

The Church at Pergamos

Revelation 2:12-17

The Compromising Church

Introduction:

Pergamos was located in the western part of Asia Minor north of Smyrna and about twenty miles from the Mediterranean Sea. "It was a notable center of idolatry and demon-controlled religion, with splendid temples to Zeus, Athena, Apollo and Exculapius (the god of healing)." Also located in the city of Pergamos was a university with a large library of two hundred thousand manuscripts. The city was famous for its paper; some believing it originated there. All of this prosperity and intellectual knowledge mixed with religion finally infiltrated the church at Pergamos, and the condemnation went out that they held to the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes. Both of these doctrines were a teaching that intermingled the Word of God with knowledge and idolatry.

With the intermingling of the Word of God with knowledge and idolatry in the historical church, it is fairly reasonable to look at the church at Pergamos as being symbolic of the age when Constantine was prominent. That period of the church age was from 315-590. During this period, it became fashionable to join the church. "Soon pagans had joined the church by the thousands, taking with them their heathen practices."

This church represents the third church age period known as the compromising church age. It is the period where the Catholic church got its start. It began with the reign of Constantine in 313 AD and lasted until 590 AD when the period known as the "Dark Ages" began in full force.

"By the beginning of the year A.D. 313, Christianity has won a mighty victory over paganism. A new emperor has come to the throne of the Roman Empire. He evidently recognized something of the mysterious power of this religion that continued to grow in spite of persecution. History says that this new emperor who was none other than Constantine had a wonderful realistic vision. He saw in the skies a fiery red cross and on that cross written in fiery letter these words - 'By this thou shalt conquer.' He interpreted it to mean that he should become a Christian. And that by giving up paganism and that by attaching the spiritual power of the Christian religion onto the temporal power of the Roman Empire the world could be easily conquered. Thus, the Christian religion would in fact become a whole world religion, and the Roman Empire a whole world empire.

"So, under the leadership of Emperor Constantine there comes a truce, a courtship and a proposal of marriage. The Roman Empire through its emperor seeks a marriage with Christianity. Give us your spiritual power and we will give you of our temporal power."

What ensued is, as they say, history. There was a council called in 313 AD of all the representatives (the Nicolaitanes) of the churches to form a hierarchy that dethroned Christ as the head of the church and enthroned Emperor Constantine as the head of the church. This hierarchy was the definite beginning of a development which is now known as the Catholic Church.

During this whole period of the formation of the hierarchy there were many Christians (the true New Testament church) who refused to go along with it. They wanted no marriage of the church and the state, and certainly didn't want a ruler of the nation to be the head of the church in place of Christ. Neither these Christians, nor their churches, ever at

that time, nor in the future, entered into the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

One thing of note is that Constantine himself became a Christian, and upon doing so was opposed by the Roman Senate of that time. They were displeased with the fact that he did not accept the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration completely because of the flaws in it. Because of this opposition the seat of the empire was moved from Rome to Byzantium, an old city rebuilt and then renamed Constantinople for Constantine. As a result of this there became two capitals of the Roman Empire - Rome and Constantinople. The two rival cities several hundred years later became the ruling centers of the divided Catholic Church - Roman and Greek.

Upon the marriage of the church and state, the church now had a legislative arm to carry out its doctrines and dogmas. The first law enacted by them was making infant baptism compulsory in 416 AD. As this became law, the churches began to fill up with unconverted members and by the close of this church period the majority of the people in the majority of the churches were lost.

Those believers true to the Word of God refused to follow this new law. They also refused to accept this baptism in their churches and began the practice of rebaptizing everyone that came into the church. This practice brought the hot displeasure of the state church, and therefore the empire itself. Thus began the start of the "Dark Ages."

During this time the word "Christian" became synonymous with the state-church, so those true

Christians had to call themselves something else. These names have been different down through those years. Such names as "Montanists," "Tertullianists," "Novationaist," "Paterines," etc, as well as "ana-Baptist" were used.

All this history given here gives us a picture of a tendency to compromise the Word of God to fulfill fleshly desires of power. That has been a trend seen today as well.

So, what can we learn from this passage about a compromising church? What does it mean for us today to make sure history doesn't repeat itself in our church right here, right now?

I. A COMPROMISING CHURCH HAS A PROBLEM WITH THE WORD OF GOD – VS. 12

One of the most serious problems in a great deal of churches today that once stood for the faith is they have compromised their stand on the Word of God. Where once they stood firm on what the Bible said they now waiver. Where they once obeyed every "word" of the Word of God they now only obey what they "feel" is important.

