of "name" which stands for the person. "And did not deny (*ouk ērnēsō* - sing. 1st aor. ind.) in one act of refusal to deny Christ, most of the individuals (the sense of the singular form 2nd per. sing.) held fast to "the faith once and for all delivered to the Saints." There was no compromise on the part of most church members in Pergamos (my faith). Christians at Pergamos held fast to Christ under heavy persecution, even under martyrdom. One martyr by the name of Antipas was singled out for special mention during the seige of hate. We know nothing more about Antipas than is mentioned here. We do know that Antipas held firm unto the end in the place where Satan continually dwells (*katoikei* - pres. tense). Satan did not merely drop in and out of this city, but it was his constant home base.

Verse 14

Their stand for Christ was a gallant one, but they permitted "the ones holding the teaching of Balaam" to remain in the Church's fellowship. This is ample warning that the Lord is not merely concerned with the Church as a whole, but for every single individual claiming membership in it. It will not do to have available a "good statistical report" of the church. Many congregations today look on the surface to be progressing and successful; but what of the belief and behavior of "every" church

member? It is not simply a matter of how many (even if statistically small) heretics are continually present in the Church life, but rather, are there any at all? Who was Balaam? (See Numbers 25:1-9; Jude 11; and II Peter 2:15.)

There were two heretical groups in this congregation - the followers of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Condemnation was Christ's answer to the Nicolaite's contamination of this congregation. Who were the Nicolaitans? No absolutely final answer can be given to this question, but they were probably committed to some form of Gnosticism.

Note: An understanding of Gnosticism is also imperative for a study of the Johannine Epistles as well as The Revelation. For further study see J. Doresse, *The Secret Book of The Egyptian Gnostics*. Viking Press, New York, 1960; *The Biblical Archaeologist*, February, 1961 - Floyd V. Filson, *New Greek and Coptic Gospel Manuscripts*, pp. 2, Religion in Life, Winter, 1961-62 - William R. Schoedel, *New Gnostic Papyri*, pp. 99; Puech, Quispel, and van Unnik, *The Jung Codex*, Mowbrays, especially, van Unnik, *The Gospel of Truth and the N.T.* for a study in parallels; an excellent general study is R. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem*, Mowbray, London, 1958. See also Jonas' two works, and Bultmann's *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, 1956 for a multitude of ridiculous assertions about the Gnostic origins of several N.T. ideas. Bultmann's thesis is invalidated, because he uses antiquated views of Gnosticism which have been destroyed by the *Nag Hammadi* finds.

Verse 16

Under the above circumstances, what can the Church in Pergamos do in order to become again acceptable to the Lord? Christ gave an immediate answer - "repent thou" (*metanoeson* - sing. 1st aor. imper. each individual was commanded to completely repent immediately). Unless they fulfilled the necessary condition of repentance completely and immediately Christ says to them "I am coming to you quickly and will fight with (or against) them (*autōn* - them - not the entire church, but the guilty, repentant ones) with the sword of my mouth. The Word of God shall prevail!

Verse 17

"The one having (the appeal was always to individuals not to groups) an ear let him hear what the Spirit keeps saying to the Churches." To the ones who are continually victorious I will give to him the having been hid (*kekrummenou* - perf. pass. part)

man, and I will give him a white stone." It is impossible to completely identify the "white stone" symbolism, but it no doubt was a mark of identification to be given to all faithful Christians. On the stone would be inscribed their "new name" having been written (*gegrammenon* - sing. pass. pt. p. - the new name had already been inscribed on "the white stone"), which no one knows except the one receiving (it is supplied because the participle - the one receiving needs an object).

Review Questions

1. Pergamos was the center of what religious cult?
2. What could the phrase "where the throne of Satan is" mean - vs. 13?
3. What does the use of "the name of me" suggest - vs. 13?
4. Was the Church in Pergamos free from false teachers? What did the Lord command that they do about them - vs. 14?
5. What is the O.T. background of Balaam (see Numbers 25:1-9) - vs. 14?
6. What did the Lord require of the Church in Pergamos - vs. 16?

SECTION 7

Text 2:18-29

18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass: 19 I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. 20 But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. 22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.

24 But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden. Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Initial Questions 2:18-29

1. What were the commendable characteristics of this congregation - vs. 19?
2. The Lord acknowledged that the Church in Thyatira was a progressing congregation. But they failed to keep the doctrine and life of the Church pure. Is there anything so insignificant that we can let it pass by when it effects the belief and life of the Church?
3. How is the individual Christian to be judged - vs. 23?
4. Was the whole Church at Thyatira infected with deadly disease of false doctrines of Jezebel?
5. To what event does the phrase "till I come" vs. 25, refer?

The Church in Thyatira Chp. 2:18-29

The next congregation to receive the analytic glance of The Lord was the Church in Thyatira. Lydia, the first Christian convert from Europe was from Thyatira (Acts 16:11-15). Pliny called this city an insignificant city. Almost nothing is known of this city, therefore it is difficult to provide background information. But we do know that Thyatira was situated at the mouth of a valley which directly connected the Caicus and Hermus Rivers. A great road from the Byzantium (or Eastern Roman Empire) to Smyrna ran through this city making it easily accessible for evangelistic purposes. The province of The Lord utilized the great road-ways in the ancient Greek world.