It would appear that the church in Pergamos did the same thing. They compromised the Word of God, so Jesus Christ is seen coming to them as the One with "the sharp sword with two edges" – the Word of God. He was once again showing them the most important thing in the Church – then and now.

The church age period represented here in the letter to the church at Pergamos also had a problem understanding the place the Word of God was to hold. They began to interpret the

Bible to fit their beliefs rather than fix their beliefs on the Word of God. And because of that the Catholic Church was formed – based on a little truth from the Bible used wrongly. If we're not careful history will repeat itself in our churches today.

So, what does the Bible say about this "sharp sword with two edges"? Why is it significant in relation to the compromising church age and for us today?

A. The "sharp sword with two edges" would be used to save the lost – seen in the word "sharp" – Isaiah 49:1-7; John 5:24; Rom. 10:11-17; Rom. 1:16; 1 Pet. 1:23

Isa 49:1-7 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. (2) And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; (3) And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. (4) Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: *yet* surely my judgment *is* with the LORD, and my work with my God. (5) And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. (6) And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. (7) Thus saith the LORD,

the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

Joh 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Rom 10:11-17 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

1Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

It is the Word of God as a dividing two-edged sword that is used to separate the sinner from

the world in saving grace. Without this sharp, two-edged sword being used we would be weaponless and powerless to win anyone to Christ.

Many years ago, during the Christmas season of 1879, an unbelieving newspaper man in Boston saw three little girls standing in front of a store window full of toys. One of the girls was blind. As the reporter drew near, he overheard the other two trying to describe the contents of the window to their blind little friend. He said that he had never thought about it before, but it would be very difficult to explain a thing that someone had never seen. In fact, he was so impressed that the incident became the basis for a news story that appeared in the paper several days later.

Two weeks later, the same agnostic newspaper man attended an evangelistic meeting conducted by D.L. Moody, and believe it or not, the reporter's main reason for attending was to try to catch Mr. Moody in some inconsistency. Well, imagine his surprise when the evangelist used his newspaper article to illustrate a spiritual truth! Mr. Moody said, "Just as that blind girl could not visualize those toys in the window, so unsaved men can't see Christ in all of His glory." He went on to say that in grace God opens the spiritually blind eyes of anyone who acknowledges his sin and receives Christ in humble faith. It is said that the Holy Spirit did a gracious work in that reporter's life. He saw his great

need and discovered for himself the truth of Moody's words!

B. The "sharp sword with two edges" would be the Christians only weapon – seen in the word "sword" – Eph. 6:12-20; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Rev. 12:11

Eph 6:12-20 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. (13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; (15) And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (19) And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, (20) For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

2Co 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (4) (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) (5) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity

every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

This passage only gives one visible weapon for the Christian to use against the onslaught of the wicked – *"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."* There is a "secret weapon" of prayer mentioned, but the only one that will be used in battle is the Sword of the Spirit. If we don't know the Word of God, how are we going to know how to use our weapon?

Paul explicitly states that the sword of the Spirit is Scripture, the word of God. The Scottish pastor and writer Thomas Cuthrie said, "The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun."

C. *The "sharp sword with two edges" would be the most life-giving, life-changing force known to man – seen in the word "with" – Hebrews 4:9-13; Ps. 119:130; Isa. 55:11; Jer. 23:29; 1 Thess. 2:13; James 1:18*

Heb 4:9-13 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. (10) For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. (11) Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man

fall after the same example of unbelief. (12) For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Psa 119:130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Isa 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Jer 23:29 *Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?

1Th 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Jas 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

The word "*with*" in this verse indicates there is a purpose for the sword. The purpose is found in the book of Hebrews – it's to open wide every area of our life: where we live, what we are, and show us our ugliness in sin, and show us we need to change as a believer. The "*sharp sword*" has a purpose and that is to impart new life to the one it splits open.

Though accounts of the demise of Fletcher Christian vary, the outcome of the Bounty mutineers is well known. After nine mutineers, twelve Tahitian women and six Tahitian men put ashore on Pitcairn Island in 1790, jealousy, treachery, drunkenness and murder took over. Ten years later, only two white men survived, surrounded by native women and half-breed offspring. When one of them died in 1800, he was the first man on the island to die a natural death. When the sole remaining mutineer was discovered in 1808, it was found that he had at one point discovered a Bible. By reading it and teaching it to others, he had instituted a simple, pious little community with no jail, no whiskey, no crime, and no laziness. Such is the transforming power of the Word of God.

D. The same sword that gives life is the same sword that will judge the life of those that reject it as life – seen in the words "two edges" – Rev. 1:16; 2:16; 19:15, 21

Rev 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

Rev 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Rev 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness

and wrath of Almighty God.

Rev 19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

It is this character of the Word of God that is meant by the term "two-edged" in the Bible.

On the one edge, the Word of God is sharp enough to separate the sinner from the world through grace. On the other edge, it is used as the means of condemnation and judgment on those who reject the message of the first side.

If we don't have a proper understanding of the Word of God and its authority in every word applied to every area of our life, then we are going to be just like the "compromising church" age, and the church at Pergamos. We will have used the Word of God for our own use and not applied it to its proper use. What a danger!!

An anonymous author wrote an article entitled, "The Diary of a Bible." It reads as follows:

Jan. 15 -- Been resting for a week. A few nights after the first of the year my owner opened me, but no more. Another New Year's resolution gone wrong.

Feb. 3 -- Owner picked me up and rushed off to Sunday school.

Feb. 23 -- Cleaning day, dusted and put back in my place.

April 2 -- Busy day. Owner had to present the lesson at a church society meeting. Quickly looked up a lot of references.

May 5 -- In Grandma's lap again, a comfortable place.

May 9 -- She let a tear fall on John 14:1-3.

May 10 -- Grandma's gone. Back in my old place.

May 20 -- Baby born. They wrote his name on one of my pages.

July 1 -- Packed in a suitcase -- off for a vacation.

July 20 -- Still in the suitcase. Almost everything else taken out.

July 25 -- Home again. Quite a journey, though I don't see why I went.

Aug. 16 -- Cleaned again and put in a prominent place; the minister is to be here for dinner.

Aug. 20 -- Owner wrote Grandma's death in my family record. He left his extra pair of glasses between my pages.

Dec. 31 -- Owner just found his glasses. Wonder if he will make any resolutions about me for the new year.

II.A COMPROMISING CHURCH MAY HAVE SOME GOOD IN IT – VS. 13

The church in Pergamos, even though a church given to compromise, was a church that had a good beginning, but somewhere began to show

signs of compromise. The words "*where thou dwellest*" indicate that the church had been established for some time and was known by the world as a church with a good history, and with some good still in it. Because of its association in this verse with the phrase "*even where Satan's seat is*" it is shown that it had the ability to recognize the devil's power and influence and still fight against it with success. This fact shows that it is possible to live in the very city of Satan and still live with a testimony.

The church age period being studied in this passage is one known for its good start. It was a church that had the potential of reaching many with the Gospel, yet because of prestige, power and money they decided to give in instead. That's why it is known as "*the compromising church.*"

For us today, if we follow the same pattern as this church mentioned here, we will find ourselves giving in to the power and influence of the devil as well. The time we live in today is a time where *Satan's seat is*, and it is all around us. The question is, "Do we recognize it?" Can we see similarities in the church mentioned here and the "church" (using the term loosely) today?

A. It's a church in a place, or time, when Satan was very powerful - "where Satan's seat is . . . where Satan dwelleth"

1. "Satan's seat" is referring to the throne of Satan, where, it would seem, the devil set up his kingdom from which to rule the earth

For centuries the devil had carried on his empire from Babylon (Gen. 11:1-9; Dan. 5). But when that nation fell he apparently transferred it (at least for awhile) to Pergamos. The city worshipped, among other objects, a living serpent. Satan will later move his capital back to Babylon (Rev. 17-18).

2. Because Satan's throne was in Pergamos, it was a very idolatrous city. It was a center of Emperor worship because of it being the legal center of the district of Asia Minor. The Emperor at the time was Augustus and the goddess Romana was worshipped.

We can look at the church age period here represented and see the beginnings of Roman Catholicism, which also is a very idolatrous religion, with its statues of Mary and Jesus, and the saints. Ps. 115:1-9; 1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21; Rev. 21:8

Psa 115:1-9 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake. (2) Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God? (3) But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. (4) Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands. (5) They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: (6) They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: (7) They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. (8) They that make

them are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them. (9) O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.

1Co 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

1Jn 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Rev 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

3. The phrase "where Satan dwelleth" is carrying the throne another step. Not only was his ungodly throne there, but he himself was there. Today, no matter where we go, the devil is going to tempt us and harass us. The question is, what are we going to do about it? 1 John 2:15; James 4:7; Eph. 4:27; 6:11

1Jn 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Eph 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

A young Christian who worked for a rich man was always telling his master that Satan was after him

and that he had a constant battle with him, but that he always won over Satan. The master made fun of him, telling him that Satan never bothered him. How was that? The young Christian could not answer him.

One day, however, they went hunting together. The master shot at some wild ducks. Some he killed and some he just wounded. "Run," the master said, "and catch the wounded ones first before they run away."

The young Christian came back laughing. He had the answer to the big question. "You know, sire," he said, "why Satan does not tempt you? Because you are spiritually dead, just like those ducks. He goes after the live ones, ones like me."

B. It's a church that holds to the Gospel of Christ as the only means of salvation – "and thou holdest fast my name"

1. "Holdest fast" – these two words mean to be strong, or strength. What it is saying is they had strength from the power of the Holy Spirit to lay hold of the name of Christ, and have Christ lay hold of them, and never let go. 2 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 10:23

2Ti 1:13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful

that promised;)

2. "My" – refers to verse 12 where it says "saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges" – it refers to none other than Jesus Christ.
3. "Name" – it's His name that we are to lay fast hold to – the word "name" is referring to a surname, the family name by which we are called. There is only one way to get the name of Christ, and that is by becoming a Christian. Acts 4:12; 10:42-43; John 3:36; 14:6

Act 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Act 10:42-43 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. (43) To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

A blind man once stood on a corner at a busy intersection reading aloud Acts 4 from a portion of a Braille Bible. A gentleman on his way home

stopped at the edge of the crowd that had gathered to listen. At that very moment, the sightless man lost his place. While trying to find it, he kept repeating the last three words he had just read: "No other name... No other name... No other name..." Many smiled, but the inquisitive bystander went away impressed. He had been searching for inner peace and therefore was ready to be influenced by a few words spoken "in season." He had heard the verse before, but that one phrase haunted him. Before morning he surrendered to the Holy Spirit's wooing and accepted the Savior. "I see it all now," he cried. "I've been trying to be saved by my own works and prayers. But Jesus alone can help me. He is my mediator. There is no other name whereby I must be saved." Thus a blind man's witness, given in a stumbling manner, was used to lead a seeking soul to Christ.

C. It's a church that has not denied the faith completely – "and hast not denied my faith"

Not only is it a church that holds to the Gospel of Christ as the only means of salvation, it's a church that has not turned from that truth. This is not speaking of a church that has begun preaching another gospel that used to teach the true Gospel (an apostate church), but it is referring to one that still preaches salvation by grace through faith, they just have compromised on separation.

1. To "deny the faith" would mean to reject its teachings and completely turn away from its precepts. That would be the definition of an infidel, as well. 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:12; Jude 1:3-4

1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

Jud 1:3-4 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (4) For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. "My" – again, this is referring to Christ
3. "Faith" – This is the faith that is exercised to be called a Christian, to take on the name of Christ. It is the faith, also, that we need to contend for, when need be. This is where many a compromising church fails – in the part of contending, or fighting, for what we believe. Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 1:18; Jude 1:3

Php 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one

spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

1Th 2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

1Ti 1:18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Jud 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

D. It's a church with some good, faithful, Bible-believing Christians – "even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you"

1. "Even in those days" – it would seem that there was a specific period of time, how short or long we do not know, when there was a great persecution. Even during this time of great persecution and martyrdom there were some that were still faithful to the Word of God. The point to remember is how faithful will we be when persecution comes? John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:20

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of

good cheer; I have overcome the world.

2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

1Pe 2:20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

2. "Wherein Antipas" – This name never appears in any other historical record. But God knows all about this anonymous humble believer who lived and died for Christ some twenty centuries ago. The fact that there is no other record would indicate that there are many "anonymous" servants for the Lord that are willing to die for Him if need be, even in compromising churches.
3. "My faithful martyr" – The "my" is referring again to the Lord Jesus Christ. Being faithful to a cause is one thing, but being called by the Lord "my faithful martyr" should be the goal and aim of every believer of every age. 2 Tim. 3:12

2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

4. "Who was slain among you" – It would seem that his execution was observed by those in the church.

When the bishop of Madras was touring India, he was introduced to a young slave girl who was an outstanding witness for the Lord. By her quiet

persistence in telling others of Jesus and His love, she had won many to Christ. As the bishop looked at her, he saw that her face, neck, and arms were badly scarred. She had received many beatings for her faithful testimony. With tears in his eyes he asked, "Child, how could you bear this brutality?" Somewhat surprised, she replied, "Aren't you glad if you can suffer for Christ, sir?" Her humble response spoke to his heart. It reminded him that if one is true to the Savior, he can expect ridicule and even harsh treatment from the world.

III. A COMPROMISING CHURCH HAS THE WRONG PEOPLE IN THE WRONG PLACES – VS. 14-15

Twice in these two verses it says that the church at Pergamos "had them" in the church that were destroying it. This is speaking of a right church at one time, a church established on the right principles and doctrines that now had gone so far as to have some (more than 1) in the church that was bringing extremely dangerous and destructive doctrines into the church.

The church age period here in view did the same thing. Churches that once stood strong on doctrine had come so far apart from the Word of God that they allowed in the doctrinal error that led to the Catholic church. Although there were still those independent, separated churches that would not go along with it, they were few in number.

Today, we have the same problem. Our numbers are dropping fast. Churches that once, not too

long ago, stood on the doctrines of the Word of God have allowed into their churches such damnable doctrines and heresies that they would be classified just like these churches were.

Let me make this point: these people mentioned here in these verses were not just members of the church but were people in places of leadership. One of the most dangerous things that can happen in a church is for someone with wrong doctrinal views to hold a place of leadership and influence in the church.

So, what about these two groups of people? What did they teach that caused such problems?

A. The doctrine of Balaam

Balaam is mentioned three times in the New Testament, as well as the occurrence in the Old Testament (Num. 22:1-25:9). We find three things about Balaam in these passages in the New Testament:

1. His way – 2 Peter 2:15 – his way was his covetousness. Balaam's services could be readily bought.

[2Pe 2:15](#) Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son* of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

2. His error – Jude 1:11 – he wrongly supposed a holy God would be forced to curse sinful Israel. He didn't know God's mercy and grace.

[Jud 1:11](#) Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and

perished in the gainsaying of Core.

3. His doctrine – Rev. 2:14 – he rightly concluded that if you can't curse them, then corrupt them. He did this by tempting them to marry women of Moab, defile their separation, and abandon their pilgrim character (Scofield Reference Bible). This accomplished a union of the world and the church (just what took place in the church age period here in view), which is what we are seeing today.

B. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes

1. The word "Nicolaitanes" comes from two Greek words:
 - a) nikao (nikao) - "to conquer"
 - b) laos (laos) - "people"
2. This is the group of people that were mentioned in relation to the letter to the church at Ephesus (2:6), where, in that passage, it was "the deeds" of the Nicolaitanes that was in view
3. The progression is seen from that church to the church at Pergamos, where it had progressed into its own doctrine.
4. What this doctrine had become was, as many believe, a division between the leadership and the people in the pew. This was the first sign of a problem in the Apostolic church where the pastor and the leadership began to view themselves as

being "above" the people in every way. This practice turned into a "doctrine" which was taught. This is a major teaching in the Catholic Church.

C. What does it mean for us?

It says in verse 15, "which thing I hate" – we are to hate these false doctrines, and any other false doctrine that comes into the church that would destroy it.

IV. A COMPROMISING CHURCH WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT – VS. 16-17

A. Repentance forsaken brings destruction – vs. 16

1. The opportunity was there for the church at Pergamos to repent and turn back to its original state
2. The opportunity for repentance is there for any church to do just that (and for any individual as far as that goes) – Matt. 3:2; Acts 17:30-31; Rev. 3:19; 16:9

Mat 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Act 17:30-31 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (31) Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and

chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Rev 16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

3. If no repentance is seen, and the course is not changed, then it will be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that will do the judging, and no one else (seen in the words "and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth") – Mark 12:9; Rev. 2:5; 3:3

Mar 12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

B. Repentance required for blessing – vs. 17

1. In order to have the blessings of verse 17, one must first repent. That is true of individuals specifically – "To him that overcometh"
2. The specifics of the blessing:

- a) "Will I give to eat of the hidden manna" – this is referring to the manna in the pot in the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle form of worship. The blessing was for the High Priest that was able to go in on the Day of Atonement and see the Shekinah Glory of God. Since Jesus died on the cross we all have that privilege of partaking of that glory. Heb. 9:1-15; John 6:51, 58

Heb 9:1-15 Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. (2) For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. (3) And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; (4) Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; (5) And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. (6) Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God*. (7) But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people: (8) The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: (9) Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining

to the conscience; (10) *Which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. (11) But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (12) Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. (13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (15) And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Joh 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Joh 6:58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

- b) "Will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man

knoweth saving he that receiveth it" – the fact that the color white is used shows the purity of the name that is written in heaven for us. There are some things about this point that we won't know until we get to heaven, when then we will know. 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1Co 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Isa 64:4 For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

Conclusion: The conclusion to the whole matter is compromise is against everything we are as Christians and everything we hold dear to us as a church. It's hated by God Almighty and if we're not careful we will be labeled among them.

Now is the time for us to decide, "Who's side are we on?"